



## **THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP**

Minister for Health  
Minister for Aged Care  
Minister for Sport

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Turnbull Govt to double public dental investment**

The Turnbull Government will deliver the largest-ever Commonwealth-investment in frontline public dental services to ensure those who need it most, such as children and adult concession card holders, do not fall through the cracks.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley today announced the creation of a standalone national Child and Adult Public Dental Scheme (caPDS) as part of landmark reforms, which will provide over 10 million Australians with access to public dental through one single national agreement with the states and territories.

It will represent a doubling of the Commonwealth's current contribution to the states and territories for public dental services, and, for the first time, will be enshrined in legislation to provide long-term certainty for current and future generations.

In return, the Turnbull Government will seek to ensure all children under 18 (5.3 million) are eligible for Federal Government-subsidised public dental coverage through the new scheme, as well as each of the five million-plus low-income adults holding a Commonwealth concession card.

This is compared to just three million eligible children under the Commonwealth's current means-tested Child Dental Benefits Scheme (CDBS), which has only delivered a third of places promised by Labor and the Greens. The CDBS also only covers children aged two to 17.

The Turnbull Government's investment will also be accompanied by an expanded range of Commonwealth-subsidised, clinically-necessary services for under 18s that are not covered under current CDBS arrangements.

"We are significantly increasing Commonwealth investment in frontline public dental services and we expect the result to be an extra 600,000 public dental patients treated every year as a direct result," Ms Ley said.

"That's because we know that poor dental health can negatively impact on every aspect of a person's life from their health and wellbeing through to employment and economic opportunities. After all, poor dental health is the third highest cause of preventable hospital admissions, with more than 63,000 Australians avoidable cases each year.

"Let's also not forget a third of the 800,000 or so children who don't regularly visit the dentist come from low-income families earning under \$40,000 per year. And that nearly 60 per cent of low income and indigenous Australians have untreated tooth decay – that's double the general population.

"It's therefore essential we have a strong national public dental scheme that is there to support those who need it most and leaves no gaps in services, no matter they people live in Australia or the condition of their teeth.

"Today we are laying the foundations for a fair and equitable national public dental scheme for children and adults that Australians can afford now and into the future."

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Ms Ley said the Turnbull Government would invest a total of about \$5 billion over the next four years improving dental outcomes.

This will include a total of \$2.1 billion for a five year agreement with the states and territories to fund the caPDS.

To support this, the Turnbull Government will establish a national efficient price for dental procedures as part of the caPDS – much like those already used to determine hospital funding – as well as giving the states and territories the flexibility to contract private dentists where services gaps arise.

In addition to funding for the public dental system, Ms Ley said the Turnbull Government would also continue to invest heavily over the next four years in supporting dental patients through other means such as the private health rebate, Medicare-funded in-hospital dental services, and dental infrastructure in rural and remote Australia.

"We are a Government taking a balanced approach to funding access to dental services in a bid to stop people falling through the cracks," Ms Ley said.

"This is reflective of our broader integrated approach to health reform, particularly when it comes to improving patient outcomes for the chronically ill, with poor oral health one of the top chronic diseases facing Australians alongside heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

"Public dental is particularly important in regional, rural and remote areas, where there may not be access to private dentists to help fill the gaps.

"It also fits in with our commitment to tackling waste and duplication in the health system to ensure funding is targeted where it is needed most, which we are not seeing from current dental arrangements."

In addition to only a third of eligible children using Labor's CDBS, nearly \$4 million worth of incorrect claims were being investigated, despite the CDBS only being in existence for just two years.

The new Child and Adult Public Dental Scheme (caPDS) will replace the current underperforming Child Dental Benefits Scheme and adult dental National Partnership Agreement.

Australians can find out more about the caPDS here: <http://www.health.gov.au/dental>.

**ENDS**