



Australian Health Care
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NATIONAL RURAL
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Smaller jurisdictions are in the lead on better dental care

It is encouraging to know that Tasmania and the ACT have indicated their support for the National Partnership Agreement with the Commonwealth to allow significant additional Federal funds to be allocated to public dental services.

However the bulk of Australians are still waiting for news from their State Premiers.

Six peak organisations concerned with dental health in Australia have written to Premiers, urging them to sign the Agreement with the Commonwealth. The six are the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), Australian Dental Association (ADA), Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA), Australian Healthcare and Hospital Association (AHHA), National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) and Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA).

Dental care is one of the most under-funded areas of the Australian health systems and the May and August 2012 announcements by the Commonwealth of funding for adult public dental services and children's oral health over the next six years was widely welcomed. This funding arrangement lays the foundations for a more rational, stronger and fairer dental system for the future.

If the States agree to maintain at 2010-11 levels the dental services funded through their own resources, the National Partnership Agreement provides public dental services with immediate additional funding for new services for the treatment of adults on low income. Any State that does not sign will commit its people to extended periods of oral health inequity and pain.

The public will be unforgiving if the States try to replace their current financial effort with the new Commonwealth money rather than using it to increase services. The losers will be the adults on low income who have been missing out on dental care for so long.

The States should grab this opportunity to put right a serious health inequity.

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