

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

ADEQUACY AND AVAILABILITY OF DENTAL SERVICES IN REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT PERTH
MONDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2001**

FOURTH SESSION

Members

Mrs Martin (Chairman)
Mr Board (Deputy Chairman)
Mr Ainsworth
Mr Andrews
Mr Hill

BOYD, DR NICHOLAS,
State Branch President, Australian Dental Association,
54 Havelock Street,
Perth, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Good morning. Before we can commence this part of the hearing, I am required to ask whether you have completed the Details of Witness form.

Dr Boyd: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you read the information for witness sheets provided to you?

Dr Boyd: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions about these?

Dr Boyd: No.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the standing committee, I take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to appear before us today. As you are aware, the committee is conducting an inquiry into the adequacy and availability of dental services in regional, rural and remote Western Australia. Your submission is of particular interest and we have asked that you attend here today to discuss the information further.

Mr ANDREWS: Can you give us your overall impression of the number of dentists practising in Western Australia?

Dr Boyd: I understand that there are about 900 registered dentists, of whom 800-odd are members of the Australian Dental Association. Obviously, the vast majority of them work in either metropolitan Perth or the large rural centres. The distribution in the smaller centres is fairly sparse. I will leap to the fourth question that I was given, as I think it is pertinent to this discussion. It said that the submission acknowledged a shortage of dental practitioners in rural Western Australia; yet the web site of the Australian Dental Association states that opportunities for employment in the dental profession in Australia are extremely limited as there is an oversupply of dentists in all States. I spent the weekend trying to find the statement on the web. I spoke to the federal executive officer. Apparently that statement was withdrawn a week ago because the association realised that it was inaccurate. It was based on information from the commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care in the 1990s. There is certainly some evidence from Professor Spencer's group that the number of dentists per capita is declining. When I came to Western Australia, the output of dentists from the Dental School did not meet the growth in population. That is why the intake was increased from 35 to 40 to 45. That is the key to the long-term provision of oral health coverage in the State. As a staff member at the school, I am not convinced that the school is sustainable in its current configuration.

Mr ANDREWS: Can you elaborate on that?

Dr Boyd: I am a bit concerned. I do not know whether this should be done in closed session.

The CHAIRMAN: Dr Boyd, if you would like, we can close this part of the hearing.

Dr Boyd: That would be good.

[The Committee took evidence in private.]