

Fact Sheet: Cost of Dental Care

Unlike other areas of health, dental care is largely funded by individuals at an ever increasing cost. Even those who have private health insurance often have significant out of pocket expenses and those eligible for public dental care can join long waiting lists with wait times of up to five years.

Some facts and figures about the cost of dental care:

People put off dental treatment due to cost:

Auspoll research commissioned by the HSU and conducted in eight Coalition marginal seats, found that:

- Half the adults surveyed said they had put off dental treatment that they needed because of the cost; and
- 15 per cent of parents said they had put off treatment their kids required because of the cost.

The cost of dental care is increasing:

- Between 1992-3 and 2002-3 the cost of dental fee inflations was 50.5%, whilst for general goods and services it was 20%.¹
- It has also been claimed that in NSW there has been a 129% increase in charges of dentists in the past ten years.²
- The average hourly rate of private dental care in 2003 was \$295.³



Medicare should be expanded to cover dental care for those aged under 18, over 65 and people of all ages on a pension or with a health care card.

Individuals pay the rising cost of dental care:

Dental care is largely funded by individuals, unlike other areas of health.

- In 2002-2003 dental services were funded by; 68% - individuals, 15% - insurance, 17% - Federal/State/Local government, <1% - Other. This is in contrast to other health services which were funded by 68% - Federal/State/Local government, 20% - individual, 7% - insurance, 5% - Other.⁴
- Even those with private health insurance often end up significantly out of pocket; the average rebate for dental services is 49% of the cost.⁵



¹ AIHW DSRU cited in Slade, G Spencer, A. & Roberts-Thomson, K. (Eds) (2007) *Australia's dental generations: the National Survey of Adult Oral Health 2004-2006* AIHW Cat. No. DEN 165 Canberra Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Dental Statistics and Research Series No. 34), p60.² Australian Health Insurance Association (NSW Branch) submission to NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues (March 2006) *Dental Services*³ NACOH cited in Slade, G., Spencer, A. & Roberts-Thomson, K. (Eds) (2007), p61.⁴ AIHW Dental Statistics and Research Unit (2004) Research Report No. 17: Economic aspects of dentistry in Australia.⁵ PHIAAC cited in Slade, G., Spencer, A. & Roberts-Thomson, K. (Eds) (2007), p60.