

Public Dentistry



Fact Sheet

This fact sheet has been prepared by the ADAVB to provide information on public dental care – waiting list and treatment data in Victoria.

Waiting times

There are currently 2.5 million people eligible to access public dental care in Victoria, however only 400,000 receive treatment each year.

The average waiting time for public dental care was 19.7 months in February 2018; an increase of 67% from 2014/15.

Long waiting times for dental care mean existing dental problems worsen, and as a result just over one third of all courses of care are for emergency treatment rather than routine care.

The longest reported waiting time was 48 months at February 2018.

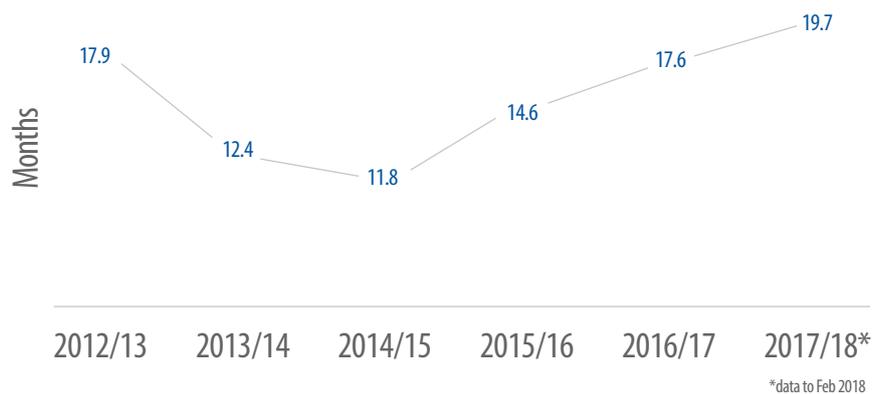
There were more than 140,000 people waiting for general dental care in February 2018. By comparison, the average waiting time for elective surgery in Victoria is 1.1 months, with waiting times for elective hip surgery 3.1 months and for ear, nose and throat surgery 2.7 months.

It is also not widely known that patients are required to wait 12 months after completion of a general course of care before being placed back on the waiting list, meaning that people are required to wait in effect 32 months for routine dental care.

Poor oral health prevents people from participating fully in society, including finding employment. It particularly impacts the general health and well-being of vulnerable Victorians, and can cause pain, difficulty eating and embarrassment. Poor oral health is one of the strongest indicators of inequality.

The number of patients receiving public dental care has remained relatively unchanged over the past five years, and the overall level of funding has also remained relatively constant at approximately \$220 million per year, with an increase to \$238.6 million in 2017/18.

Average waiting time for general dental care in Victoria



Key facts

- ▶ Average waiting time for general dental care Feb 2018 – 19.7 months
- ▶ Longest waiting time for general dental care Feb 2018 – 48 months
- ▶ Average waiting time for denture care Feb 2018 – 17.1 months
- ▶ Longest waiting time for denture care Feb 2018 – 49 months
- ▶ Victorians eligible for public dental care – 2.5 million
- ▶ Victorians who accessed public dental care in 2016/17 – 398,257
- ▶ Eligible Victorians who accessed public dental care in 2016/17 – 16%
- ▶ Funding for public dental services in 2017/18 - \$238.6 million

Eligibility

At current funding levels, only 16% of eligible Victorians are able to access public dental care in any given year. Victoria has experienced significant population growth, increasing from 5.5 million people in 2011 to 6.15 million in 2017, and investment in public dentistry has not kept pace with this growth.

On current estimates, the number of people eligible for public dental care will increase to 2.76 million by 2024.

Maintaining existing funding levels will see the proportion of eligible patients treated decrease further.

Who funds public dental care?

Historically, public dental care has been the sole responsibility of the State Government, and the majority of funding is still provided by the State Government. In recent years, the Commonwealth Government has provided funding to States under various National Partnership Agreements to alleviate pressure on public dental waiting lists.

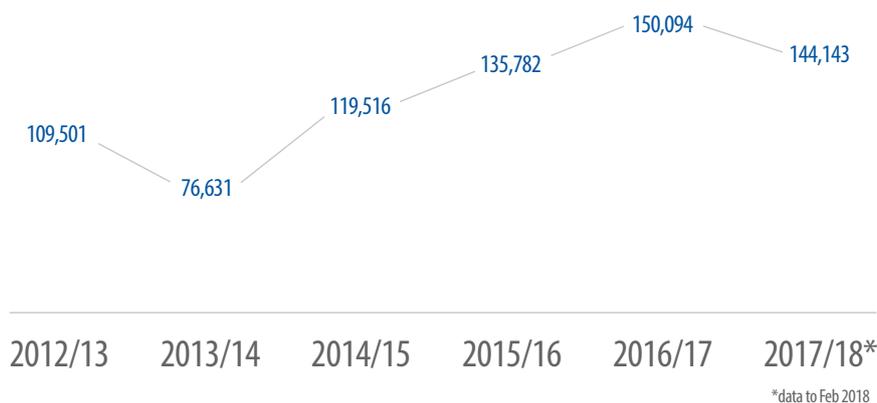
The current agreement provides Victoria with \$26.9 million in 2018/19. The Child Dental Benefits Scheme (CBDS) is a Commonwealth Government program that provides up to \$1000 in basic dental services over two years for children aged 2-17 years who receive eligible Government payments, including Family Tax Benefit Part A. Eligible children can access the CBDS through public dental clinics as well as through private dental practices.

What needs to be done?

Successive Victorian Governments have failed to adequately prioritise and fund dental care. ADAVB is calling on all political parties to increase funding for public dentistry, with a target to double the number of patients being treated on a yearly basis from 400,000 to 800,000 by 2023/24.

A target of 800,000 patients treated would represent approximately 29% of the eligible population, a substantial increase on the 16% currently able to access care. It is estimated that this would require an additional investment of \$40 million on top of existing funding each year for the next five years, lifting the funding from the current \$240 million to approximately \$440 million. Additional capital funding and partnership with the private sector would be required as capacity growth is required, with a particular focus on growth corridors in Melbourne and areas identified as having a high demand for public dental services.

People waiting for general dental care in Victoria



Eligibility for public dental services

- ▶ All children aged 0-12 years
- ▶ Young people aged 13-17 years who are health care or pensioner concession card holders or dependents of concession card holders
- ▶ Adults who are health care or pensioner concession card holders or dependents of concession card holders
- ▶ Refugees and asylum seekers
- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people (only if treated at the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne).

Further information on eligibility:

<https://www.dhsv.org.au/patient-information/who-is-eligible>