

Say Aaaaah!
New Dental Medicare Provisions

A new arrangement for dental Medicare provision, starting in November 2007, will improve access to Medicare funded dentist services. Changes to the way dental care is supported by Medicare is welcomed, as there has been very poor uptake of the scheme in its present form.

Under the current arrangement, general practitioners can refer patients to private dentists for treatment funded through Medicare. However, the patient must present with 'a chronic non-dental disease' to which their oral condition may be contributing. (E.g. diabetes, mental illness, heart disease), and a management plan must be prepared which involves referral to private dental services.

Another problem with the current situation is that only \$240 is allocated per person per year.

The new deal will increase individual treatment funding to approximately \$2100 each year and the Association for the Promotion of Oral Health (APOH) is hopeful a widening of the definitions of chronic disease will make the scheme more accessible for those in need.

Federal Health Minister, Mr. Abbott, at a recent Oral Health Advocacy Day at Parliament House, indicated there was no reason why the mouth should not be considered part of the body. APOH welcomed the comments and hopes that more medical practitioners will make use of the wider interpretation to make better use of the scheme.