

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-442

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: PUBLIC DENTAL WORKFORCE

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Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

With dentists being only part of the dental workforce what are the statistics/profile in relation to the overall public system dental workforce?

Answer:

Information on the dental workforce comes from the annual Dental Labour Force Surveys, which are collated and reported by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The most recent available data are for 2006 and these are provided in the table below.

	Number practising	Number - main practice in the public sector	Characteristics
Dentist	10,404	1,647	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15.8% (1,647) of dentists had their main practice location in the public system. • In relation to all areas of practice, 13.3% (1,386) of dentists practised only in the public sector and 8.6% (895) practised in both public and private sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Of these, a greater proportion of female dentists (37.1%) worked in both public and private sectors and averaging 37.7 years of age, compared with 25.5% practising only in the private sector and averaging 38.9 years of age. – Around 33.4% in the public sector worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week), compared with 26.4% in the private sector. – Of the 10,404 practising dentists, 1,328 were classified as practising specialists, of which 12.0% (160) worked in the public sector while 17.8% (237) worked in both public and private sectors.
Dental Hygienist	674	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.3% of hygienists had their main practice location in the public sector. • Based on all areas of practice, 5.6% (38) hygienists worked only in the public sector, with 88.3% of these hygienists being female and averaging 40.0 years of age. • 5.9% of hygienists worked in both the public and private sectors, with 93.1% of these hygienists being female and averaging 39.4 years of age.
Dental Therapists	1,171	959	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81.9% (959) of dental therapists had their main practice location in the public sector, with 60.4% of these therapists employed in public school dental services and 16.2% in public community dental clinics. • Based on all areas of practice, 928 therapists worked only in the public sector, with 98.7% of these therapists being female and averaging 43.3 years of age. • 49 therapists worked in both the public and private sectors, with 97.3% of these therapists being female and averaging 42.7 years of age.
Oral Health Therapists	371	141	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38.0% of oral health therapists had their main practice location in the public sector, with 90.1% of these therapists employed in public school dental services and the remainder in public community dental clinics, dental hospitals and teaching institutions. • Based on all practice locations 104 therapists worked only in the public sector, with 91.6% of

			<p>these being female averaging 38.1 years of age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82 of these therapists worked in both the public and private sectors, with 97.2% being female and averaging 42.8 years of age.
Dental Prosthetists	921	79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.5% (79) of dental prosthetists had their main practice location in the public sector, of these 82.3% worked in government clinics or laboratories, with the remainder working in education. • Based on all practice locations 46 prosthetists worked only in the public sector, with 18.2% of these being female averaging 41.4 years of age. • 54 of these prosthetists worked in both the public and private sectors, with 17.2% being female and averaging 48.4 years of age.