



Victorian  
Oral Health  
Alliance

## Media Release

4 May 2018

# State dental funding a welcome but small step forward for people on public dental waiting lists

The Victorian Oral Health Alliance (VOHA) has welcomed the State Budget announcement of \$267.4 million for public dental services. This is a positive but modest first step in meeting the needs of Victorians eligible for public dental care, many currently waiting in long queues. The increased funding is expected to provide an extra 20,000 client services.

“Whilst this Government has committed to taking action on notable social justice issues, there’s still more work to do to provide timely access to dental care for disadvantaged and vulnerable Victorians,” said Tony McBride, VOHA spokesperson. “The average waiting time for non-emergency care increased by 19% in the last year and is currently at 19.6 months. Despite the welcome funding increase, the Budget papers forecast an even longer waiting time of 23 months next year. This situation has hardly been assisted by the drop in Federal funding – down another 20% for next year.”

A lack of timely care is a key factor in the high number of Victorians going to hospital for conditions that could have been prevented. 16,000 Victorians experience preventable hospitalisation due to dental conditions each year, at a cost of \$60 million. There is also a personal cost. Poor oral health prevents people fully participating in society (e.g. getting a job, going to school), and contributes to poor general health.

Up to 2.5 million Victorians rely on public services for their oral health care, but only around 400,000 receive care each year. VOHA is urging the government to build on the positive news in the Budget papers, by providing sufficient and predictable funding to reduce waiting times to less than 12 months for general care at any public dental clinic and provide access to more eligible Victorians. Further, the system needs to shift to a more preventive and early intervention focus to reduce the need for complex restorative and emergency care.

VOHA is an alliance of health, professional and consumer bodies that have united to urge the Victorian and Australian Governments to reverse the decline in access to public dental care for our most vulnerable people.

## Contact

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