

# Is there life **after** dental practice ownership?

**Dentists often put off selling their practices because they are concerned about life after dentistry.**

**What will they do with all those extra hours, how will they cope with leaving behind the identity that has defined them for decades? This series of articles explores the very busy lives of some of Practice Sale Search's clients, former practice owners who have embraced post-sale life.**



**Name:** Ina Van Der Merwe

**Age:** I am 64 now, sold in 2020.

**Graduated:** I graduated in 1982 from Pretoria University, South Africa

**Practice Owned:** Balgowlah, NSW

## **Brief Career Summary:**

We decided to come to Australia in May 1986. I did the ADC exams at end of that year and started working for a dentist in Macquarie St in Sydney immediately after that.

In 1991, I started my own practice in a premises in Balgowlah. We operated with three chairs; I always had at least one other dentist working for me.

I did everything - 40 hours of dentistry per week plus all the bookkeeping, payroll, wages - it was a lot of work.

## **Why sell?**

I really enjoyed the patients, and I had good staff, but:

1. The admin was relentless. Every time we went on holiday (we love hiking and fishing) I would get calls that the internet was down or the printer wasn't working. I'd had enough. What really did it for me was when we had to move onto the NBN; we had enormous problems with the transition. That was the last straw.
2. I was so bored with working in a confined space; sitting on a chair ... I am an outdoors person.  
In 2018/19, we hiked the Larapinta

Trail in the NT. I realised then that I didn't want to go back to work. I waited until we'd finished some property development that we were in the middle of, and then called Practice Sale Search.

## **What was the process of selling like?**

Practice Sale Search handled the sale. I met with some prospective dentists who were interested. Many wanted me to stay on and manage the practice, but I didn't want that. The first year I worked four days a week, cutting back Fridays completely. During Covid I stopped working altogether.



## **What have you been doing post sale?**

As soon as I stopped working, we planned our next trip.

First, we went to visit my daughter in the UK.

We love hiking, so we did the South-West Coast trail in the UK.

Then we went to Scotland. I did my international diploma in distilling and brewing - I had planned to make whisky,

but during the course I found an amazing product called Armagnac, a French brandy. We spent a lot of time researching the products, learning about the grapes. We went to all the distilleries in Scotland and then to Ireland and then the Gascone area. We hired bikes and cycled through the whole area, going to different farms and the alembic still manufacturer.

We got our license to manufacture alcohol and bought a big farm in the Snowy Mountains, where we want to put the distillery. The farm currently has nothing on it, but we have drilled for water and got good clean water, and the farm will be powered by solar and gas.

We've hiked the High Pyrenees - we went back for 12 days in August, to hike the high peaks.

I'm 64 and John is 66, now is the time to do it.

## **Do you have any advice for other dentists towards the end of their career?**

My advice would be to just get out of that tiny narrow little world of dentistry, jump the pond!

Do something you enjoy. Plan a reward for yourself and have something to look forward to. Do it while you can!

What was good for me was that I had this plan to be a distiller for a long time and loved hiking.

We are now able to fulfil those parts of our lives and taste that freedom and reward.