

07/07/07

Dear Senators

INQUIRY INTO THE COST OF LIVING PRESSURES
ON OLDER AUSTRALIANS

I will confine my submission to the subject of DENTAL CARE.

When the Howard Government came to power in 1996, they arbitrarily terminated the scheme whereby pensioners such as myself, could obtain a voucher towards a portion of the cost of dental treatment from a private practitioner.. No reason was given for this decision, though the motive was probably cost saving. I took advantage of this scheme, though not every dentist participated in it.

Since then, however, as I value the health of my teeth (no dentures), I have paid for private treatment which on a widow's pension means some curtailment of the pleasures of life, but that of course is my choice. I cannot afford private health insurance.

Treatment at the Melbourne Dental Hospital and local community health centres entails long waiting lists except for emergency treatment. Dentures may be fitted and help given towards the cost, but nothing to help those who wish to preserve the health of their own teeth.

I suggest two remedies for this situation:

Dental treatment be included with Medicare benefits for pensioners,
OR
(if this would strain the Federal budget)

A return to the voucher system.

Yours hopefully

Forrest J. Gavin

