

# City vs country practice: Orange, New South Wales

**I**nterest in dental practice sales are often focussed on the capital cities, with many people fighting over practices in popular areas. At the same time, fantastic practices in regional centres or off the beaten track are often overlooked. There are many virtues of regional and rural dentistry in Australia.

In 2016, Dr Francois Bothma sold his very successful practice in West Pennant Hills, Sydney, so that he and his partner could start a new life, with a new practice (and a B&B), in a small town in regional NSW.

## Why did you decide to sell up and move?

**M**y practice in Sydney was incredibly hectic and my partner had a stressful job working for a big pharmaceutical company. We were living about a kilometre away from work, but it could take me anything from 20 minutes to half an hour to get there, because of the roads and traffic. A few years ago, some of our friends passed away unexpectedly and that made us start to re-evaluate our lives somewhat - we both thought that there had to be something different out there. At the time, I think we were exhausted and wanted to move. We wanted to make a lifestyle change.

## Why did you choose Orange?

**W**e knew we wanted a move to the countryside; we wanted a tree change. I grew up in a small town in South Africa and I wanted to move to a town that had some familiarity for me. We came to Orange in 2012 for the first time and just fell in love with the town. It was quaint and reminded me of Stellenbosch, the winelands outside of Cape Town, where I grew up. The food and locally produced wine is fantastic. You can be in the centre of town and within five minutes' drive see farmlands.

## What was the process of buying the practice like in Orange?

**I** called Practice Sale Search and asked what practices they had for sale in the area and they found me a practice that had been around for 30 years and had a very good reputation. I walked in and immediately recognised the potential. Buying the practice was an on-the-spot decision. There were no hassles during the process. The price was set, we did due diligence and there were no surprises or shockwaves. Practice Sale Search has always been good to me like that - I bought my first practice from them too.



## Was it hard to find a place to live and a job for your partner?

**W**hen we came out to buy the practice, we stayed at a small B&B called Boissy. We started speaking to the owners and told them why we were there. They were at retirement age and while we were chatting one day, they told us that they were looking to sell their B&B so that they could retire.

We knew that we were moving to Orange, but we hadn't worked out where we were going to live or what my partner was going to do. After some discussion, we decided to solve both problems, by buying Boissy as well.

We really enjoy it. It is small, only three bedrooms and, because of the way the B&B is operated, it feels like it runs itself. We have always loved entertaining and having people around and running the B&B feels like we regularly have guests in the house.



### Was it a good move lifestyle-wise?

I can walk to work; the quality of life is so wonderful. I never encounter traffic, anywhere in town takes me 10 minutes at the most. I have two-hatted restaurants within 10 minutes' walk of the house and eight other great quality places to eat within walking distance. Countryside people are really welcoming and very warm. You don't ever feel like a stranger within the community.

At the same time, if I want to travel, I live 15 minutes from the airport; I can comfortably leave home 30 minutes before take-off to catch a flight and then it's only a 40 minutes to Sydney.

### How has it been professionally?

I took over from someone who was 65 and some of the staff had been with him for 20 years. Like in most circumstances, after 20 years, they were quite set in their ways. It took some time to win the team over and prove to them that the changes that I was bringing in (renovations, computerisation, a faster pace) were a good thing. It took a while, but they saw the results of what I was doing. My practice manager is an absolute gem. I have been able to grow it 200% in the 18 months that I have been here and the feedback from the patients has been great.

In Sydney, I was a sole operator, but here I am lucky to have an associate and a hygienist. For the first time in practice ownership, I can go on a holiday without needing to worry about my patients.

People think that country practices have issues with recruitment and getting supplies. I can honestly say that these have not been a problem. The employment side of things was easy and when I order supplies, they are here the next day.

Speaking from experience, I personally think it is 100% better owning a practice in a regional town than buying a practice in Sydney. And it's cheaper!

I love my practice and living here. I tell my patients - and everyone I can - that I am living the dream.

*If you feel that you might want a tree change for a practice in regional/rural Australia please, get in touch with Practice Sale Search by email at [info@practicesalesearch.com.au](mailto:info@practicesalesearch.com.au)*

*For more information on The Boissy Bed and Breakfast, please visit [www.bedwithbreakfast.com.au](http://www.bedwithbreakfast.com.au), call: (02) 6361-4667 or e-mail: [info@bedwithbreakfast.com.au](mailto:info@bedwithbreakfast.com.au).*