



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

DELEGATE'S REPORT

12th June 2007

DR1	NORTHERN NSW ORAL HEALTH NETWORK
FILE: 265	CLR JHB {Folio No. *}

SUMMARY:

Reporting on attendance at a Service Partner Workshop held in Kempsey on Tuesday 29th May 2007. Ms Gabi Brie, Acting Manager, Community and Lifestyle was also in attendance.

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DESCRIPTION:

The Northern NSW Oral health Network is developing a five (5) year plan for its participating Oral Health Services in Hunter / New England and North Coast Areas and those in attendance at the workshop were invited to comment on issues of local significance.

Issues included were: -

- Inadequate funding
- Shortage of dental health professionals
- Lack of infrastructure for training of such professionals
- Long waiting lists
- Voucher value for external procedures inadequate
- Insufficient number of patients with private insurance
- Dental procedures not covered by Medicare
- Dental health part of overall health which lacks adequate recognition of government
- Low socio-economic status
- Transport
- Access
- Loss of mobile dental services
- Service delivery to remote communities
- Pain management for patients on opiates
- Lack of adequate health promotion
- Lack of education on oral hygiene or nutrition

The workshop clearly identified that increased resources are urgently required, promotion of Oral Health issues to enable early detection, intervention and preventative measures are prioritised and education procedures are undertaken on a continuing basis of diet and personal hygiene.

It would be fair to say that Oral Health has been down graded by both Federal and State Governments over the years.

Local Government on behalf of the communities served should assume the role of driver to ensure that Oral Health is given serious consideration in the provision of the essential infrastructure.

It is noted that whilst a government plan to tackle the growing public dental crises in NSW by increasing student numbers by 40% it appears universities may not be equipped to meet the challenge.

Reference was made to the increasing dental crises amongst the Aboriginal Community being 3.5% in NSW and 2.1% nationally.

Kempsey Shires' Aboriginal community is estimated at 8.5% and demands greater consideration.

The current policy document of the Shires Association of NSW provides

'In addition Local Government seeks the NSW and Australian Governments to provide significantly enhanced funding of public dental services in NSW, particularly in rural areas, aimed at improved preventative programs, reduced waiting times for treatment, improved access to emergency services and reducing public dentist shortage'

With the Hunter / New England and North Coast Area Health Services developing 5 year plans for Oral Health Services it would be timely to solicit state wide support for recognition and implementation of the Association's policy.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

Nil

- ***Social***

Improved Oral Health will undoubtedly assist with the overall health of the community.

- ***Economic (Financial)***

Nil

- ***Policy or Statutory***

Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **That a copy of this report be forwarded to the Shires Association of NSW with a request that state wide support be solicited for a substantial increase in resources to address Oral Health Services within NSW.**

2. That an appropriate motion be submitted to the annual conference of the Local Government Association of NSW and the Australian Local Government Association calling on both Federal and State Governments to adequately address Oral Health services by the provision of the required resources as a matter of urgency.
3. That the Aboriginal Medical Services through the Durri Aboriginal Medical Services be invited to support Kempsey Shire Council.

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COUNCILLOR J H BOWELL