

Submission
No 204

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation:

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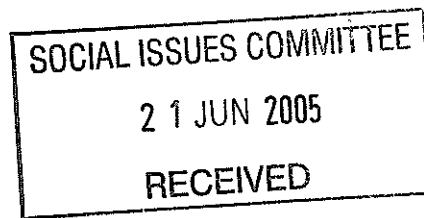
Theme:

Summary

B/

20th June, 2005

The Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council, NSW Parliament
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY. NSW 2000



Dear Sir/Madam,

**re: The Inquiry by the Standing Committee on Social Issues
into Dental Health**

I have been employed by Sydney West Area Health Service (formerly Western Sydney Area Health Service) at Westmead Centre for Oral Health for 15 years and have long been concerned about the degrading state of dental health, service and education. I welcome the Upper House Inquiry into this neglected area of health care.

My role at WCOH is to support staff of the Faculty of Dentistry involved with the clinical training of senior students. As such one of my main concerns is the inability of WCOH to offer financially attractive packages to experienced dentists as an encouragement for them to work in the public system and consequently to be available for teaching. The majority of the Dental Officers are only first or second year graduates and are not experienced enough to supervise students. It is dentists with a number of years in general practice, as well as specialists, who are required in our student clinics and these now need to be sourced entirely from private practice. It is very worrying when the State's major teaching hospital cannot provide staff for teaching.

In recent years the Faculty of Dentistry has built a rural placement program into the final year of the course, initially as an elective, to give students a taste of rural life and practice, to broaden their view of dentistry and in the hope that some will be inspired to work in a rural area. This has had some success with a number of students opting to work in rural areas, but only in private practice. The program relies on the rural Area Health Services having a dentist who is able to supervise the students. If circumstances change just prior to a planned placement leaving no dentist available, new arrangements have to be quickly made as the rural placement is now a requirement of the course. Again more finance needs to be directed to the Oral Health Units of rural Area Health Services so that they can offer attractive packages to dentists (as does Queensland Health which takes some of our graduates each year).

Many other areas concern me also such as the patchiness of public dental services with some areas receiving comparatively good care and eligible people in other areas not receiving reasonable access to routine dental care; the lack of adequate preventive dental programs and insufficient fluoridation, as prevention of dental caries should be a basic right of all people in our advanced culture.

I am very disappointed that despite an increase of about one billion dollars for NSW Health in the recent budget, no new funding has been allocated to dental health.

I hope that the current inquiry results in positive action being taken to address these concerns, and expect the State Government to accept its responsibility for ensuring adequate dental health, services and education for New South Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. A. L. Jarvis