



## **Pensioner Dental Plan Could Blow the Budget**

Private Healthcare Australia Chief Executive Dr Rachel David said while the concept of the ALP's Pensioner Dental Plan might be appealing, funding it would be a different story.

"The Pensioner Dental Plan alone isn't enough to provide free dental care for Australian pensioners. The cost of one dental implant can be five times that of what the Plan is offering over a two-year period. This proposal has the potential for considerable cost blow outs year after year," said Dr David.

"If the next Federal Government is serious about improving the dental care of older Australians, they will have to collaborate with health funds. In recent years health funds have played an increasingly important role in this area of healthcare but more needs to be done.

"Health funds have the experience and infrastructure in place to provide a more affordable and accessible dental health system and Private Healthcare Australia has met with both the Government and Opposition to express a willingness to work towards this goal.

"Increasingly, health funds are contracting with dentists and vertically integrating with dental practices, thereby consolidating and creating economies of scale. This is driven largely by a need to standardise quality, increase transparency on services provided, and reduce out-of-pocket costs for consumers.

"The facts are that 77% of people aged over 65 years have private health insurance; one-in-two Australians claim for dental services through a health fund. Health funds now pay out over \$2.7 billion per annum in dental benefits, which is more than Federal Government dental programs.

"In addition, 90 per cent of dental services provided to low and middle- income earners get some level of reimbursement from a health fund and 60 per cent of dental treatments/services in hospitals are also funded by health funds. In the year ending September 2018, private health insurance has funded almost 42 million dental services."

Dr David said reform of the dental health sector should be the next major project for policy makers and the focus must be on access, quality, affordability and tackling waste. This will only be achieved by working cooperatively with health funds who have the experience and infrastructure to deliver a better dental health system," said Dr David.

*Private Healthcare Australia is the peak representative body for Australia's private health insurance industry. PHA represents 22 Australian health funds with a combined membership of 13 million Australians, or 97% of the sector on membership. Promoting the value of private health insurance to consumers in the Australian economy and keeping premiums affordable for our members is the number one priority of PHA members.*

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