

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: Dr Jeff Swann

Age: I was 64 when I sold

Practice Owned: Darwin Orthodontics

When did it sell? 2019

Tell me about your practice:

Over time I had built a very small part-time practice in Darwin into a big practice - five chairs in the city, two chairs in Palmerston (about 20 km from Darwin). My partner in Palmerston was Dr Mark Ledham. We went to dental school together and have been friends for 50 years.

Why did you sell?

It had been 26 years in one place.

It was a busy time, I was working 5-6 days a week, between the clinical and admin involved in running the business. I got a bit tired of it all, I was overstressed and overwhelmed.

At the same time, in early 2019, I had a bad motorcycle accident. I fell off a dirt bike and hit a log, broke my clavicle, scapula and five ribs; I was off work for six weeks and it got me thinking about selling.

I spoke to my partner, Dr Ledham, and we decided to put the whole thing on the market as a package. We went to PSS, after

being recommended by someone. They came back with a buyer who put in a good offer, and we thought "why not?" Regional large practices are not easy to sell, so we had to take the opportunity when it arose.

How did you feel after selling?

After selling, the immediate difference was going to work and not having to worry in any way about running the practice. I just walked in and did the same clinical work I'd always done. I love the work, I just felt like it was time to scale back. My contract ended two years ago, but I just finished working now.



What are your plans now?

- ◆ **Studying:** The main reason I do not wish to work that much now is that I am studying Maritime Archaeology at Flinders University. To that end, I will spend more time down in Adelaide as well. I have been doing that for six months and will continue over the next two years. I have some areas of research in that field which I am pursuing - I have a keen interest in shipwrecks.
- ◆ **Diving:** I have been scuba diving for almost 40 years. I am an open water and wreck diver; I am a technical diver, I use rebreather equipment and go on big dives. I'm going to Chuuk Lagoon in Micronesia in September, it's my fifth trip. There is a group out of Melbourne that I dive with.
- ◆ **Motorcycling:** It's a life-long ambition of mine to ride around Australia someday. Up until now, it was always hard to take long holidays because I was worried about the business. I used to do shorter trips and less of them. Now I know I have time to do these things. I am able to do longer trips, whenever I want.
- ◆ **Clinically:** I was thinking that I might do some consulting for the government, to help get their waiting list down. Through the Australian Society of Orthodontics, we run an orthodontic clinic in Timor. I have gone over once a year to do work (and dive). Now that I have the time, I definitely want to be more involved in that. ◆