

# Media release

3 November 2022

## Liberal boost to dental funding will make Victorians smile

The Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB) welcomes the announcement today from Matthew Guy that the Liberal Party will invest additional funding, if elected, to support the ailing public dental system and prioritise the oral health of Victorians.

“Waiting times to access public dental care have surged from 20.3 months in 2018 to 26.7 months in June this year,” said ADAVB President A/Prof Warren Shnider. “These clinically unacceptable waiting times have a significant impact on the oral health of patients, which in turn compromises their general health.”

For too long the public dental sector has been ignored, with only about 220,000 of the 1.5 million eligible adults receiving basic dental care each year. And with long waiting times, there is no opportunity for routine appointments for necessary regular and ongoing care to prevent dental disease and improve oral health. The ADAVB and Victorian Oral Health Alliance have been calling for a major boost in public dental funding for more than four years, recognising that the system is in crisis.

“The pandemic lockdowns prevented people from seeing the dentist, and the oral health of Victorians is suffering as a result. We are calling on Labor, Greens, minor parties and independents to support this positive measure to improve oral health in Victoria,” said A/Prof Shnider. “The waiting list blitz funding earlier this year has taken more than 80,000 people off the waiting list, so additional funding to further reduce the waiting list, using the capacity in the private sector, is an important step. However, what has been lacking is an increase in recurrent funding to ensure a more sustainable approach. We know that following a waiting list blitz, the numbers will invariably go up again because the underlying issue – lack of capacity – has not been addressed.”

The ADAVB is also calling for a focus on prevention, with up to 5% of health expenditure to be allocated to measures to reduce the burden of disease. “When 1 in 3 children have tooth decay by the age of 5-6 years, making it the leading cause of preventable hospitalisation in children, we know there is a significant problem,” said ADAVB CEO A/Prof Matt Hopcraft. “We should be focusing on health promotion and prevention, expanding the coverage of water fluoridation to communities like Heathcote and taking steps to reduce advertising of sugary junk foods to children.”

More information is available at [adavb.org/election](http://adavb.org/election).

### Media enquiries

Interviews available with CEO A/Prof Matt Hopcraft on 0412 487 853 and President A/Prof Warren Shnider.

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