

Log of responses by Parliamentarians to the NSW Oral Health Alliance letter 2 June 2010

In June 2010, the NSW Oral Health Alliance wrote to NSW State and Federal Parliamentarians seeking their policy position on oral health and their commitment to adequately fund public dental services and prioritise the needs of low-income and disadvantaged groups to reduce the inequalities in oral health.

We received a total of 51 responses, 30 from State MPs, and 21 from Federal MPs.

From NSW State MP's, we received 30 responses from the following parties:

- Family First NSW – 1 response
- Independents – 5 responses
- Labor – 14 responses
- Liberals – 4 responses
- Nationals – 4 responses
- NSW Greens - 2 responses

From Federal MP's, we received 21 responses from the following parties:

- The Greens - 1 responses
- Independents – 2 responses
- Labor – 10 responses
- Liberals – 5 responses
- Nationals – 3 responses

A summary of the responses we received is provided in the tables below.

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Responses from Members of NSW State Parliament		
	Party	Response
1.	Family First NSW	Letter of response. Fully supports recommendations and will continue to do so.
2.	Independent	Email of response. Fully supports recommendations.
3.	Independent	Letter of response. Member is committed to supporting the call for government funding to provide effective public dental health services and the associated infrastructure required to provide those services. Noted the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups in accessing timely and affordable dental treatment. Has made representations to the Minister for Health and will contact us again when he has a response.
4.	Independent	Letter of response indicated that our request for a policy position on this issue will be considered in the light of its impact on the public dental services specific to the Member's electorate.
5.	Independent	Strongly supports the NSW OHA position and asked a question in Parliament on receipt of our letter. Willing to take further action to support the NSW OHA campaign.
6.	Independent	Letter of response received. Private Members Statement presented in Parliament 2 June 2010 on issue of dental services in the Member's electorate.
7.	Labor	Acknowledged receipt of letter
8.	Labor	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
9.	Labor	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
10.	Labor	Letter acknowledged and representations made to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
11.	Labor	Letter acknowledged. Representations made to State Minister for Health, Carmel Tebbutt.
12.	Labor	Further letter attaching a copy of Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health's correspondence following Mr Sartor's representations to the Minister for Health. Also attaches a copy of the Minister for Health's letter of response to NCOSS.
13.	Labor	Letter acknowledged and representations made to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
14.	Labor	Acknowledged receipt of letter
15.	Labor	Acknowledged receipt of letter
16.	Labor	Further letter enclosing a copy of the Minister for Health's letter in relation to oral health services in NSW.
17.	Labor	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
18.	Labor	Comments noted and matter referred to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
19.	Labor	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Minister for Health, the Hon C M Tebbutt MP.
20.	Labor	Letter of response received. Refers to blocking of funding for Commonwealth Dental Health Program in Senate; COAG implications; Commonwealth funding for Medicare Chronic Diseases Dental Scheme and Teen Dental Plan; Close the Gap funding for an Aboriginal Oral Health Hub; increase in NSW Govt's commitment to oral health funding of 38% since 2005-06; expansion of the dental workforce; major capital commitment to water fluoridation plants in regional NSW and importance of getting funding and strategic balance right with the Commonwealth. Refers us to NSW Chief Dental Officer for more info on NSW Government's forward plan for oral health.

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	Party	Response
21.	Liberal	Acknowledged receipt of letter
22.	Liberal	Acknowledged receipt of letter
23.	Liberal	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Jillian Skinner, MP, Shadow Minister for Health. He will contact us again when he receives a reply.
24.	Liberal	Letter of response received. Liberals and Nationals welcome debate on oral health reform at a Commonwealth level; committed to developing policy to complement future Commonwealth arrangements with a view to improving dental health care for the people of NSW.
25.	Nationals	Acknowledged receipt of letter
26.	Nationals	Acknowledged receipt of letter
27.	Nationals	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Jillian Skinner, MP, Shadow Minister for Health.
28.	Nationals	Letter acknowledged and matter referred to Jillian Skinner, MP, Shadow Minister for Health.
29.	NSW Greens	Acknowledged letter but referred matter to Lee Rhiannon, MLC, Greens spokesperson on Health.
30.	NSW Greens	Acknowledgement of letter. Matter referred to The Hon Lee Rhiannon, MLC, NSW Greens spokesperson for Health.

