

MEDIA RELEASE

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STOP THE ROT IN OLDER AUSTRALIANS' ORAL HEALTH

Medicare-funded oral health check-ups for over-75s, access to daily oral hygiene measures and denture cleaning and more dental health education for aged care workers and carers must be introduced to stop the widespread and unacceptable neglect of older Australians' oral care.

An oral health assessment for every person entering a Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) and a public awareness campaign on the benefits of good oral health will also be among the recommendations presented by Australian Dental Association New South Wales (ADA NSW) President Dr Kathleen Matthews to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety this Thursday (July 16).

"Access to dental check-ups should be a basic right in 2020 for everyone, but older Australians are missing out," Dr Matthews said. "The economic impact of poor oral health for older Australians costs an estimated \$750m a year, yet access to oral health care lags behind hairdressing and podiatry for our country's elderly.

"Poor oral health and hygiene can hugely impact older Australians' health and quality of life. It significantly increases the risk of pneumonia, oral infections, poor nutrition and other life-threatening conditions.

"Without oral health there is no health. It's time to stop the rot and ensure that oral health is a priority for older Australians."

ADA NSW's recommendations to the Royal Commission will include introducing a Medicare-funded oral health assessment by a registered dental practitioner for over-75s to facilitate regular oral health visits. This would apply to all older Australians whether they live at home or within a RACF. Every resident entering an RACF must have an oral health assessment by a registered dental practitioner to inform their ongoing daily oral hygiene needs, schedule regular oral health care assessments and any necessary treatment.

"RACF staff do a terrific job but often lack the time or training to carry out basic daily oral hygiene measures such as tooth brushing and denture cleaning," Dr Matthews said. "This means elderly residents can go weeks and even months without anyone even looking in their mouth.

"It can be even worse for residents with dementia and other cognitive abilities, who cannot communicate pain and oral health problems.

"Oral health care needs within RACFs, including oral health assessments on admission, basic daily oral hygiene measures and access to professional oral health care are not being met. This is unacceptable. ADA NSW is grateful for the opportunity to present its recommendations to the Royal Commission and is always ready to discuss how to create better oral health outcomes for all Australians with both the Federal and NSW Government."

To view the ADA NSW's recommendations and for more details, [click here](#).

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For interview requests, image and vision opportunities or more information, contact ADA NSW Media Advisor Stuart Turner on 0451 002 466 or email stuart.turner@adansw.com.au

About: ADA NSW is the peak body representing dentists and dental students in NSW and the ACT, with 4,500 members. We have been supporting dentists and promoting good oral health in the community since 1929.

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