
1st April 2012

SUBMISSION regarding HEALTH INSURANCE (DENTAL SERVICES) BILL 2012 [No. 2]

My perspective regarding the Medicare audits relating to the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) is from that of spouse, and practice worker. I have observed first-hand the unfolding of this most unbelievable situation, and have been completely and totally amazed by how bureaucracy can make even the clearest and simplest of situations appear complicated and complex.

The intention of the scheme was valid and admirable – that is, providing financial assistance for dental care, for those in our community struggling with chronic illnesses. What can go wrong? Well, apparently the take-up of the scheme was overwhelming, and consequently the budget has been blown.

The Government finds itself in somewhat of a predicament. How to control the budget blow-outs? Such a dilemma. I can just imagine the 'round table' 'think tank'. Labor decides that the budget is getting out of hand, and strategizes that the way to rein it in, would be to hit the provider of the scheme. **The one who has done all the work.** Accuse them of improper administration, make them the bad guy, and make a grab to reclaim funds that have been legitimately claimed under the scheme.

Audits!! Let's apply the letter of the law to such an extent that it's almost impossible that any of them will have complied 100%. Then, let's not just fine them, but let's recoup ALL the money that we paid them! Too bad that they have **paid expenses, paid staff, completed legitimate and excellent work on the very people that the scheme was intended to help!** Too bad for them.

It is quite simply outrageous that Medicare/Government can approach practitioners years later, with a poorly concealed grab for cash.

The unerring result of these audits is that we are being asked for TOTAL REFUND of all fees for patients treated under the CDDS. Dental practices are being attacked, and placed under severe financial strain, due to nothing more than minor paperwork errors which occurred almost entirely due to a poorly communicated scheme. The result, which we all have to be majorly concerned about, is that dentists (and their families don't forget!!) are being asked to repay tens of thousands of dollars, in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars, for legitimate, and much-needed dental work that was completed under the scheme.

To be falsely accused of anything is unconscionable. To be falsely accused, and then penalized to a life-shattering, financial-ruining extent is unfathomable.

Politicians need to be fully aware that their political shenanigans are not just a game to be played out in the halls of parliament house, but are affecting people's day to day lives. When Tanya Plibersek and/or Brendon O'Connor are accusing dentists generally, in a broad and sweeping generalization of roting, they are pointing their fingers directly at our family, and I have to believe that they know they are playing political chess with our lives. **There was NO RORTING. Not by our practice.**

The strain that families are experiencing is severe. But finally, a glimmer of hope. Shadow Minister for Health Peter Dutton has submitted a BILL attempting to address the blatant unfairness of the letter of the law. He is supported not only by his Liberal colleagues, but by Senator Richard Di Natale and the Greens. They are attempting to take away the politicization of this issue, and restore some balance and commonsense, which to this point, let's be honest, has been sorely missing. I submit that this adjustment to the legislation is vital, and I support it whole-heartedly.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours truly,

Lesley Antolos