

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1: That the Commonwealth, in consultation with the States and Territories and other key stakeholders in the public and private dental sectors, support the development of programs to improve the promotion of oral health throughout Australia.

Recommendation 2: That the Commonwealth Government support the introduction of a vocational training program for new dental graduates, especially to assist in the delivery of oral health services to people in rural or remote areas.

Recommendation 3: That the use of dental auxiliaries such as therapists and hygienists be expanded, particularly to cater for the needs of specific disadvantaged groups and that, to this end, the States and Territories be encouraged to review legislation restricting the employment of such auxiliaries.

Recommendation 4: That support be given to a national oral health training strategy for health workers and carers, specifically including those working in the fields of aged care and Aboriginal health.

Recommendation 5: That the Commonwealth assist the States and Territories to establish, conduct and evaluate highly targeted pilot programs to address the priority oral health needs of the following specific disadvantaged groups: pre school-age children (1 to 5 years), young adult Health Card holders (18 to 25 years), aged adult Health Card holders (65+ years), the homebound, rural and remote communities, and indigenous Australians. Such programs should include a capacity for the individual beneficiary to make a contribution to the treatment costs.

Recommendation 6: That the Commonwealth Government adopt a leadership role in introducing a national oral health policy, and give consideration to the possibility of using the National Public Health Partnership as the vehicle for developing and implementing that policy in partnership with the States and Territories.

Recommendation 7: That the national oral health policy include the:

- setting of national oral health goals;
- establishment of national standards for the provision of, and access to, oral health care and the quality of services;
- establishment of national strategies and priorities for oral health care reform, with an emphasis on preventive dentistry;
- setting of minimum service targets; and
- monitoring national oral health goals through the maintenance of a national data collection and evaluation centre and undertaking research into current and projected needs.

Recommendation 8: That the Commonwealth allocate resources for a national oral health survey, to be conducted as a priority, to establish data on the oral health status and oral health needs of the Australian community.

Recommendation 9: That the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services create a dedicated section or appoint an appropriately qualified senior officer with responsibility for oral health matters, and that the necessary resources to fulfil the role and responsibilities of such an office be provided.