

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 22 November 2019



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TIME FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION ON INDIGENOUS ORAL HEALTH

The Australian Medical Association's report card on the state of Indigenous oral health, *No More Decay*, is a damning account detailing poor rates of oral disease, lack of access to treatment and lack of access to fluoridated water in Indigenous communities.

The report found that the current oral health system is failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with rates of tooth decay and periodontal disease significantly higher.

"This report is a comprehensive and considered analysis of the state of oral health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. It highlights a lack of awareness of the importance of good oral health care and the need for education programs, a lack of access to treatment that is culturally appropriate and the need to build workforce capacity in Indigenous communities," The President of ADA NSW, Dr Kathleen Matthews said.

"It also highlights the harmful effect that red tape and regulation is having on preventing practical and effective dental programs, such as fluoride varnish, from being implemented in Indigenous communities," Dr Matthews said.

Tooth decay and periodontal disease are the most common chronic diseases in Australia and yet they are largely preventable by the provision of simple, regular oral health care. Prevention should be a clear focus of any oral health plan or policy. However, oral health prevention and education programs appear to be the lowest priority.

The AMA report states that the Australian Government committed \$10.5 million towards the implementation of a National Oral Health Promotion Plan, however, a draft plan presented to the government was never progressed and the funding taken away.

"We have a health system that simply doesn't support oral health," Dr Matthews said.

ADA NSW is calling on the Government to restore the funding and implement a National Oral Health Promotion Plan. Furthermore, we would like to see greater access to fluoridated water in Indigenous communities and fluoride varnish programs where access is not possible. More flexible service models and a greater Indigenous dental health workforce are also recommendations ADA NSW supports.

The AMA's *No More Decay* report card is a plan for the government to act on to improve the oral health of Indigenous people. ADA NSW would welcome the opportunity to support the implementation of key recommendations.

You can read the full report [here >](#)

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