



MEDIA RELEASE

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Stop the Rot: Launch of New Oral Health Campaign

National community, dental and health organisations have today launched a national campaign, *Stop the Rot*, calling on political leaders to make an election commitment for urgent action to address the decaying state of Australia's dental care system.

In a statement released today the National Oral Health Alliance calls for more affordable and timely dental services, particularly for low-income Australians who are mostly likely to suffer from poor oral health.

More than seven million Australians can't access dental care when they need it because of long waiting lists and one in three people put off having dental treatment because they can't afford it.

"The health and social impact of poor oral health is immense," the Alliance says in its statement.

"For people with serious oral health problems, nine out of ten experience pain or discomfort and the same proportion have experienced embarrassment due to their teeth, contributing to poor self image, reducing their social interactions and limiting employment prospects.

"It is vital to improve accessibility so that all Australians have equitable access to oral health care.

"While Australians who receive social security payments are entitled to health benefits, long public dental waiting lists are preventing them from accessing dental care. Workers who are underemployed or on low wages are also more likely to have poor access to oral health care.

"People in rural and remote areas commonly wait in excess of two years for general treatment and waiting times are as high as three-and-a-half years in some parts of the country."

The Alliance is seeking a commitment from all political parties in the federal election for direct and effective action to ensure:

- All Australians can access oral health care when they need it.
- That Australia has a well-distributed, self-sufficient and sustainable dental workforce.
- Australia has the national leadership and coordination to ensure an effective preventive oral health strategy.

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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.