

Title	Dental Service Innovation: Transforming Oral Health Services in the Knysna and Bitou Subdistrict
Organisation	Knysna Provincial Hospital, Department of Health, Western Cape Province
Innovation	<p>Dental care in the Knysna and Bitou Sub-district was centralised and inaccessible for a larger part of the population. One main dental facility at Knysna Provincial Hospital served the entire sub-district, while 40% of patients lived in rural areas with limited or no transport. Families often had to choose between paying for transport to reach the clinic or delaying treatment, especially for children. The result was waiting lists exceeding 6 months, delaying urgent care for children in pain. There were also missed school days due to untreated dental infections. At the same time the Department of Health, Western Cape, had a stockpile of redundant dental chairs stored after upgrades in larger facilities. These chairs were still functional but considered obsolete because they lacked permanent installation sites. Building new dental clinics was financially unrealistic due to budget constraints and time-consuming capital approval processes. This created a critical challenge: How could the hospital expand dental services quickly and affordably into rural communities without building new infrastructure or hiring additional staff? This situation revealed a unique opportunity, that if they could repurpose and mobilise unused dental equipment, they could take the service directly to rural clinics, adding 5 new service points at zero capital cost. These rural clinics had available multipurpose rooms (Doctors room, Physio/Dietician consulting room) that could be transformed into dental spaces when needed, then reverted for for other health services when dental teams were not on-site. This approach overcame financial, geographic and operational barriers simultaneously while bringing services closer to the people who need them the most.</p>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are no longer missing school, • Long queues at the provincial hospital's dental centre have been eliminated, • Families do not have to spend money to travel to Kysna Provincial Hospital,