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## **Dental care out of reach to millions**

A new survey on access to dental care reveals gaping holes in the care and treatment of Australians' teeth and gums.

The research<sup>1</sup>, released by Australia Fair, revealed:

- 90% of people think that regular visits to the dentist are important to maintain healthy teeth and mouths;
- 23% of people say they haven't seen a dentist in over 2 years;
- 46% of people reported that it would be difficult for them to pay for basic preventative treatment (\$300) today;
- 75% of people stated that the Federal Government must at least share the funding for dental care and only 5% think it is State Government responsibility alone;
- 46% of people stated that the cost of dental care influences their decision to see a dentist regularly.

Executive Director Andrew Johnson said, "This research reinforces the fact that Australia has a crisis in access to dental care, particularly for low income and disadvantaged Australians."

"The survey also shows popular support for Federal Government action on dental care. With large budget surpluses and a strong economy, it's not fair that 1 in 4 Australians have told us they have not seen a dentist for 2 years or longer."

Australia Fair has simultaneously released a broadcast-quality clip on You Tube, an online letter which Australians can e-mail to their Federal MPs asking for Federal Government support for dental care for people on low incomes, and a participation kit for local groups to find out more about oral health.

The results of the survey support the facts that:

- Over half a million Australians are on waiting lists around Australia for general dental care from public dental services – the average time on a waiting list is 27 months.
- 40% of Australians cannot access dental care when they need it.
- Consumers contributed nearly \$3.4 billion or 67% of funding for dental services in 2004-05, compared to only \$953 million from Government (19%) and \$701 million from private health insurance funds (14%).

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**For more information on Australia Fair visit [www.australiafair.org.au](http://www.australiafair.org.au)**

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Morgan Research conducted on July 4-5 2007