



Media Release

30 June 2016

Whoever wins the election has to deal with this – the Tooth Hurts!

The National Oral Health Alliance (NOHA) has today urged all political parties to reverse the decline in oral health services in Australia and its painful impact on many Australians.

“This election has seen both promises and back flips on oral health. On one hand NOHA applauds the recent Coalition announcement of \$11 million dollars to support the oral health services provided by the Royal Flying Doctors Service in rural and remote communities. However this is but one measure and its provision should have been better coordinated with other measures. For example it comes on the back of the 2016 Budget that not only reduced promised spending on dental health by \$200 million, but it also increased the number of people supposedly to be targeted, reducing the per person budget to \$42 per person – a token amount and making them access an already under-resourced public sector,” Tony McBride, spokesperson for NOHA said today.

“NOHA congratulates the Greens on their ongoing commitment to the expansion of oral health care and hopes they can influence oral health policies following the election. The Greens have also proposed a tax on sugary drinks which will have the dual effects of reducing sugar intake and dental disease, as well as creating a stream of revenue to fund equitable dental care. Countries such as Mexico and the United Kingdom have already gone down this pathway.

“NOHA notes that the ALP’s position is unclear. It has previously indicated strong support for the Child Dental Benefit Schedule and better access to care but, according to the Australian Financial Reviewⁱ, have also cut \$1.3 billion from its proposed costings – a source of concern”.

“Untreated dental problems cost our community millions in health care costs and lost productivity,” Mr McBride said. “There are long waiting lists for public care and every year around 63,000 Australians need to be hospitalised for preventable and treatable oral conditions. Many others are unable to work or fully participate in community life due to poor dental health.

According to AIHW, individuals are already contributing 60% of the total spend on dental care in Australia through out of pocket costs. That is over four times the average cost for all health care. For a significant number, these out of pocket costs are unaffordable.”

“Sadly, the major parties are not addressing the significant oral health needs that exist in Australia, particularly outside the major cities. This needs to change and the National Oral Health Alliance will be taking up this issue with whoever forms Government after the election to seek a better deal for oral health,” Mr McBride said.

Contact: Tony McBride, Spokesperson for NOHA, 0407 531 468 www.oralhealth.asn.au

ⁱ <http://www.afr.com/news/politics/election/election-2016-labor-quietly-abandons-spending-measures-20160627-gpswiw>