



01 AUG, 2025

Dental must for Medicare

Gympie Today, Gympie

Dental must for Medicare

With Federal Parliament returning last week, dental care was firmly placed back on the national agenda, thanks to a Greens-led push to bring dentistry into Medicare.

Senator Jordan Steele-John reignited the conversation by calling on the Albanese Government to ensure oral health is no longer treated as a luxury, but as a fundamental part of overall health care.

The Australian Dental Association (ADA) welcomed the renewed attention, noting that equitable access to dental care has long been neglected in the national health conversation.

While Medicare covers a broad range of essential medical services, dentistry remains largely excluded—despite its vital role in maintaining general health and preventing chronic disease.

As the political discussions got underway in Canberra, the ADA ramped up its ongoing advocacy for greater federal investment in public dental services.

Currently, the delivery of public dental care falls predominantly to state and territory governments, supported by limited Commonwealth funding.

The ADA argues this fragmented model results in long wait times, unequal access, and patchy service delivery—particularly in rural, regional, and low-income communities.

ADA President Dr Chris Sanzaro and Vice President Dr Angie Nilsson took to the airwaves last week to reinforce the case.

Appearing in a series of ABC TV and radio news segments on Monday 21 July and Tuesday 22 July, both clinicians underlined the urgent need for systemic reform, starting with wait times.

“... by people languishing on these waiting lists for years, that disease is getting worse to the point where we don’t have an option other than extracting teeth. And if those waiting lists were shorter, people would be able to keep more of their teeth

for longer,” Dr Sanzaro said.

Dr Nilsson, who is a fellow of the International College of Dentists and the Pierre Fauchard Academy, offered firsthand insights from the public health frontline.

“I think when we’re looking at the public system, we don’t have the workforce, we don’t have the funding to be able to manage the entire load. So, I think it’s definitely on a knife edge,” she said.

“Most dental diseases are preventable, essentially, and if we’re able to get on top of them every six months, it means we can get to them before they become more complex and before they end up having to be a presentation to the ED department.”

The ADA has consistently argued for a national approach to oral health funding and service delivery—one that recognises dental care as an integral part of the health system, not a separate or secondary concern.

The organisation is now calling on the Federal Government to take meaningful steps toward incorporating dental care into Medicare, beginning with increased and more consistent funding for public dental programs.

This includes support for targeted groups such as children, older Australians, people living with disabilities, and those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

“ I think it’s realistic, if we’re looking at doing it in targeted ways, something like the senior dental benefits scheme, you know, expansion of what already exists, like the Child Dental Benefits Scheme,” Dr Nilsson said.

With the first full sitting week of Parliament now behind us, the ADA is urging federal policy-makers to turn political momentum into practical reform and make dental care part of the Medicare system.



01 AUG, 2025

Dental must for Medicare

Gympie Today, Gympie



The Australian Dental Association has renewed the push to have dental care added to Medicare. (Unsplash)