

# 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:** Gary Sludden

**Age:** I was 54 when I sold.

**Graduated:** in Glasgow in 1991

**Practice Owned:** McCrae, Mornington Peninsula

I had always wanted to try living in Australia. I got sucked in by the TV shows and books I read. In 2010, after a few years of working in the UK, my wife and I decided we wanted to make a change, so why not make a big one!

We arrived in Australia in January 2011 with our two kids, who were 5 and 8. We decided that we wanted to live in the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. We had never been, but the area had been recommended to us by other expats that we knew.

I found a job two weeks after arriving. The dentist who owned the practice was already in his 60's. After a while I offered to buy it and he accepted. He worked for me for another four years.

In Christmas 2021 I hit 25 years of running a practice, between the UK and AUS.



Like many practice owners, I was always the practice manager and principal dentist. I had two associates that did four days combined, but one left and the other texted me on the Sunday that he was leaving on Monday to go back to India for a long holiday with no return date. At the same time, I was having trouble finding dental nursing staff and it was the busiest time of year.

I managed to find a locum, but I was incredibly stressed keeping it all together and my wife turned to me and said, "Why are you doing this?"

I started speaking to PSS, held on until July and then said let's do it.



## What was the process of selling like?

It was really easy. Kevin identified three potential buyers, I met each of them. I chose who I wanted to sell to. It was a positive experience.

## What now?

I'm working four days-a-week for the purchasers now.

It takes a while to get used to not being the boss anymore ... but that's what I wanted!

One of the things I enjoy the most is when there is some issue that the boss has to solve, and I realise that it isn't my problem.

- ◆ If something breaks, I don't have to pay to get it fixed
- ◆ Before, if I found out a staff member was leaving, it would have caused sleepless nights. I'd be worried if I would find someone. Now I sleep like a baby.
- ◆ Now, when I get a text message early in the morning, I'm not thinking to myself "OK, who's sick today?"

## Photography

I have been interested in photography since my early 20s, and it became a passion in my 30s. I can't draw or paint! I love shooting the landscapes and sea capes where I am. Since selling, I have become interested in wildlife and bird photography too.

I didn't have much time to dedicate to this until I sold the practice. Now I have a lot more time. ◆

