



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Dental Care**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 28 May 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 28 May 2015  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Brodtmann, Gai, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
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**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (13:36): When she was 14, my mother spent the first six months of her working life paying for her rotten teeth to be pulled out. She was the daughter of a single mother who worked three jobs to keep food on the table, and dental care in such difficult circumstances was a luxury—an option that could not be afforded. That is why I rise today to express my anger at the Abbott government's cruel cuts to the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. Nearly half of all Australian children aged between five and six have a history of dental decay. That figure rises to 70 per cent for children from the lower socioeconomic areas. Having good teeth, having a nice smile, is about more than just self-esteem—dental health is critical to our overall physical and mental wellbeing, particularly in our youth.

Dental health is a clear indicator of poverty in adulthood, and the effects of poor dental health can haunt people throughout their lives. I support a denture scheme here in the ACT and I have helped fund mothers who do not want to go to parent-teacher nights because of their bad teeth and people who are frightened of going to job interviews because of their bad teeth.

The Abbott government's decision to cut \$125 million from child dental services is short-sighted and cruel, and will leave thousands of Australian families worse off. Budgets are all about priorities; and, if the physical, economic and social wellbeing of all Australians is not a priority, I do not know what is. I call on the government to reverse this cut immediately.