

Submission Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT

Dental Services Bill 2012

As a private citizen with an interest in dental services for those with chronic dental issues I wish to add my voice to those who see the utter ineptitude in the processes adopted by our present government in the implementation of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. This includes

- Under estimation of the need in the community for the chronic dental treatment program.
- lack of defined process and clear information when rolling the program out to dentists
- when it became obvious of the high level of recipients need for service the governments response was to find ways to rein in the cost blow out through their auditing process
- the draconian auditing with consequences to dentists with the unfair penalties for failure to comply with a strict administrative requirement.
- A requirement which was not clearly explained to the Dental Profession by the Department by its own omission.

It is reported that the program has provided dental treatment to almost one million people who qualify as being in need of chronic dental treatment.

No wonder Medicare Audit process were enacted to find ways in which it could recoup this money from individual dentists.

However that Audit process also found and has been admitted by spoke persons within Medicare that the system was short on supplying the information about its processes and requirements for treatment plans being written up and sent to the LMO.

Departmental Education to Dentists was found to be lacking by the Departments own internal Audit.

Information at hand from the ADA still finds that some of its members are still unaware of the strict administrative requirement of the scheme. Introduced in 2007 and in 2012 the Department still has not communicated its systems and processes in order for the knowledge to be fully comprehended by all.

It is reported that a majority of Dentists will though the audit process be found to be non compliant and there fore subjected to bullying, harassment and slanderous tactics used by those who implement the bureaucratic processes that requires a reduction to the programs costs by attacking individuals and make them pay back the monies now reassigned as engaging in fraudulent practices. The language suits the bully mentality that has been adopted against a group of professionals providing relief for those with chronic dental issues.

We need these bureaucratic departments to be accredited, with transparent auditing and clearly defined program outcomes. What a difference this could make with the Department accountable through the very processes it demands from others.

Medicare is well renowned when its costs increase over budget, they change the goal posts, triggers assigned where validation visits and audits are undertaken with the specific purpose of reducing the income and recovering an amount of monies paid for the services your organisation has provided, in this case dentists.

One of the dentists involved who has been subjected to demands for repayment, stress, disbelief in the systems and legal costs, is the same person who provides pro bono care for those who have no opportunity to even get to a dentist.

When a dentist who gives their time and expertise to treat patients with chronic dental problems with a reduced recompense from Medicare (as against some private practices who engage in expensive treatment plans and salesmanship) and is singled out for an administrative oversight, then I sincerely believe there is something very wrong with the understanding between the bureaucracy and the delivery of welfare and health programs.

At the very least the above process undermines the funder mental of and what it means to establish partnerships, and move with confidence to implement future programs by working together for the betterment for the community.

Worse still is the damage personally done to members of the dental profession, the legal fees bankruptcy closure of practices and the good will of the profession has been and still is subjected to the horrific bureaucratic process to be endured by receiving a non compliant for an action that can at best be described as an honest omission of some inadvertent misunderstood paperwork which had not been clearly explained to the professional community. Why is this the case?

Please consider the issues here and where a wrong has been attributed (and admitted by the Department themselves) in the first place that the information and education was not sufficient to inform the dentists to fulfil the correct processes and procedures as set out by the Department.

Please support the Dental Services Bill 2012, and put into place a system where the Department can clearly distinguish and investigate between those roting the system for own financial gain and those who have a failure to complete required paper work before attending to the patients dental needs.

Publically the Department owes the Profession and the Australian citizens an apology for its ineptitude and mismanagement of what could have been a very good dental scheme.

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