

30 April 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re Caring for Older Australians

Access to dental treatment for older Australians is a real issue for many. In terms of affordability, Veterans and/or their widows may be covered for dental treatment with Gold cards through Veterans' Affairs, aged pensioners need to be placed on a Waiting List with their respective state/territory government, some may be able to receive some benefits with private health insurance funds, some may be able to receive dental treatment under the current Enhanced Primary Care through Medicare, and others have to pay upfront fees to a private providers – dentists, hygienists, technicians and prosthetists.

However, access to dental care is more of a problem. Many people in nursing homes or in their own home, do not have suitable transport to and from a dental facility. Other questions also arise – who's responsibility is it to pay for this transport and whose responsibility is it if there is an accident? It is also very difficult for dental providers to perform dental treatment in aged care facilities or in older Australians' homes. This is a possibility with mobile dental units and mobile dental equipment – who provides this dental equipment? More importantly, dental providers need to be willing and able to visit people in nursing homes or in their own home and someone has to pay for the dental treatment provided.

Dental and oral health therapists have the skills and knowledge to assist in caring for older Australians if regulatory constraints to limit and exclude their practice were removed. Please contact me to discuss possible options for dental and oral health therapists to care for older Australians.

Yours faithfully,

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