

National dental check-up a great step forward

MEDIA RELEASE, TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018

The poor dental health of too many Australian children and adults and the simple steps we can take to improve it, are highlighted by a world-first national dental report released today.

The Consumers Health Forum welcomes *Australia's Oral Health Tracker* launched today by the Australian Dental Association and the Australian Health Policy Collaboration. The tracker has been developed by leading Australian dental academics, researchers, clinicians, and public health experts.

Australia's Oral Health Tracker comprises national report cards which detail the state of oral health of adults, children and young people in relation to risk factors, oral disease and adverse health outcomes.

The CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said the report cards placed Australia as the first country in the world to have established clear and measurable oral health targets.

"This is a highly valuable innovation given the absence of an effective and accessible dental health scheme to equal the universal access principles of Medicare for care and treatment for other health conditions," Ms Wells said.

"The encouraging feature of the Oral Health Tracker is that it highlights simple achievable preventative steps, like reducing sugar intake and regular teeth brushing, people can take to improve dental health.

"It shows that nearly three in four children are consuming too much sugar and close to a third of children have untreated tooth decay.

"It will surprise many people that oral health conditions are responsible for one in ten potentially preventable hospitalisations and that,

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disturbingly, the highest rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations due to dental conditions are in children five to nine years of age.

“For adults nearly 50 per cent of Australian Adults are consuming too much sugar, approximately one in five Australians have gum disease and almost half of adults have not had a check-up in the last 12 months.”

Fifteen adult, children and young people’s targets and indicators have been developed in-line with the World Health Organization’s *Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013-2020*.

The targets are aimed at eating less sugar, brushing teeth and regular dentist visits.

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