



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

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DENTAL CARE FOR WAR VETERANS IS SINKING

The principle under which the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Scheme is said to operate is on the basis that **this nation's worthy veterans should have the same access and standards of dental care as any private dental patient.** Notwithstanding this very noble and worthy sentiment, the DVA's actions over recent years do not support this.

For some time DVA officers have conceded that often fees paid for dental services to Veterans are below cost and that dentists are providing these services to the recipients at the dentists' own expense. Whilst there is no compulsion to sign up to be a dentist under the Scheme (LDO), many members of the Australian Dental Association Inc. (the ADA represents about 95% of all practicing dentists) have done so for years to ensure that Veterans and their families get the best possible dental care available.

The ADA believes that if the Government does not urgently adequately fund the Scheme it will eventually fade away. No matter how generous a LDO may be, no dentist can afford to treat patients at a discount of over 30%.

The ADA seriously wonders if the real intent of the Federal Government is to gradually run down the Veterans' Affairs Scheme and move the treatment of Veterans to the public State and Territory dental systems.

Examination of information obtained by the ADA reveals:

1. The average overhead expended by a dental surgeon in the conduct of their private practice was 64%.
2. There is a range of variations between the DVA fees and average fees of between 10% and 52% with the DVA fees always being lower.
3. The average variation between the two is about 26%.
4. Utilizing the average referred to in the preceding paragraph, the reduction in fees represented by the DVA scales means that for DVA treatment the differential between gross income and overheads for dental practices is effectively increased from 64% to 90% or more.
5. In some cases the dental surgeon receives no income for the treatment provided.

Despite the dental profession being proud to be able to provide their services to Veterans, the state of the scheme that has developed due to the DVA's inaction in addressing this problem, has unfortunately meant that a number of dentists (LDOs) no longer make their services available to Veterans. **Veterans are already suffering due to the Department's inaction and this suffering will continue to increase.**

Overleaf, a table has been prepared setting out the differential between the average fee charged by a dentist for various services and those that are paid by the DVA for services pursuant to the Scheme. This table will reveal the very wide discrepancy that exists between the two. **Immediate action is essential to assist veterans.**

Contacts: Dr Bill O'Reilly, President Mr Robert Boyd-Boland, Chief Executive Officer



COMPARATIVE TABLE OF FEES

Mean Fee as per ADA 2003 (2002 fees) Survey and Current DVA Schedule Fees

| SERVICE | Mean \$ 2003 | DVA FEE | % Difference | Common Procedure Diff>20% | |
|---|--------------|---------|--------------|---|---|
| DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES | | | | | |
| 011 Comprehensive oral examination | 43 | 34.95 | 19 | | |
| 012 Periodic oral examination | 36 | 29.20 | 19 | | |
| PREVENTIVE SERVICES | | | | | |
| 111 Removal of plaque and/or stain | 43 | 36.05 | 16 | | |
| 114 Removal of calculus – 1 st visit | 73 | 48.95 | 33 | * | |
| 121/111 Topical application fluoride (1x treat incl plaque rem) | 45 | 21.70 | 52 | | |
| 151 Provision of mouthguard – indirect | 120 | 90.75 | 24 | | |
| 161 Fissure sealing – per tooth | 37 | 31.65 | 14 | | |
| ORAL SURGERY | | | | | |
| 311 Removal of tooth or part(s) thereof | 100 | 78.80 | 21 | * | |
| ENDODONTICS | | | | | |
| 417 Root canal obturation – one canal | 80 | 62.90 | 21 | | |
| 418 Root canal obturation – each additional canal | 80 | 62.90 | 21 | * | |
| RESTORATIVE SERVICES | | | | | |
| 511 Metallic restoration – 1 surface | 83 | 65.60 | 21 | * | |
| 512 Metallic restoration – 2 surfaces | 101 | 81.60 | 19 | all restorations are common procedures | |
| 513 Metallic restoration – 3 surfaces | 122 | 99 | 19 | | |
| 514 Metallic restoration – 4 surfaces | 141 | 116.4 | 17 | | |
| 515 Metallic restoration – 5 surfaces | 162 | 0 | 17 | | |
| 531 Adhesive restoration – 1 surface – posterior tooth | 99 | 133.9 | 19 | | |
| | 125 | 5 | 17 | | |
| 532 Adhesive restoration – 2 surfaces – posterior tooth | 152 | 80.05 | 16 | | |
| | 171 | 104.1 | 13 | | |
| 533 Adhesive restoration – 3 surfaces – posterior tooth | 194 | 0 | 12 | | |
| | 23 | 127.2 | 17 | | |
| 534 Adhesive restoration – 4 surfaces – posterior tooth | 26 | 0 | 27 | | |
| | 197 | 149.5 | 21 | | |
| 535 Adhesive restoration – 5 surfaces – posterior tooth | | 5 | | | * |
| | | 171.7 | | | * |
| 575 Pin retention – per pin | | 0 | | | |
| 577 Cusp capping – per cusp | | 19 | | | |
| 582 Bonded facing – direct | | 19 | | | |
| | | 154.9 | | | |
| | | 5 | | | |
| CROWN AND BRIDGE | | | | | |
| 615 Full crown – veneered – indirect | 1036 | 981.9 | 10 | * | |
| | | 0 | | 1 only annual limit \$712 | |
| 618 Full crown – metallic – indirect | 957 | | 22 | | |
| 651 Recementing crown or veneer | 82 | 745.5 | 32 | | |
| | | 0 | | * | |
| | | 55.45 | | * | |
| PROSTHODONTICS | | | | | |
| 711 Complete maxillary denture | 770 | 618.2 | 20 | * | |
| 719 Complete maxillary and mandibular dentures | 1369 | 0 | 20 | * | |
| 721/733/731 | 642 | 1098 | 13 | | |
| Partial maxillary resin, 6 teeth, 2 free end saddles, 2 retainers | | 65 | | | |
| | | 559.0 | | | |
| | | 5 | | | |
| GENERAL SERVICES | | | | | |
| 911 Palliative care | 55 | 30.65 | 44 | * | |

*Sample is central 90% of responses (excludes zeros) from General Practitioners [was central 80% less zeros in 2002].