



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

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NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

The social and economic impact of poor oral health throughout the Australian community is immense. Poor planning and underfunding by governments has resulted in low income and disadvantaged Australians experiencing a higher degree of poor oral health, as well as lengthy delays in treatment.

Recognising this, the ADA has initiated the formation of a National Oral Health Alliance. The purpose of the Alliance is to influence the Federal Government to improve the accessibility of oral care services to the Australian community by encouraging an effective oral care health policy that enjoys coordinated priorities and programs across Federal and State Government boundaries.

The Alliance is comprised of the ADA and a number of other groups involved and interested in addressing the oral health needs of the Australian community. The inaugural meeting of the Alliance was held in October 2006, with members contributing a range of perspectives on a variety of key issues facing the delivery of oral health care to the community.

The Alliance will focus on both immediate and long-term challenges, including resource allocations in the next Federal budget, the forecasted shortage and maldistribution of the dental health workforce across Australia, and the implementation of *Australia's National Oral Health Plan*.¹

In 2004, Australia's Health Ministers endorsed a *National Oral Health Plan* which outlined the policy directions needed between 2004–2013 to improve Australia's oral health and to provide improved access to good oral care. To date, the short-term and medium-term actions outlined in the Plan have not been implemented.

The ADA, ACOSS and the National Rural Health Alliance have met with a number of Senators and the Federal Minister for Health in order to impress upon Members of Parliament the lack of dental care for a significant proportion of the community.

The *National Oral Health Plan* includes aims of:

- Matching the supply of oral health professionals with the anticipated growth in demand for dental services, including addressing the shortage and maldistribution in the supply of dentists across Australia.
- Providing increased access to oral health care services to socio-economically disadvantaged groups.
- Investing in oral health promotion: focusing on risk factors contributing to poor oral health.
- Holding States and Territories accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities under the Plan. These responsibilities include: oral health promotion; expansion of water fluoridation; and planning and developing accessible adult oral health care services.

The National Oral Health Alliance will draw on its participants' skills and resources to influence governments to improve Australia's oral health.

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MOUTHGUARD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

With the winter sports season imminent, the ADA will again this year be conducting its Mouthguard Awareness Campaign in March.

Children and adults run the risk of serious facial injuries when playing sport without a mouthguard. Far too many unnecessary, serious and often permanent injuries to teeth occur because a mouthguard was not worn or fitted correctly.²

The campaign will point out the cost-effectiveness of a custom-fitted mouthguard as compared to the cost of repairing damaged teeth and the long-term dental health benefits of avoiding dental injury.

The ADA will be advocating mouthguards be mandatory for all children and adults participating in contact sports.

1. National Advisory Committee on Oral Health (2004) *Healthy Mouths Healthy Lives: Australia's National Oral Health Plan 2004-2013*, A Committee Established by the Australian Health Minister's Conference.

2. Monash University's Accident Research Centre shows that at least 2,000 dental injuries were treated in Victorian hospital emergency departments between 2002 and 2004. Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit, Accident Research Centre, Monash University.

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