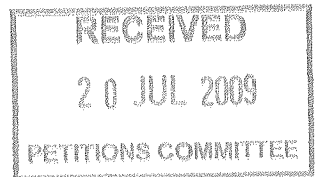
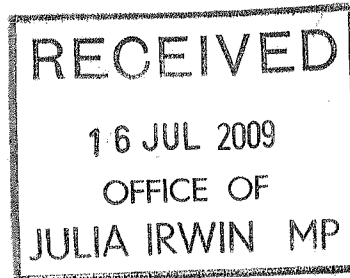




**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**



Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mrs Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 11 June 2009 enclosing a petition in relation to the cost of dental treatment and asking the House to enable more of the cost of dental treatment to be funded under Medicare.

I am pleased to inform you that the Australian Government implemented its election commitment to assist eligible teenagers to access important preventative dental services through the Medicare Teen Dental Plan, which commenced on 1 July 2008. Through this program, the Government is providing an estimated investment of over \$490 million over five years so that around 1.3 million teenagers 12-17 years of age in families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A, and teenagers in the same age group receiving Youth Allowance or Abstudy, can receive a voucher for up to \$153.45 per person towards an annual preventative dental check.

From 1 January 2009, additional groups of teenagers have been included in the program. Eligible teenagers receiving Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payment, Special Benefit, Carer Payment or Double Orphan Pension, as well as those receiving assistance under the Veterans' Children Education Scheme or Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme will be provided with a voucher for a preventative dental check.

Medicare Australia sends vouchers for each calendar year to eligible families and teenagers from mid-January, and sends vouchers to newly eligible teenagers during the calendar year.

The Government is also intending to provide \$290 million over three years to the States and Territories for around one million additional public dental visits for pensioners and concession card holders through the Commonwealth Dental Health Program (CDHP).

The Government has signalled its intention to close the previous government's chronic disease dental scheme in order to make funding available for these new, better targeted dental programs. However, the Senate has prevented closure of the chronic disease dental scheme. This means that the Government has not to date been able to implement the CDHP.

The Government will continue to explore options with the Senate in an effort to improve access to dental treatment services through the CDHP. Meanwhile, the chronic disease dental scheme remains available to patients with chronic medical conditions and complex care needs and whose oral health is impacting on their general health.

I trust that the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

NICOLA ROXON

10 JUL 2009