

## Labor's dental pledge a much-needed step forward

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The Consumers Health Forum welcomes Labor's \$2.4 billion Pensioner Dental Plan for aged pensioners and Commonwealth senior card holders.

"We welcome the access this plan will deliver to many Australians who presently struggle to access basic dental health care check-ups let alone more advanced services such as root canals, and dentures," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said today.

"Better access to dental health is one of CHF's top three priorities for this federal election in our *Making Health Better* prescription.

"The mouth shouldn't be seen as a separate body part – good oral health care is an essential part of essential comprehensive health care – and should be what the community expects from a modern Medicare.

"The pain and cost of poor dental coverage came up constantly as we consulted members and stakeholders to shape our election priorities. And also came up repeatedly in our out of pocket costs research over the years.

"The statistics bear this out: almost two million people delay or don't go to the dentist because of cost

"As we said in *Making Health Better*, poor oral health not only leads to poor outcomes for people, but it is a burden for the system – the cause behind tens of thousands of avoidable hospital admissions in its own right.

Contact: Mark Metherell, 0429 111 986

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“It is unacceptable that a country with Australia’s wealth has left it this long to make dental health care more accessible and affordable – starting first with those who need it most.

“The proposed deal with the States under the Plan is also good news. The requirement for bulk billing and maintenance of existing spending will mean more services to a greater number of people including those who would otherwise wait on public dental health queues.

“We note the pledge that this is Labor’s next step towards its vision for universal access to dental care in Australia.

“We urge the Government to match pledges from Labor and the Greens to provide more affordable dental health care through Medicare,” Ms Wells said.

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Contact: Mark Metherell, 0429 111 986

**Consumers shaping health**

PO Box 73  
Deakin West ACT 2600

Ph: (02) 6273 5444  
Fax: (02) 6273 5888

[www.chf.org.au](http://www.chf.org.au)