

Submission
No 36

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation:

Name: Dr Ian McNeill

Telephone:

Date Received: 24/05/2005

Theme:

Summary

SUBMISSION BY DR.I.A.MCNEILL FOR ENQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN N.S.W.

Received S.T.
24 MAY 2005

1. PREAMBLE

Whilst undertaking the MDS course in Orthodontics at the University of Sydney in 1981, I was touched by the number of patients who, because of their financial situation had to travel from inland N.S.W. to receive orthodontic treatment. Some stayed overnight at the People's Palace in George Street Sydney in order to keep their appointment at the UDH on the following day.

I approached Dr Norbert Wright then Chief Dental Officer, Department of Public Health – N.S.W. and I suggested an answer to this problem

- (i) that orthodontic centres be set up at three strategic locations around the state using existing Dental Therapist Clinics as surgeries.
- (ii) that final year MDS students be given use of a car to travel to these centres and administer treatment, as they then had sufficient orthodontic knowledge to carry this out.

Dr Wright enthusiastically embraced this idea and gained the support of Prof. Noel Martin then Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry and Assoc. Prof. (Orthodontics) Keith Godfrey. During 1984 Dr Wright applied for and was granted funds for this service, and also acquired a Ford Laser car in order for me to initiate this scheme – which was appropriately called the Rural Orthodontic Scheme. Thus after travelling around the state assessing suitable centres, I established the pilot scheme at the Dubbo Dental Therapy Clinic. I attended the clinic on a monthly basis and soon had a list of contented patients undergoing treatment.

Sadly during 1985 Dr Wright passed away and his position was given to a Dr W. Winspear in 1986. Dr Winspear had other ideas and informed me

- (a) That the scheme would be now known as the State Orthodontic Scheme.
- (b) That he would be solely in charge of this activity and thus my services were no longer required.

Disappointed with this decision I resigned from the Public Service not long afterwards and went into private practice. Some time later Dr Windspear resigned and I believe the service no longer exists.

2. PROPOSAL

Thought should be given to the establishment of a similar scheme. I believe it would not be too costly and would be of great benefit to the underprivileged rural community. The re-establishment of the scheme requires debate and as I am now retired I would voluntarily give my services to help administer such a scheme.

3. SUGGESTIONS

Having worked in the Public Service I realised very quickly that “services given for nothing are worth nothing” What I am saying is that a co-payment (by the patient) for any form of dentistry is mandatory. No matter how small the payment the treatment is then considered by the patient to be of value. A strict check on patients eligible for treatment must be maintained, as I have seen clear breaches wherein patients claiming subsidised treatment were not eligible