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Dr John Lockwood  
Chairman  
Dental Board of Australia

**Re: Scope of Practice Public Consultation**

After 30 years of caring as a general dentist for my patients I look forward with greater concern than ever before. Caring for each patient as I would a family member has been my focus and until recently I was encouraging my children to consider Dentistry as a career option. With the evolution of Universities maximising profits by educating Dental Therapists and now the Dental Board changing scope, where are our young General Dentist positioned?

Who dares to have a conscience for the ever-increasing number of Dental Graduates, from the numerous universities, who can't find jobs? The government flooded the market with overseas Dentists. Now Universities and the Dental Board plan to over saturate the market. Who is left to care about the quality of Australian Dentistry? Clearly not the Dental Board, nor the Universities.

It seems that Dental Specialists and Academics who drive these decisions are devoid of the understanding of the grass roots care that ordinary Australians need. Managing dental care has become more demanding within the general suburban practice where the largely ageing population have complex medical needs to negotiate. Changing structures within the dental profession that safeguard patient care is most unwise.

Over the years of private practice, I have been privileged to mentor younger dentists and realise the crucial role this plays in shaping their path. The errors, limited vision, omissions and lack of experience that compromise treatment and patient care are an ongoing dynamic that occupies my time. The post-graduate Dentists in recent years bring even more compromised skills when they begin their careers. I recall a conversation with Professor Peter Duckmanton about the lack of abilities of young graduates as they enter the Profession and he said "you need to hold their hand a little more these days"!!! Then the intentions of the Dental Board seem to be more than unwise. If academically able post-graduate Dentist are challenged by routine patient

care, how might less qualified dental staff manage without adequate support? It is clear to me, like the Universities, money and power play are driving these changes to the detriment of dental care for ordinary Australians.

About two years ago I happened to arrive at a course given by a Dental Therapist. Though the day was professionally unrewarding I gained valuable insight and recall how limited the material presented was. The lack of depth of scientific knowledge and the limited ability to understand relevant medical and dental implications touched upon confirmed for me that employing a Dentist gave my suburban patients much better care than an Hygienist or Dental Therapist, even when they needed a routine scale and prophylaxis. Treatments this Hygienist exercised within her scope of practice were unorthodox. Amidst many she casually discussed in her lecture, she would massage a patient's jaw and charge \$100 if they seemed to have an "issue". I would much rather a Dentist do a comprehensive examination and move toward a diagnosis and options of management. Then no harm might be done due to limited vision. When the management of a pregnant lady arose, I was appalled at the void in understanding of the consequences for this patient's management and the possible risks to the unborn baby. It was a day of realisation for me that Dental Therapists and Hygienists do need to work with a Dentist to guide them.

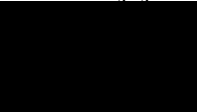
As the world of managing dental patients becomes more complicated it appears the Dental Board wants to eliminate the structures that protect our dental patients. In caring for my dental patients for 30 years with integrity and evolving with the dynamic evolution of the profession without any marketing, I rest well in the knowledge my patients are well cared for. The outlook you offer as the Dental Board is bleak and my hope for this wonderful profession is completely unravelled.

Personally, as I age with my teeth, who will care for me with integrity and deep understanding of my medical and dental needs? I cannot commend Dentistry as the vocation and profession I have been privileged to live and learn with to any young person, not even to my own children.

I hope that wisdom and integrity will enlighten those who wield such power to change the protective scope of practice that exists. That goodwill for patient care be the priority and not less honourable intentions from individuals or groups who seem to easily influence the individuals in positions of privilege.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this letter for your consideration.  
I offer it in good faith.

Sincerely yours,



Junette Burke