



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL
ASSOCIATION INC.

**Submission to The Australian Commission on Safety
and Quality in Health Care
on the
Draft National Patient Charter of Rights**

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**Authorised by
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Submission to Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in
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The Australian Dental Association Inc (ADA) thanks the Commission for the opportunity to provide comment on the Draft National Patient Charter of Rights.

The Australian Dental Association (ADA) is the peak national professional body representing about 10,000 registered dentists engaged in clinical practice. ADA members work in both the public and private sectors. The primary objectives of the ADA are to promote the practice of evidence-based dentistry and encourage access for all Australians to affordable preventive oral care. There is a Branch of the ADA Inc in all States and Territories other than in the ACT, with individual dentists belonging to both their home Branch and the national body. Further information on the activities of the ADA and its Branches can be found at www.ada.org.au

The ADA provides the following comments in relation to the Draft National Patient Charter of Rights.

Rights of patients and health care providers should be balanced

The ADA supports the creation of a National Patient Charter of Rights which sets out the key rights of patients when receiving care. However with rights come responsibilities and so these should also be spelt out. The primary responsibility of dentists is the health, welfare and safety of their patients. Recognising fundamental patient rights – both individually and collectively is one of the core values and commitments of the dental profession. However, it is important that the rights of both patients and healthcare providers are balanced and this point ought to be incorporated in the paper. Whilst the ADA recognizes the basic rights of patients, healthcare providers have equal rights. In the same way both parties have responsibilities and obligations to achieve optimum health outcomes. Mutual recognition of rights and responsibilities should be made clear in the paper.

One could argue that having a patient charter of rights and responsibilities and also a provider charter of rights and responsibilities is creating an adversarial position. To avoid the creation of this sense but at the same time maintain the objective of achieving good health outcomes, patients and providers should work in partnership. Therefore to recognise the mutuality of the relationship may be a more productive way forward. An alternative to a separate charter of rights and responsibilities for patients and providers is a single patient-provider relationship charter.

Self managed care

Basic patients' rights must be balanced by acknowledging their responsibility for safeguarding and managing their own health. In the area of oral health care, patients have an obligation to:

- give the necessary priority to oral health and accept their responsibility for their own oral health;
- acknowledge the reality and limits of individual oral health care;
- understand the variance in how oral health care can be legitimately delivered;
- know their rights as patients and the limitations of these rights.

Practice accreditation standard

The ADA believes that the creation of a practice accreditation standard on the topic would be advisable as would the development of criteria upon which accreditation can be measured.

Recognition of office based private practice for dentistry

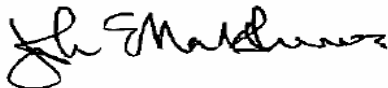
It is noted that the National Patient Charter of Rights is focused on the public sector environment. In 2003 of the 9,678 practising dentists, 82.0% worked in the private sector compared to 15.5% in the public sector.¹ In the field of dentistry therefore, there must be recognition that the office based environment differs from the public sector.

FDI Policy Statements

The ADA also provides the following policy statements from the FDI World Dental Federation which may be of interest to the Commission. These include, *The basic rights and responsibilities of dental patients* and *The basic rights and responsibilities of dentists* which were adopted by the FDI General Assembly on 26th October 2007. The main roles of the FDI are:

- to bring together the world of dentistry;
- to represent the dental profession of the world; and
- to stimulate and facilitate the exchange of information across all borders with the aim of optimal oral health for all people.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



Dr John E Matthews
Federal President

¹ Teusner, D and Chrisopoulos, S (2006) 'Australian dentist labour force 2003', *Australian Dental Journal*, 51 (2) pp 191-194.