

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

Overview

- Older people are more likely to have poor oral health, especially those with low socioeconomic status and those living in residential aged care settings.
- 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 get older and 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 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, the scheme should be targeted to older people with limited means, including aged care residents, before expanding to other groups.

Budget Impact

- If eligibility was restricted to a subset of pensioners on low means using the proposed PCC+ and approx. 500,000 pensioners were eligible for the new card, the cost to government would be only \$250 million per year.
- If eligibility was expanded to all Pensioner Concession Card holders, the annual cost would be \$1.25 billion per year.
- If eligibility was provided to all Age Pension Pensioner Concession Card holders and Commonwealth Seniors Card holders (as recommended by the Aged Care Royal Commission), the cost to government would total \$1.54 billion per year.

