

Create a targeted Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme (SDBS) to provide seniors with assistance to meet dental costs.

Overview

- According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), older people, especially those with [low socioeconomic status](#) and those living in residential aged care settings, are more likely to have [poor oral health](#).
- Older people who cannot afford private dental care must rely on public dental services, which can involve being placed on lengthy wait lists.
- As people age and become increasingly frail, the ability to adhere to good oral health practices can decline dramatically.
- According to the final report of the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#), poor oral health has many adverse consequences and interrelations. It can:
 - affect a person's ability to speak, eat, and socialise.
 - contribute to social isolation, functional impairment, pain and discomfort, ill health and even death.
 - contribute to health conditions, and is linked with other chronic conditions, such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, and cerebrovascular diseases.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Establish a Seniors Dental Benefit Scheme (SDBS) to provide \$500 per year towards interventions to improve oral health outcomes among older people based on the existing Child Dental Benefit Scheme (CDBS).
- Initially, implement a means-tested SDBS targeted to older people before expanding to other groups.

Budget impact

- If eligibility was provided to Pensioner Concession Card and Commonwealth Seniors Card holders (as recommended by the Aged Care Royal Commission) the cost to government would total \$1.6 billion per year.
- If eligibility was provided to all Pensioner Concession Card holders, the annual cost would be \$1.33 billion per year.
- If eligibility was restricted to approx. 500,000 low means pensioners using NSA's proposed PECC, the cost to government would be \$250 million per year.

