

Seniors Dental Care
Australia

Seniors Dental Care Australia
PO Box 4329
SPRINGFIELD CENTRAL QLD 4300
info@sdcaust.com.au

27 July 2023

Re: Supplementary Submission

I want to add to my original submission the need for a national consumer-led communication program about the importance of oral health. If the Senior Dental Benefits Scheme is funded and implemented, there is no guarantee that older Australians will avail themselves of the program. We already see that with the Child Dental Benefits Scheme – it only has a 30-40% uptake rate after years of implementation.

Approximately 50% of older Australians do not attend for regular dental check-ups, they mainly make a dental appointment with toothache or pain (extraction rather than a filling, root treatment or treatment for periodontal diseases), and they have low oral health literacy going back decades. What they thought about oral health care or dental treatment has changed a great deal since the 1940s. They may also have a fear of 'dentists' and dentistry which is passed on to their adult children and grandchildren.

We need to address their dental trauma, fears, and anxiety so that they are dental patients that dental practitioners will want to treat. Dental practitioners will not participate in the Senior Dental Benefits Scheme if it is more trouble than it is worth.

So, to ensure a good uptake of the Senior Dental Benefits Scheme, a national consumer-led communication program to inform older Australians about the link between general health and oral health, and the importance of twice-daily oral health care and regular dental check-ups is required for any new scheme to be successful.

Yours faithfully,

Ms Leonie M. Short
Owner and Director
Seniors Dental Care Australia