



**Media release
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Targeting needy more effective than universal dental plan: Australian Dentists

The Australian Dental Association Inc (ADA) has cautioned Federal and State Governments against any universal dental care scheme as proposed by the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission (NHHRC).

Instead, they argue, governments should assess a counter proposal that specifically targets the oral health needs of low income and other disadvantaged Australians.

“More than two thirds of Australians report they have or can gain access to quality dental care,” said ADA Federal President, Dr Neil Hewson.

“They don’t need a new tax – an increased Medicare levy - as proposed by the NHHRC, to fund services they already efficiently utilise, according to their individual needs.

“What is needed, and what Australia’s dentists advocate, is a targeted and means-tested program to deliver dental access to the 30 per cent of Australians who have indicated they cannot get access to dental care.

“The real question for Governments is to explain the chronic lack of investment in public dentistry infrastructure and services, leading to the point where the NHHRC can float its *Denticare Australia* idea,” he said.

Denticare Australia is among more than 120 recommendations in the NHHRC’s *Healthier Future For All Australians*, with the headline proposal being for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to agree to an Australian Health Accord.

“The NHHRC urges Governments to give support to an Accord this year. With COAG meeting in Brisbane on Monday, you’d expect this to be on the agenda,” said Dr Hewson.

He said the ADA endorsed in principle the majority of the NHHRC’s dental recommendations, but drew the line at what he described as a proposal that would exacerbate inequity in Australia’s dental system.

The ADA’s counter proposal, DentalAccess, has been presented to the Commonwealth in discussion format, and is available online at www.ada.org.au.

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For more information, or to arrange an interview please contact Porter Novelli
Melbourne:
Patrick McClelland
pmcclelland@porternovelli.com.au
03 9289 9555 OR 0409 499 419