

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

Name: Roberto Aureli
Age: 70
Graduated: 1970 BDS Sydney University
Practice owned: Martin Place, Sydney NSW

Brief career summary:

I went to Europe as soon as I finished my degree. After working in London for a few years, I returned to Australia at the end of 71. I wasn't ready to come back though, and wanted to go back to Europe. I managed to get a job through the Dean of dentistry at Sydney University, in a maxillofacial unit in Sussex. While working there, I met my wife, and eventually moved back to Australia.

During my first year back in Australia, I worked for a dentist in Marrickville and another in Five Dock. I decided that I wanted a central city practice – I wanted to do 9-5, Monday to Friday, without working Saturdays or evenings. I found a great practice in Martin Place, where I started working as an assistant, with two nice older dentists. After a while they both retired, and I took over the practice, where I ended up practicing for 38 years.

Tell me about your practice:

I was a solo practitioner with two surgeries in Martin Place. I was proud of the practice I built – I had a great, loyal team, with only 3 nurses in 20 years. My last nurse was with me for 18 years. I invested in my practice, ensuring I had the most advanced equipment, like Cerec, lasers, OPG. Over the years I had established a very select clientele, mostly city-based professionals. I was always busy, and was very happy in my practice.

Why did you sell?

I didn't sell because I was ready to retire – in fact, I was far from ready. I loved my job and still had a few years of work ahead of me. Deciding to sell was purely a lifestyle choice. I knew I would have to retire at some stage, and the sooner I did it, the easier it would be to get used to. I am Italian, and go back regularly. I bought a house in Italy eight years ago, with the intention of spending more time there, and realised it would be impossible to do that and run a practice at the same time.



When did you sell?

I sold four years ago, at the end of 2011.

How did you sell?

I sold my practice through Practice Sale Search.

What was the process of selling like?

My practice sold quickly – quicker than I thought. Within two months we had two keen buyers, and I ended up selling to a dentist who bought it six weeks after seeing it. While I was happy with my decision to sell, and the process of selling, saying goodbye was very difficult. I was heartbroken when I walked out of my practice for the last time – but it turned to be an easy adjustment. I was able to let go of it straight away. The hardest part was to get used to not having a regular income.

What now?

I keep really busy. I get a lot of exercise. I read a lot, go to my place in Italy and spend time in the Blue Mountains. I keep my brain active and work as much as I want to. There is never a dull moment I always have something to do. I do miss my patients, but I don't ever wish I hadn't sold. In my experience, dentistry post-sale has been a mixture of locum and charity work.

Locum work:

After selling my practice, I was offered

a job at Justice Health. I work about 35 hours a month as a dentist in jails around the state. It's fantastic and I love it. I get to meet all these amazing, extraordinary people in there, with so many interesting stories.

Charity:

I wasn't involved in any charity work when I was practicing. It never occurred to me, as between my family and my practice I was probably too engrossed in my life, and didn't feel like I had enough time.

I became involved in a volunteer organisation, providing dentistry to an Aboriginal community on the NSW/QLD border (www.fillingthegap.com.au). Working with an indigenous community has really given me a better understanding of their situation and the hardships they have been through. I didn't realise what special people they are until I came in contact with them through this work. I really love them.

I feel like making myself useful like this enriches my life and makes me feel good about myself. I'd like to do more of it. ♦

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