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NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

MEDIA RELEASE

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Joint Statement: Better dental care is in the States' hands

Six peak organisations concerned with dental health in Australia are coming together to write to Premiers and Chief Ministers, urging them to sign the National Partnership Agreement with the Commonwealth to allow significant additional Federal funds to be allocated to public dental health services.

The six are the Australian Dental Association (ADA), the Australian Healthcare and Hospital Association (AHHA), the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) and the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA).

“Dental care is one of the most under-funded areas of the Australian health systems. But hopes for a much better dental care system are being severely threatened by States’ refusing to accept the Federal Government’s offer of very large increases in funding,” a spokesman for the six said.

“Access to public dental health services, especially for children and people on low income, can be dramatically improved if the States and Territories agree to simply maintain their financial effort on oral health at 2010-11 levels and accept the significant Commonwealth funds to augment this. Assuming they do this, the total amount of money available for public dental services - from Commonwealth and State - will be increased substantially.

“The public will be unforgiving if the States fail in this regard and try to replace their current financial effort with Commonwealth money from the oral health package announced in August. If State Treasuries see this as an opportunity to save money, the Commonwealth funds will not flow. The losers will be the low income adults who have been missing out on dental care for so long.

“Our six organisations intend to make every effort to see that this once-in-a-generation opportunity to put right a serious health inequity is not missed.

“Tomorrow’s meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) provides an opportunity for Premiers, Chief Ministers and the Prime Minister to signal their agreement to proceeding collaboratively down the path to better oral health care.”

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