



Government
of South Australia

Hon Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health
and Wellbeing

MHW-H23-6052

Senator Jordon Steele-John
Chair
Senate Select Committee into the
Provision of and Access to Dental Services in Australia
Email: dental.services.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Steele-John

Thank you for your correspondence regarding eligibility for public dental services in South Australia as part of the Select Committee into the Provision of and Access to Dental Services in Australia (the Committee).

I requested information from SA Dental and have received the following advice:

Eligibility for public dental services in South Australia can be broadly grouped into two main categories – child and adult dental services. Eligibility criteria are below.

All children aged under 18 years who live in or attend school in South Australia are eligible for care at an SA Dental clinic. Care is free for children not yet at school, and children covered by government concessions including the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS), and a Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card or School Card Scheme. For children at school not covered by a concession scheme, care costs \$51 (indexed annually) for all care received within a calendar year. Children who become eligible for CDBS partway through a calendar year are refunded any fees already paid in that year.

Adults aged 18 years and over who live in South Australia and hold a current Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card are eligible for public dental care via SA Dental. This includes general and specialist care provided at SA Dental clinics (including at the Adelaide Dental Hospital) or via the use of private provider schemes issued to clients. Care types include emergency, general (provided following recourse to a waiting list) and specialist care (on referral from a general dentist). Co- payments for services typically apply based on the services provided and with caps per course of care. Free care is provided to certain priority groups (Aboriginal clients, residents of Supported Residential facilities, homeless clients, and prisoners) and application for a fee waiver can also be made. Priority groups may also receive priority care (i.e. non-waitlisted) and/or recall-based care.

Eligibility for public adult services has always been linked to cardholder status, and while individual benefit types may vary between states and territories, this is consistent with interstate jurisdictions. Eligibility has been reviewed as benefit types have changed over the years, and the number and distribution of eligible adults is regularly reviewed.

Limited eligibility for adult non-cardholders has occurred for various patient cohorts over the years and is typically linked to a specific funding source (i.e. eligibility for refugees to receive a single, free course of care; the historical Commonwealth HIV dental program).

Eligibility for child services in South Australia has varied over the years from a focus on regional areas and primary school children to the current expansive and universal care for all children under 18.

Eligibility criteria for public dental services has a strong link to the demand for, and available supply of, public dental services. The focus for public dental services has always been one of equity to maximise oral health for those with the greatest need and most disadvantage.

SA Dental has a culture of continuous quality improvement and benchmarking with peers to ensure the care provided is of the highest quality and promotes access to care. There is regular review of all major policy positions and internal ways of working. SA Dental has also had a Consumer Advisory Panel since 1999, whose role includes advising on policy positions impacting on consumers of SA Dental.

Once again, thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. I trust this information is of assistance and look forward to the Final Report from the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health and Wellbeing

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