

Issue: 201207

2 March 2012

Dear Member,

The National Advisory Council on Dental Health recently released their final report that provides the Federal Government with advice, options and priorities for consideration in the 2012-13 Budget.

The Council was established in late 2011 to examine dental health issues, including the current mix and coverage of Australia's dental services, in order to provide expert advice on needs and priorities for reform.

The Council agrees that the long-term goal for dental services should be universal and equitable access to dental care for all Australians. Essential dental services should include diagnostic, preventive and routine services, but exclude 'elective' services such as crowns and implants. This approach allows for a focus on oral health prevention and early intervention.

As a first step in addressing the nation's oral health needs, the Council identified two priority groups that require targeted action: children and lower income adults. The Council recommended four options to consider for the 2012-13 Budget that has been designed as a stepping stone on a path to a universal access program. These options include:

- For children
  - **An individual capped benefit entitlement:** Covers basic preventative and treatment services. The benefit could be used in the public or private sector
  - **Enhanced access to public dental services:** Increasing access for all children up to the age of 18 to basic dental services by enhancing existing public sector services
- For lower income adults
  - **A means tested individual capped benefit entitlement:** Building on the legislative framework for existing programs. Access to higher level services or caps could be provided in exception circumstances.
  - **Enhanced access to public dental services:** Increasing access for adult concession card holders to basic dental services by enhancing the public sector.

Any four of the options could be potentially scaled and/or phased in over time. The Council agrees that oral health should be seen in the context of general health and that oral health reform should also be linked to current health reform, such as the establishment of Medicare Locals and Local Hospital Networks. In doing so, it will help identify service gaps, improve access to services and integrate oral health services with other primary health care services.

More details about these recommendations can be found in the full report which can be found at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/final-report-of-national-advisory-council-on-dental-health.htm>

Kind regards,



Trevor Carr  
Chief Executive

