

SUPPLEMENTARY VICTORIAN STATE PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-2021

24 June 2020

To The Hon. Tim Pallas, Treasurer
The Hon. Jenny Mikakos, Minister for Health
Mr Anthony Carbines, Parliamentary Secretary for Health

Contact A/Prof. Matt Hopcraft
Chief Executive Officer, Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch Inc.

INTRODUCTION

This submission provides dental policy and funding recommendations to tackle the impacts of coronavirus on the oral health of Victorians. The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the health and wellbeing of Victorians, and the Victorian economy have been enormous. With the deferral of State Budget announcements to October 2020, a reframing of funding priorities will be necessary.

From March to May 2020 restrictions on the provision of dental care were in place to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission, in line with other measures in the community. This had a profound impact on the dental sector and on patients' access to care. The ADAVB therefore urges the government to provide funding to ensure that public dental patients can have timely access to care.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Conduct a waiting list blitz by**
 - (a) providing an additional \$60 million to fund the provision of dental care to public patients in 2020-2022, and**
 - (b) utilizing capacity in the private sector to ensure that public dental patients receive timely access**
- 2. Continue to fund and support prevention activities**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a waiting list blitz by

- a. **Providing an additional \$60 million to fund the provision of dental care to public patients in 2020-2022, and**
 - b. **Utilizing capacity in the private sector to ensure that public dental patients receive timely access**
- **The ADAVB estimates that the public dental sector is now three months behind in the provision of basic dental care to vulnerable Victorians**
 - **Many more Victorians will have recently become eligible for public dental care due to reduced income and job losses**
 - **Delaying necessary dental care leads to more complex, invasive and costly dental treatment and poor oral and general health**
 - **Outsourcing some public dental care to the private sector will ensure that patients receive timely access.**

At least 80,000 vulnerable Victorians will have missed out on public dental care from March to June 2020 due to coronavirus risk management restrictions on dental care. The state-wide average waiting time for public dental care was 20 months in March 2020 and this will continue to increase as more people seek public dental care. The restrictions imposed on dental practice will see these waiting times increase by at least three months to more than 23 months – higher than the State budget target. The continuing economic impact of the pandemic will increase the number of Victorians eligible for public dental care, where there are already more than one million adults eligible for care. Failure to invest more money into public dental care will place further pressure on public dental agencies.

Private sector dentists can be utilized to assist with a waiting list blitz. Private dental practices have also been significantly impacted by the restrictions on dental care introduced due to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to supporting the health of Victorians, private sector outsourcing would support the economy, and prevent further job losses in the sector. The public dental system will not have the capacity to provide the additional patient visits that have been missed because of coronavirus in addition to the extra demand from more eligible patients. Utilizing the private sector is an efficient and effective way of distributing dental care across the entire sector and avoiding a dental waiting list blowout.

2. Continue to fund and support prevention activities

Oral health promotion and prevention activities have the potential to offer the greatest long-term oral health benefits at the lowest cost. The ADAVB urges the government to build on the strong preventive activities that were already in progress before the pandemic struck. Initiatives such as community water fluoridation, supporting smoking cessation programs, oral cancer screening and prevention, and the food audit in public hospitals and aged care facilities must all continue.



Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch

Level 3, 10 Yarra Street, South Yarra VIC 3141
P: 8825 4600 W: adavb.net E: ask@adavb.org
Reg Assoc # A0022649E ARBN 152948680

CONCLUSION

Good oral health is fundamental to good general health. It allows people to eat, speak and socialise without pain or embarrassment. The ADAVB urges the Victorian Government to ensure that vulnerable Victorians continue to receive the dental care they need and do not fall further behind.

Please do not hesitate to contact the ADAVB CEO, Matt Hopcraft, if you would like to discuss any of the dental policy matters raised in this submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angelo Pacella'.

Dr Angelo Pacella
ADAVB President

 [@AusDentalVic](#)

 [@adavb @adavbceo](#)

 [Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch](#)

 [@AusDentalVic](#)