



13 September 2004

Dear Supporter of public dental services,

**RE: REPORT CARD ON FEDERAL PARTIES' ORAL HEALTH POLICIES**

The Oral Health Alliance, an alliance of organisations representing health consumers, welfare recipients, health service providers and health professionals, was recently formed because of a common concern about the inadequate resourcing of the public dental sector. Health Issues Centre is a key member of the Alliance.

As you may be aware, waiting lists for public dental services can be up to five years. In addition to the obvious stress caused to the individuals affected, this has significant financial implications for the rest of the health system. We know for example that 90% of hospital admissions for 0-4 years olds in regional Victoria are due to dental decay – and that this causes added burdens on doctors and hospitals, which could be avoided.

In order to focus more attention on the need to provide adequate resources for public dental services, the Oral Health Alliance has written to the major political parties seeking their responses to a set of specific questions regarding their parties' commitment to improving the oral health of Australians. Where necessary, the letters were followed up by phone and email.

The enclosed Report Card provides a summary of all responses received. No response was received from the Liberal Party, despite several requests. Background material is also enclosed and additional information, including the actual responses received, is available at [www.healthissuescentre.org.au](http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au)

If you too feel strongly about this issue, please look over the page for a list of recommended actions you might follow. We urge you to join us in action to improve this shocking situation.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

**Tony McBride**

CEO, Health Issues Centre

[t.mcbride@healthissuescentre.org.au](mailto:t.mcbride@healthissuescentre.org.au)

On behalf of the Alliance

- Health Issues Centre
- Council on the Ageing
- Australian Dental Association, Victorian Branch
- Australian Dental Therapists Association
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Public Health Association of Australia
- Victorian Council of Social Services
- Victorian Healthcare Association
- Catholic Social Services Victoria

P.T.O.

## URGENT - Possible Actions

We are asking your assistance to distribute this information as widely as possible and as quickly as possible. Please consider the following:

- **Providing copies of this material** to your constituents/clients/members.  
This could be through a direct hard copy mailout or it could be made available in waiting areas of services in your area. Electronic versions of the materials are also available at [www.healthissuescentre.org.au](http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au). If it is more appropriate, please download the documents and email them.
- **Writing articles in newsletters**  
The information enclosed should be adequate however a number of additional resources are available at the above website. (*These include a draft article.*)
- **Writing a media release** for your local paper/radio station/TV.  
(*A draft media release is enclosed. Please modify as appropriate for your local area and constituent base*)  
This will have more impact if you can offer a photo opportunity such as an interview with a person directly affected. Information on the local situation such as waiting lists or lack of local dentists would also be of interest. It may be an advantage to mention that you are requesting a deputation to your local member in your media release.
- **Requesting a deputation** to your local Member of Parliament.  
Preferably take along people who are directly affected by lack of adequate dental services. You may also find that your local GP or dentist (if you have one) will also support your campaign. If so, taken them along together with local statistics: Where is your nearest dentist? What is their current waiting list? Are they accessible to all your community?  
A media presence at the deputation can also focus the discussion with the local member. Questions must be planned in advance for instance around what the local member can do to improve their parties' commitment to adequately resourcing public dental services.
- **Letter writing campaign**  
Writing letters can influence change particularly if there are large numbers of them. Consider writing to the political parties, your local member, and your local paper and encourage others to do the same. (*A draft letter is enclosed*)
- **Websites**  
If your organisation has a website, link it to the oral health campaign materials and encourage people to use these to participate.

Thank you for your assistance in raising awareness of the currently untenable situation regarding the provision of public dental services, and the urgent need to increase the allocation of resources to address this.

Please let us know what actions you take by emailing Tere Dawson at [t.dawson@healthissuescentre.org.au](mailto:t.dawson@healthissuescentre.org.au)