

11 April 2012

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re SENATE INQUIRY ENHANCED PRIMARY CARE SCHEME
 UNJUST TREATMENT OF DENTISTS**

As a Labor voter I am disgusted by the misuse of power by the Labor Party to boost its coffers by exploiting the fine print of the Enhanced Primary Care Scheme.

As a Practice Manager working in a specialist dental practice we do our best to abide by the rules.

The rules demand that every aspect of a patient's treatment be reported, in writing, to the referring doctor. Because we are a specialist dental practice (oral surgery) this means two referring doctors: The prime referrer, the medical practitioner as well as the secondary referrer, the dental practitioner. Therefore, a minimum of two letters are needed after each stage of the patient's treatment. If further medical advice is needed, for example from a Cardiologist, Radiologist, Ophthalmologist etc then a third letter is needed and so the paperwork goes on. Commonsense would suggest that often providing a copy of a letter to a doctor would suffice, keeping the doctor informed of a patient's treatment. This is not allowed under the current system.

The mountains of paperwork created is also not in keeping with the Labor Party's thrust for saving the environment and is in fact is quite hypocritical.

The Oral Surgeon and staff I have the pleasure to work with do their utmost to provide the most professional care we can for our patients. Our primary goal is, and should remain, to help people not being crippled and overwhelmed with unnecessary and time consuming paperwork. Most dental practices are run as a small business with small numbers of dedicated staff who work long hours. We are trying to help the chronically ill, by providing care for patients in a very flawed system.

On that note, our staff have found seeking answers from Medicare staff related to the Enhanced Primary Care Scheme most unsatisfactory. The Medicare staff we have contacted have been very confused about the scheme and have not been able to provide succinct answers. The information provided on the scheme has been confusing and cumbersome and hard to access.

The dentists who abuse the Enhanced Primary Care Scheme are in the minority not the majority. An oversight with paperwork should be treated as such and not used as an excuse to financially ruin practices placing further stress on others in the profession.

Forgive me for wondering if ideas such as the Enhanced Primary Care Scheme are nothing more than political grand standing rather than aimed at helping those for whom the scheme is intended. The current system is now a nightmare to use and will make those in dentistry afraid to use it.

I strongly support the Shadow Minister for Health, Mr Peter Dutton, and others, to change current legislation related to Enhanced Primary Care Scheme. A fairer system is needed. The dental profession should be judged on its quality of care to patients not its paperwork.

Yours faithfully

SUZANNE ROBERTS