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Responses from Federal Members of Parliament		
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1.	The Greens	Letter of response received. The Greens propose that non-cosmetic dental services are incorporated into Medicare under a universal dental health scheme, Denticare. Denticare would provide universal comprehensive basic primary (non-cosmetic) dental care for all Australians through the expansion of the currently established dental Medicare provisions for the chronic illness dental scheme established by the Howard Government. Scheme to be implemented over five years to avoid cost overload and ensure dental workforce is developed. First phase of scheme to provide access to dental care for low income earners and those on dental waiting lists.
2.	Independent	Letter acknowledged. Shares NSW OHA's concerns. Written to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing to raise concerns and seek advice. Enclosed his media releases on oral health 2006-09.
3.	Independent	Further response. Member wrote to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing who referred the issue to the Department to respond. Member sent a copy of the Department's letter which attaches a copy of a letter from the Director of the Dental Policy Section
4.	Labor	Acknowledged letter and referred matter to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing.
5.	Labor	Acknowledged letter and referred matter to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing.
6.	Labor	Acknowledged letter and referred matter to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing.
7.	Labor	Acknowledged letter and referred matter to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing.
8.	Labor	Letter and role of NSW Oral Health Alliance acknowledged and matter referred to Federal Minister for Health and Ageing.
9.	Labor	Letter of response received. Refers to Government commitment to major reforms in dental care including new, better targeted dental programs; blocking in Senate of CDHP and closing of existing chronic disease dental scheme; Medicare Teen Dental Plan.
10.	Labor	Letter of response received referring to Labor initiatives in oral health and commits to work hard towards improving access to oral health care for vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians.
11.	Labor	Letter of response received. Refers to blocking of funding for Commonwealth Dental Health Program in Senate; expansion of the dental workforce and dentistry schools and significance of rural Charles Sturt University providing this training.
12.	Labor	Reply on behalf of the Minister for Health and Ageing. The Government supports the recommendation of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to increase access to dental care, in particular: better targeting of dental services through closure of existing Medicare chronic disease dental scheme with savings redirected to proposed Commonwealth Dental Health Program and Medicare Teen Dental Plan; proposed legislative changes have been blocked by the Senate; 2009-10 Budget committed to investing a further \$11m over 4 years in additional dental services for Indigenous Australians in rural and regional areas.
13.	Liberal	Letter of response. Refers to Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme introduced by the Coalition Government and the Rudd-Gillard's attempts to close the Scheme, which the Coalition has blocked in the Senate. Refers to declining level of support for dental health services in Australia by the current Labor government.
14.	Liberal	Acknowledgement of letter.
15.	Liberal	Acknowledged letter. Has conveyed our concerns to Shadow Minister for Health and Shadow Minister has advised Member that a policy will be announced closer to the election.

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	Party	Response
16.	Liberal	Acknowledged letter and referred matter to Federal Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing.
17.	Liberal	Copy of letter from Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing to Joe Hockey's letter. Refers to Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme introduced by the Coalition Government and the Rudd-Gillard's attempts to close the Scheme. Says Coalition will be releasing health policies during the current election campaign including measures for dental health.
18.	Nationals	Letter of response received. Refers to a number of National Party initiatives for Regional NSW including securing funding for regional health infrastructure and incentives and implementing flexible practice options including in Oral Health.
19.	Nationals	Letter acknowledged.
20.	Nationals	Acknowledgement of letter. Member indicates that the Coalition will be making announcements on this and other policy areas in the approach to the forthcoming election.
21.	Labor	Acknowledgement of letter. Shares the values at the heart of the NSW OHA's goals, particularly the need in finding durable solutions to the inequities of dental health for disadvantaged groups in our community.