



Media Release

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Child Dental Health matters

The National Oral Health Alliance (NOHA) is very pleased to note the announcement today by Catherine King MP that the Australian Labor Party has been able to negotiate withdrawal of the Child Dental Benefits Scheme (CDBS) from the Omnibus Bill of savings.

“The changes announced in May’s Budget were a big step backwards for better oral health for all Australian children. The CDBS enabled Medicare funded care for 66% of Australian children. So it is not surprising that we have seen considerable interest from the Senate crossbench about the inclusion of the CDBS in this Omnibus Bill and what its closure would mean for child dental health. NOHA is currently providing briefings to members of the crossbench to inform them about the impact of the CDBS and options for improvements in the provision of oral health services to those who need them the most.

“The 2016 Budget announcement of the proposal to close the CDBS not only reduced promised spending on dental health by \$200 million, but it also increased the number of people (adults and children) supposedly to be targeted, reducing the per person budget to effectively \$42 per person of Commonwealth support – a token amount and making them access an already under-resourced public sector,” Tony McBride, spokesperson for NOHA said today.

“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.”

“The National Oral Health Alliance calls on all our political leaders to ensure that funding for oral health care for children is supported. We cannot afford further worsening of the significant oral health needs that exist in Australia, particularly outside the major cities,” Mr McBride said.

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