



The National Oral Health Plan: Proposals for Implementation

Response to APOH Discussion Document: July 2005

**Associate Professor Debbie Cockrell,
Head of Discipline of Oral Health**





Discipline of Oral Health at the University of Newcastle

- Established in late 2003 in response to identified regional, rural and remote oral health needs
- Unique partnership structure and community focus
- Commitment to multi-disciplinary health education
- Vision for preventive oral health care
- Commitment to development of career pathways for all members of the oral health team



Preamble

- **Challenges and approach uncontested**
- **Consistent evidence base**
- **Past achievements in oral health**
- **Future directions in oral health care**
- **Stakeholders**
- **Commitment to action**



APOH Recommendations - support

- Oral health advocacy
- Promotion of prevention
- Data collection
- Personal and professional incentives (including structured Year 1 experience)
- Medical and Allied Health education
- Flexible appointment (including conjoint appointments)



APOH Recommendations – reservations

- Expansion of metropolitan services
- Mandatory continuing education
- Vision based on existing and historical perspectives
- Mandatory internship
- Academic ‘hubs’ and location
- Representation on APOH



APOH Recommendations – considerations

- **Accountability**
- **Commitment to preventive workforce**
- **Vision based on new models**
- **Student placements**
- **Career Pathways for the entire oral health team**
- **Collaboration / strengthening of professional relations**



It is lamentable that a commitment to prevention is not universal in oral health care. While water fluoridation has had a significant impact on dental caries, there are numerous other preventive strategies available. Prevention of periodontal disease must be a major consideration to address systemic health relationships. If we prevent the preventable, current and projected workforce issues will be irrelevant.

Implementation of a preventive ethos will require a commitment to cooperation and collaboration both within the oral health sector and with other health professionals. A creative response to the current problems and projected needs requires a visionary approach.