

## Victorian Election Dental Report Card

With one day to go until the Victorian State election, the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB) has run a ruler over the dental policies of the major parties to help you decide where to cast your vote.

Oral health is an important issue, with 40 per cent of Victorians eligible for public dental care. Waiting times have increased by 70 per cent over the past four years to more than 20 months on average. Dental disease is one of the most prevalent health problems affecting Victorians, so improving access to care and prevention is critical.

### **Labor: B +**

Labor are to be congratulated for a bold and ambitious plan to provide free dental care to all state school children as part of a \$396 million program over four years.

The emphasis on improving oral health for children is important, however there are some concerns with the plan. By allowing children only enrolled in state schools to access the program, many children who need care will miss out because their parents choose to send them to an independent school. State schools are being used as a proxy for means testing, but it will result in inequity in outcomes - the precise problem that needs to be fixed.

Dan's van plan is also questionable. It will cost more than \$100 million to build 250 vans, and it will be years before they are operational. That money would be better spent delivering services straight away, which could be done in existing clinics and engaging the private sector. Whilst vans might make sense in some regional and rural areas, they are not required in metropolitan Melbourne with easy access to dental clinics, many of which already run screening programs in schools. There are also important issues around consent when care is provided in vans at school where parents wouldn't attend the appointment with their child.

There are also questions about the costing of this plan. More than 60 per cent of children are eligible to access the Medicare dental scheme that provides \$1000 over two years for treatment; the cost of Labor's proposal includes pre-existing Medicare funding. This implies that Labor's funding commitment to this program is actually closer to \$268 million.

### **Greens: A**

The Greens have announced an investment of \$160 million to double the number of patients accessing dental care over the next four years, which mirrors the policy position of the ADAVB. There is little further detail in their plan, but nonetheless this represents a strong commitment to improve funding to the public sector.

# Media Release

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## Coalition: D

There has been no significant announcement of dental policy from the Coalition, which has been disappointing. There is a commitment to greater transparency with waiting lists, which is welcomed, however more information alone will do nothing to improved access to care. It is unclear what a Guy Government would do to reduce the 20-month wait for public dental care.

Regardless of the election outcome, the ADAVB looks forward to working closely with the next Victorian Government to implement policies that will improve the oral and general health and well-being of all Victorians.

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