

Media release

30 March 2022

Federal Budget disappointment

- **Budget falls short in addressing gaping hole in public dental funding**
- **A missed opportunity to address one of the key recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission – the introduction of a Medicare Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme**
- **One in four Australians aged 75+ years suffer from untreated tooth decay and 69 per cent have gum disease**
- **Service uncertainty, planning disruptions and job insecurity continue due to lack of public funding commitment**

The Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB) is disappointed that the Federal Budget has again failed to deliver any additional new measures to address dental health.

The budget provided a one-year extension to the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) funding for public dental services, with \$107.8 million to deliver care for an additional 180,000 adult patients in Australia per year. There are more than 150,000 adult patients currently on waiting lists in Victoria alone, with an average waiting time of 25 months, so it is clear that this budget falls well short on what is actually needed to help address the gaping hole in public dental funding.

This is now the fourth successive budget that has extended the NPA dental funding only for a single year. These continuing short-term extensions create significant uncertainty, and the process is costly and inefficient. Planning is disrupted and there is significant job insecurity for staff working in public dental services, impacting on the ability to deliver care in a timely manner.

Public dental agencies are unable to prioritise continuity of patient care, with fragmented treatment focused on emergency care the result. There is an urgent need to reform Commonwealth funding for public dental services with a significant boost to National Partnership Agreement funding over a longer timeframe, to provide state and territory

governments, public dental clinics, staff and patients more certainty.

There was also a missed opportunity to address one of the key recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission – the introduction of a Medicare Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme. One in four Australians aged 75+ years suffer from untreated tooth decay, and 69 per cent have gum disease. Poor oral health impacts on nutrition, well-being and general health. Expanding Medicare to provide access to care for older Australians is an important step in helping to improve oral health across the community.

The Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch will continue to advocate for measures to improve oral health and access to dental care in the lead-up to the federal election.

Media enquiries

Interviews are available with ADAVB President Dr Jeremy Sternson and ADAVB CEO A/Prof Matt Hopcraft.

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