

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: Ken Gover
Age: 62
Graduated: QLD Uni 1979.

I started off working for the government at the Hospital in Kingaroy, then Mt Isa, and did a bit of work for the flying doctors. In 1984 I went into private practice in Kingaroy, then Murgon, then finally Toowoomba. We went there because we needed a good school for the kids and Murgon felt a bit small in that respect. Toowoomba had schools that seemed more suitable for us.

I worked as an employee dentist for a group practice that had a branch practice and I could see it could be made to work better if someone was there more often, so I offered to buy it. The partners were pleased to see it go. I moved the location twice, first into a converted house and then into a better converted house, to set up a ceramics lab. I eventually sold that in 2003.

By then my younger daughter wanted to go to study at a university in the UK and was nervous to go by herself. I said I would go there and keep her company while she settled in – which she did very quickly and didn't need me around. It was quite a challenge to leave for a year, I didn't know anyone in Cambridge, I didn't have a job there. I turned up and had to shop around for a job, which wasn't actually that hard to find. Living there for a year after Toowoomba was fantastic; I had access to concerts, lectures, seminars, music, etc.

I came back to Australia in 2008, because the GFC seemed to hit my area in England pretty hard. I was working in private dentistry and patients started shifting across to the NHS, so our work dried up a lot. There was an old dentist in Toowoomba who had a part-time practice. I bought it in 2011 and turned

it into a full-time practice with modern equipment.

Why did you sell?

A few years ago I went to the US on a holiday and I picked up a bug while I was away. After nearly dying, I woke up having spent six days on a ventilator. It took a long time before I could even walk. That was a big wake-up call for me. I decided I didn't want to continue building up the practice. I wanted to sell and concentrate on getting healthy again and doing other projects that I was passionate about.

How did you sell?

I contacted Practice Sale Search and spoke to Simon Palmer. I sent him photos and details, and he started sending people to have a look. The process went quickly, which was good, as I had to sell. I needed to have one last bit of corrective surgery which would put me off work for a few months, so was eager to sell before it happened. I'm glad I did, as the recovery process was months.

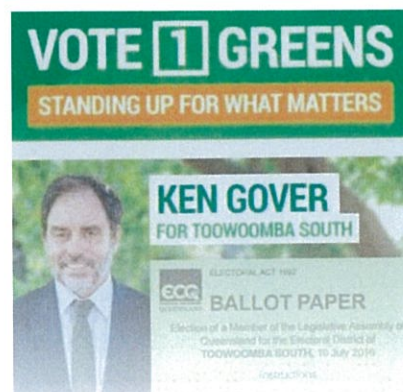
What now?

My political career

I ran for the Greens twice for the seat of Toowoomba North. I am not necessarily a Greenie, but it seemed to me that in Toowoomba we were constantly losing parkland and nice old houses to put up 7-Elevens. I also felt that the coal seam gas industry was bugging up the land around here.

I knew I would never get elected, but I wanted to highlight all these problems. Someone had to talk about things like coal trains running past schools and the kids breathing in the coal dust.

That was my motivation. I didn't even



expect to win 10% of the vote. But I got to be on the radio and talk about issues and problems and talk about misconceptions regarding how much the mining industry was supposedly helping the local community.

What else?

I work as a dentist about eight days a month and do a bit of locum work. That sustains me financially. I live humbly, so I don't need much.



I write cabaret songs – we do cabarets in the style of the movie Cabaret – in Warwick. We did a Christmas cabaret last year. I wrote most of it, and also write short, one-act plays and satirical sketches. They are mostly booked out weeks ahead.

On some of the days I don't work, I restore old cars; I have a collection of 10 classic cars. I race and rally classic cars and I like travelling.

Any regrets

I have no regrets about selling or practicing. I sometimes wonder if I chose the right career but, as much as I like writing and cabaret, I might not have been able to educate my kids and support them as I did, so I think I made the right choice.