



# Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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## Dental care – welcome but not enough



Dental health is an essential component of overall health and well-being and yet dental care is treated differently to medical care within our health system. This reduces access to vital dental services and leads to more significant and expensive problems because people cannot access preventive care.

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that more than 60,000 Australians are hospitalised each year because of oral health problems which could have been prevented or managed in the community. This is an unnecessary

health burden for consumers and results in increased costs overall to the health system.

AHCRA welcomes the commitment from Labor to provide \$1000 every two years to assist pensioners with the cost of dental services. This measure will assist some of the most vulnerable people in the community access dental care and will assist in maintaining their health and well-being.

However, on its own, this is not enough to help the nearly 2 million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics figures) who reported that they either delayed or did not see a dentist due to cost in 2017. To address this need, a universal dental health scheme is needed. This should treat oral and dental health the same as any other health condition. We also need a strong focus on prevention, including support for fluoridation of the water supply across Australia, improved nutrition and targeted programs for at risk groups.

Only the Australian Greens have committed to funding a universal dental health system for all. AHCRA strongly supports this commitment and believes that this is a much more cost-effective use of funding than subsidising private health insurance. We will continue to advocate for dental health and call on both major parties to fill the gap in their health policies with an increased commitment to public dental care.

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