

DENTAL TREATMENT - WAITING LISTS IN PUBLIC SYSTEM

1744. Mr P.D. Omodei to the Minister for Health

- (1) How many people are waiting for dental work through the public system?
- (2) How many of these people have been waiting -
  - (a) up to 3 months;
  - (b) up to 6 months;
  - (c) up to 12 months; and
  - (d) more than 12 months?

Mr J.A. McGINTY replied:

- (1) On 30 November 2006, 12,017 people were on the public dental services waiting list.  
After the Howard Government ceased the Commonwealth Dental Health Program in December 1996, public dental waiting lists grew from about 7,000 with a three month average wait time to about 25,000 with a 17.3 month average wait time in January 2004, even though State governments had maintained funding levels to State dental programs. Additional State Government funding of \$2.3 million for January 2004 through to 30 June 2005 and a further four year commitment of \$1 million per financial year ending 30 June 2009 has been put in place. This has seen the waiting list at about 12,000 (8.5 months average wait time) as at 30 November 2006.
- (2)
  - (a) People waiting up to three months:  
3,987 in 2004  
4,003 in 2005  
3,728 in 2006.
  - (b) People waiting three to six months:  
4,571 in 2004  
3,263 in 2005  
2,926 in 2006.
  - (c) People waiting six to 12 months:  
4,061 people in 2004  
1,892 people in 2005  
2,473 people in 2006.
  - (d) People waiting more than 12 months:  
Not known in 2004  
2,930 people in 2005  
2,890 people in 2006.

There is an international shortage of dentists. Advertising for dentists in Western Australia is occurring internationally and nationally. Recruitment of dentists to Geraldton, Bunbury, Busselton and Albany will rapidly resolve waiting lists of greater than 12 months. A dentist has been recruited for Geraldton and is expected to commence in April 2007.

The current dental clinic in Bunbury has six chairs. A new 10 chair dental clinic at Bunbury is under construction, with an expected completion date of October 2007.

Increased levels of care are being obtained from the private sector through the metropolitan patients' dental subsidy scheme and the country patients' dental subsidy scheme.