

## MEDIA RELEASE



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION  
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH  
INCORPORATED

### **Dr Mark Hutton Elected as President of the Australian Dental Association SA Branch**

Dr Mark Hutton was elected as President of the Australian Dental Association SA Branch (ADASA) at the Annual General Meeting of the Association held on Thursday evening 20 November 2003.

Dr Hutton a Mt Gambier private practitioner is the first ADASA President residing and practising in a rural area. Dr Hutton said it is an honour to be entrusted with the leadership of ADASA and sees no impediment in performing the role from his Mt Gambier base given modern communications.

Dr Hutton said that two important areas he will focus his energies on are improving access to oral health care for older people and dental workforce issues in particular as they relate to rural and remote areas.

The oral health of South Australia's 13,000 nursing home residents is "disgraceful", according to Dr Hutton.

Dr Hutton has found that the experience of South Australian Dentists has shown that an increasing proportion of South Australian nursing home residents and those in home based care are suffering from untreated dental disease, oral dysfunction and chronic oral pain.

"As a result of poor oral health, nutrition levels among many of our older people have dropped dramatically," Dr Hutton said.

"This is having a significant effect on their general health levels, as well as their independence."

Dr Hutton said in order to address SA dental crisis for older people, the ADASA was calling on the State Government provide an additional \$5 million annually – a small figure in the context of the State's entire health budget.

Recruitment and retention of dentists is a significant issue in rural areas and an emerging issue in the metropolitan area according to Dr Hutton. The Senate Select Committee into Higher Education has failed to address the pleas of the Australian Dental Association Inc in seeking to have the Government's Education package take account of the very significant issues.

"The Senate Committee appears not to want to deal with the problems that exist. The ADA has for some years alerted Health and Education Ministers

and members of Parliament of all persuasions that significant labour shortages were contributing to the enormous delays in the provision of dental care to the community. The Committee was advised of the need for attention to be given to:

- Increasing dental student numbers.
- The training of Dentists to practice in rural and remote areas.
- The need to train dentists to enter the public health area for the delivery of dental care.
- The creation of incentives to students for the achievement of these goals.

None of these has been addressed. If this situation continues, the quality of dental care will deteriorate even further than the current position where Australia has the second worst standard of adult dental health among the OECD countries” said Dr Hutton.

Dr Hutton said he planned to vigorously pursue these crucial issues during his 12 month term as President.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**  
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