

MEDIA RELEASE

20 August 2010

National Oral Health Alliance seeks commitment from all Parties in the next term to reform access to dental services and oral health promotion

It is vital that the next Federal Government gives a high priority to oral health, particularly by improving access to timely services for the 7 million Australians currently missing out on dental care.

This is the call from the National Oral Health Alliance, a group of community, dental and health organisations seeking solutions to the poor access to oral services and the poor oral health outcomes experienced by many Australians.

“Ensuring access to timely dental services should be a bi-partisan issue,” said Prue Power, Executive Director of the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, an Oral Health Alliance partner.

Tony McBride, Chair of the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance, added: “Improving access to timely dental services across the country has remained an orphan of the recent health reforms. The longer we let the Commonwealth ignore oral health, the greater the problem becomes.”

The National Oral Health Alliance wrote to all political parties urging them to adopt a five-step program to REPAIR the chronically poor state of oral health in Australia.

The Alliance called on governments to:

1. **RE-vitalise** the dental system;
2. Focus on **Prevention** and oral health promotion;
3. Improve **Access** to services;
4. **Improve** workforce capacity and distribution; and
5. Undertake **Research**, monitoring and evaluation.

The Greens and the Australian Labor Party responded with policies ranging from reinstating the Commonwealth Dental Health Plan to adopting Denticare as proposed by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. The Coalition has yet to advise its policies on dental care.

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Members: Australian Council of Social Service; Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapists' Association; Australian Dental Association; Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association; Australian Health Care Reform Alliance; Australian Nursing Federation; Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health; Brotherhood of St Laurence; Dental Hygienists' Association of Australia Inc; Health Issues Centre; National Rural Health Alliance; Public Health Association Australia.

The **National Oral Health Alliance** comprises national community, dental and health organisations that have formed an alliance to seek solutions to the poor access to services and oral health outcomes experienced by many Australians. For further information, visit www.oralhealth.asn.au.