



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

MEDIA RELEASE

Dr Neil Hewson, Federal President

27 July 2009

FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH AND HOSPITALS REFORM COMMISSION FAILS TO PROPERLY ADDRESS DENTAL CARE ISSUES

The long awaited final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission released today by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd demonstrates the same lack of appreciation of dentistry and the problems with dental care delivery as the earlier Interim Report.

The recommendation for a universal "Denticare" scheme will not deliver improved access to appropriate dental health care. 'Denticare Australia' is simply a universal plan which will deliver limited services such as scale and cleaning of teeth, extractions, fillings and the provision of dentures, and shows no appreciation of the real problems facing dental delivery in Australia. It fails to address the need for delivery of proper care to the disadvantaged.

"Recognising that about 35% of the community have not been able to access proper dental care, the Australian Dental Association (ADA) has been calling on the Federal Government to focus its attention on the delivery of care to those that find difficulty accessing dental care. Targeted funding delivered where it is needed – to those who are not currently able to access dental care is what is required," Dr Hewson, ADA President, said today. "To make some very limited, very basic dental services universally available does not solve the needs of the disadvantaged and in fact may compound them. It is not good enough to say that provision of basic services to all will fix dental care delivery. What is needed is delivery of dentally effective scopes of treatment that will provide long term dental health - not patch work treatment with extractions and dentures - which may give rise to long term problems later in life."

"Those that can now access dental care will continue to do so under "Denticare Australia", but less efficiently, and those that could not access care previously will be given second class care. If the problems of dental health and dental care delivery are to be addressed, it is the long term health of the disadvantaged that has to be considered. The ADA says the answer is to target available funding to those in need, so they get a level of service that will provide long term oral health."

The ADA however does welcome dentistry's inclusion in the report and supports, in principle, the recommendations for:

- internships for graduating dentists and oral health professionals to provide broader clinical experience and training, as well as to expand the public dental workforce;
- the national expansion of preschool and school dental programs;
- improved oral health promotion; and
- the expansion of specialist outreach services – for example, medical specialists, midwives, allied health, pharmacy and dental/oral health services.

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The Australian Dental Association Inc. (ADA) is the peak national professional body representing about 10,000 registered dentists, who are the vast majority of dental care providers. ADA members work in both the public and private sectors. The primary objectives of the ADA are to encourage the improvement of the oral and general health of the public and to promote the ethics, art and science of dentistry and to support members of the Association in enhancing their ability to provide safe, high quality professional oral care.