



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP
Acting Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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More than 250,000 benefit from teen dental plan

The Acting Minister for Health and Ageing, Justine Elliot, announced today that 258,203 teenagers have received a dental check up under the Rudd Government's Medicare Teen Dental Plan.

The minister also announced that 7,598 dentists across the country have provided services under the Medicare Teen Dental Plan, which equates to almost 70 per cent of dentists.

"With tooth decay ranking as Australia's most prevalent health problem and gum disease ranking fifth, untreated dental decay is a major problem for our nation's teenagers," Mrs Elliot said.

"The Rudd Government announced in its first budget that it would allocate over \$490 million over five years to help more than one million Australian teenagers look after their teeth.

"To achieve this, the Government has provided a \$150 voucher towards an annual preventative dental check to teenagers aged 12 to 17 in families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A or teenagers receiving Youth Allowance or Abstudy. The value of the voucher will be indexed to \$153.45 for the 2009 calendar year," she said.

From 1 January 2009, additional groups of teenagers will be 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-up.

These preventative check-ups will help prevent cavities and other dental diseases, and will help to reduce the need for more expensive dental procedures later on.

"We know that dental check-ups are vital to identifying oral health problems early," Mrs Elliot said. "According to dental health experts, there is a four-fold increase in dental decay between 12 and 21 years of age, and almost half of all teenagers have some signs of gum disease."

Vouchers for the 2009 calendar year will be mailed to eligible families from mid January.

Families who would like more information on the Teen Dental Plan can visit the Department of Health and Ageing website www.health.gov.au/dental

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