

Submission
No 40

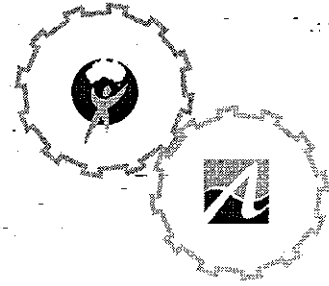
INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

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Theme:

Summary

COTA NATIONAL SENIORS
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



27 May 2005

The Hon Jan Burnswoods
Chairperson
The Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Burnswoods

Inquiry into Dental Services in New South Wales

COTA National Seniors Partnership (CNSP) wishes to bring before the Standing Committee on Social Issues a number of matters of relevance to the Inquiry into Dental Services in New South Wales.

We are gravely concerned that the State-funded dental services program has not filled the gap left by discontinuance of the federal program, which was abolished in 1996. Seniors and other on low incomes are disadvantaged with public dental hospitals, either not accepting any new cases or reporting waiting lists of up to 4 years. When treatment is available it is often for emergencies only.

We are also concerned that provision of vouchers for dental services purchased from private dental practitioners has not proven a successful strategy because there is insufficient incentive for private dentists to become involved with this program.

Lack of access to dental services not only leads to poor dental health and oral hygiene but to a range of other health problems either directly or indirectly through a decline in nutrition. Poor nutrition in turn is linked to a wide range of chronic health problems.

It is the agreed policy of CNSP that a national dental and oral health plan, specifically for older Australian, both in the community and aged care facilities should be development and funded.

The national plan should:

- focus on preventative dental services
- ensure that treatment is appropriate and timely

- enable the public dental services to contract private dentists or services
- ensure that people in rural and remote areas have access to public dental services
- ensure that people with special needs including those in residential aged care have access to public dental services, and
- provide catch-up funding to clear the back-log of waiting lists for state public dental health services.

CNSP is also of the view that steps need to be taken to ensure that people with special needs living in resident aged care facilities have access to public dental services.

COTA National Seniors Partnership (CNSP) is the largest membership organisation representing the concerns and interests of Australians aged 50 and over, both nationally and in every State and Territory. CNSP develops policy based on membership input, including through Branches and member organisation forums. Policy Councils in each State and Territory, and our National Policy Council, determine CNSP policies and positions. The NSW Policy Council is co-chaired by Dr Susan Kurrle and Ms Sheila Rimmer AM.

With more than 270,000 individual seniors and over 800 organisations in membership, CNSP is the largest membership organisation representing the concerns and interests of Australians aged 50 and over, both nationally and in every State and Territory. In New South Wales we have more than 70,000 individual members.

With its combined individual and organisational membership representing all aspects of Australian seniors' interests, CNSP has a pre-eminent role in representing, advocating for and serving older Australians.

We would be happy to supplement this brief submission with further information and to appear before the Committee to discuss the issues raised. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone on 02 9251 6088 or email l.cheetham@nationalseniors.com.au for further information on this submission.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Cheetham
NSW Manager - Policy and Programs