DENTICARE FOR EVERYONE

Millions of Australians are unable to afford proper dental care. The Greens Denticare plan will ensure dental care for all Australians.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Australia's oral health is poor and getting worse. Less than half of Australians have good oral health and dental visiting patterns, largely due to the high cost of dental treatment.

60% of dental care is paid for out-of-pocket by consumers, with the result that a third of people say they can't afford to go to the dentist or delay going to the dentist because of the expense.

Up to 10% of GP visits are due to poor dental health, and more than 60,000 potentially avoidable hospital visits a year are due to dental issues. This costs the country approximately $500m in direct costs and up to $2 billion in lost productivity every year.

In 2012, the Greens negotiated a new national dental health scheme worth nearly $5 billion over the next million children. The Greens also secured $1.3 billion for extra public services and hundreds of millions more for dental health Australia has seen.

Our Denticare policy would bring dental health fully into Medicare and extend benefits to all Australians. Denticare under Medicare, and would phase in over 5 years, starting with the most needy. Under Denticare, goi
BRING DENTAL CARE INTO MEDICARE

Millions of Australians are unable to afford proper dental care. Many more put off dental visits and struggle to pay dental bills when emergencies arise. It’s time we fixed this gaping hole in our world-class health system.

The mouth is part of the body and dental health should be part of our universal health care system. That’s why the Greens are calling for dental care to be included under Medicare, so that everyone can get necessary treatment no matter what their circumstances may be.

PUBLICLY FUNDED DENTAL CARE

The Greens’ plan, Denticare, adds dental treatment to the Medicare Benefits schedule, meaning dentists can bulk-bill dental services just like doctors do.

Our plan for Denticare will:

- Provide dental treatment covered by Medicare. Phased in over five years, Medicare will cover preventative and restorative dental treatment so that everybody can afford to go to the dentist.
- Start with the most disadvantaged. Low income earners, kids and teens, pensioners and concession card holders will be among the first to access dental treatment under Medicare, before rolling out the scheme to everybody.
- Ease pressure on the public system. Because of the Greens, billions of extra dollars are being injected into public dental services. By maintaining this investment, public dental services will be able to treat complex cases and hard-to-reach sectors of the community without sending waiting lists skyrocketing.

Through our work in Parliament, the Greens have already secured the biggest reform to dental health in generations for all Australians.
FIXING A HEALTH CRISIS

Australia’s oral health is poor and getting worse. Less than half of Australians have good oral health and the high cost of dental treatment. 60% of dental care is paid for out-of-pocket by consumers, with the result that a third of people say they can’t afford to go to the dentist or delay going to the dentist because of the expense.¹

Good oral health is important for overall health and wellbeing. Complications from dental disease can lead to life-threatening situations.

Untreated dental disease results in an unnecessary burden on the health system: Up to 10% of GP visits and more than 60,000 potentially avoidable hospital visits a year are due to dental issues.³ This costs the country to $2 billion in lost productivity every year.⁴

An estimated 400,000 people are on waiting lists for public dental care, with average wait times of 27 months and in some cases higher than 5 years.⁵

Just as the mouth is an integral part of the body, so too should dental care be an integral part of the public health system. The Greens propose that dental care should be incorporated into Medicare under a universal dental health scheme: Denticare.

A FAIR AND MORE CARING SOCIETY

The evidence shows that the health burden of dental neglect falls heavily on disadvantaged groups. Low income earners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the elderly and people in rural and regional areas are all significantly more likely to suffer from untreated dental disease.

Dental neglect can have serious consequences for people’s lives. It can lead to poor nutrition. It can disturb sleep. Cosmetic issues can lead to social isolation and could potentially prevent somebody from getting a job or finding rental accommodation.

It is unacceptable that disadvantaged Australians are left to suffer or must endure never-ending waiting lists for basic treatment many of us take for granted. Under Denticare, nobody is left behind.

Australia can afford to be a more caring country.

¹ AIHW, Dental attendance patterns and oral health status (2011)
² Menzies Centre for Health Policy, Dental and Oral Health: Policy Issue Paper, p. 2.
³ AIHW, Oral health and dental care in Australia: Key facts and figures 2011, p. 16.
⁴ Menzies Centre for Health Policy
⁵ Report of the National Advisory Council on Dental Health 2012, p. 16

Download the Denticare initiative (196Kb)