

Fact Sheet 2 – Government Funding Cuts Will Reduce Access to Public Dental Services

Everyone should have the right to access affordable basic dental care in a timely manner, as we do basic medical care. Federal funding of Victorian public dental care has been cut in 2014-2015. Without this funding, the waiting time for basic public dental care will increase

Recommendation: That the Federal Government be urged to honour its earlier commitments to funding public dental care through

- In 2015-17, fully funding the National Partnership Agreement for Adult Public Dental Servicesⁱ*
- Not further restricting access to the Child Dental Benefits Scheduleⁱⁱ (eligibility is determined by eligibility for the Family Tax Benefit, part A)*

Did you know?

- Basic dental care is important for maintaining good oral health, as it helps to prevent tooth decay, so everyone should see the dentist regularly
- Around 340,000 Victorians see a public dentist each yearⁱⁱⁱ, but at least 1.4 Million Victorians are eligible for public care (as determined by low-income and other criteria)^{iv}
- If each person eligible for public dental care sought a basic check-up, it would take six years to treat each person once!

For more information on waiting times for public dental treatment in Victoria see:

<http://performance.health.vic.gov.au/Home/Report.aspx?ReportKey=18>

How does this affect Victorians?

- The reduced Commonwealth funding will reduce Victoria's ability to provide dental care to those who need it, and waiting times for basic public dental care will increase
- If it takes a long time to get dental care, the chances of having poor oral and general health increase
- Tooth decay can lead to pain, difficulty in eating, speaking, embarrassment about broken and unsightly teeth, missing school and work, and finding it hard to get a job. It can lead to infections and make conditions like heart disease and diabetes worse

What is ADAVB doing?

- ADAVB is lobbying State politicians – we are asking them to negotiate a better funding deal with the Commonwealth Government

What can you do?

- Contact your local politicians, the State Minister for Health and the State Shadow Health Minister and tell them how important it is that everyone has access to basic dental care. Ask them to make sure that Victoria gets enough Commonwealth funding to make this possible.
- Contact the Federal Minister for Health and the Federal Treasurer

Click here to send an email to Victorian politicians about the importance of improving funding to Victoria's public dental system: <http://www.adavb.net/?TabId=1395#ADAVB-the-voice-of-dentistry-in-Victoria-0110110100000011>

Electoral comment: see <http://electoralcomment.adavb.org>

ⁱ The National Partnership Agreement (NPA) for Adult Public Dental Services is an agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments, which says that the Commonwealth Government will provide funding to the States for public dental care for adults. This funding was originally planned to begin in the 2014-2015 financial year, but the Commonwealth Government decided to defer this funding until 2015-16 as a cost-saving measure.

ⁱⁱ The Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) is a Commonwealth-funded initiative to provide dental care to children aged 2-17. Eligibility is means tested – children qualify for the CDBS if their family receives the Family Tax Benefit Part A. In the 2014-15 Federal Budget, the Government restricted access to Family Tax Benefit Part A (by changing the income cut-off threshold) as a cost-saving measure.

ⁱⁱⁱ Note that not everyone who is eligible chooses to access public dental care. Reasons for not accessing the public system may include personal choice, long waiting times, or not wanting to pay the required co-payment per visit (from \$26 to \$104). The waiting time for Victorians who are on the public general dental care waiting list is currently 10.2 months. See here for further information: <http://performance.health.vic.gov.au/Home/Report.aspx?ReportKey=18>

^{iv} The University of Adelaide, Public Health Information Development Unit (2014) Social Health Atlas of Australia (2014)