

VOHA Response to the 2024-2025 Victorian Budget

This report was prepared by representatives of the various leading professional, welfare, and consumer organisations, alongside community dental services on behalf of the Victorian Oral Health Alliance (VOHA).

Funding may slightly reduce this year compared to last, but it has significantly decreased from pre-COVID times.

- The Budget figure of \$213.4m is down 15% (\$37m) from last year, excluding the Commonwealth NPA funding.
- The Federal Budget commits \$26.9m (\$1m more than the 2016-17 allocation) to Victoria. Including this, the total is \$240m, a \$10m reduction from last year.
- There is no allowance for inflation, including agreed or likely staff enterprise bargaining agreement rises.
- In 2019-20, pre-COVID, actual funded expenditure was \$294m, 22% more than the 2024-25 announcement. Targets were almost the same, indicating a significant per-person funding reduction, even without inflation.
- Considering inflation, the CPI indicates a 19% increase over five years. To match 2019-20 figures, funding for 332,000 Victorians should be around \$350m, \$110m more than currently allocated, a 28% reduction per client in CPI-adjusted terms.
- The system remains focused on emergency care and priority groups, leaving only 25% to address long waiting lists for general care.
- Budget papers' waiting time targets are unchanged at an average of 23 months for general clients and 22 months for dentures, which are unacceptable on fairness or clinical grounds.

Funding Comparison between 2024/25 and 2019/20

Year	Funding \$	Funding adjusted to 2024	Target persons	Todays \$ per client	% change from 19-20 adjusted
2019-20	294m	350m	324k	\$1,080	
2024-25 with Commonwealth NPA\$*	240m	240m	332k	\$772	-28%
2024-25 no Commonwealth	213m	213m	332k	\$641	-41%

** Assumes \$27m NPA arrives

From Budget Paper # 3

Dental Services (2024-25: \$213.4 million)

This output includes delivery of a range of dental health services to support health and wellbeing in the community.

	2023-24 budget	2023-24 revised	2024-25 budget	Variation % ^(a)
Dental Services ^(c)	250.7	250.9	213.4	(14.9)

(c) The lower 2024-25 target reflects pending Commonwealth commitments for Dental Services and the cashflow profile for the Smile Squad program.

From Departmental Performance Statement

Dental Services (2024-25: \$213.4 million)

This output includes delivery of a range of dental health services to support health and wellbeing in the community.

Performance measure	Unit of measure	2024-25 target	2023-24 expected outcome	2023-24 target	2022-23 actual
Quantity					
Children participating in the Smiles 4 Miles oral health promotion program	number	60 000	60 000	49 000	60 657
The 2023-24 expected outcome is higher than the 2023-24 target due to increased funding of staff and promotional materials, boosting the program's reach to more children in early childhood services. The higher 2024-25 target is due to increased funding that will improve capacity of staff and expand promotional materials to be able to reach more children in early childhood services, increasing the program's coverage.					
Persons treated	number	332 150	332 150	332 150	296 932
Priority and emergency clients treated	number	249 100	249 100	249 100	221 565
Schools visited by Smile Squad	number	575	523	200	177
The 2023-24 expected outcome is higher than the 2023-24 target due to continued uplift in activity. Initial target was set at the implementation stage of the program, where there was no historical data to inform target setting. The higher 2024-25 target is due to continued uplift in activity. Initial target was set at the implementation stage of the program, where there was no historical data to inform target setting.					
Students examined by Smile Squad	number	58 000	48 626	50 000	31 844
The higher 2024-25 target is due to continued uplift in activity as the program reaches full capacity.					
Students receiving treatment by Smile Squad	number	15 500	12 960	7 500	7 759
The 2023-24 expected outcome is higher than the 2023-24 target due to continued uplift in activity. Initial target was set at the implementation stage of the program, where there was no historical data to inform target setting. The higher 2024-25 target is due to continued uplift in activity as the program reaches full capacity.					
Timeliness					
Percentage of Dental Emergency Triage Category 1 clients treated within 24 hours	per cent	90	90	90	91
Waiting time for dentures	months	22	22	22	16.1
Waiting time for general dental care	months	23	23	23	16.9
Cost					
Total output cost	\$ million	213.4	250.9	250.7	240.7
The lower 2024-25 target reflects pending Commonwealth commitments for Dental Services and the cashflow profile for the Smile Squad program.					

Source: Department of Health

The only departmental objective related to oral health is to reduce the hospitalisation rate for children aged 0-9 years due to dental conditions. The Budget makes no further mention of this, likely considering it an operational matter.

Our Members

Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch
Australian Dental Health Foundation
Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapists's Association
Australian Dental Prosthetists Association
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Better Health Network
Brotherhood of St Laurence
coHealth
Council on Ageing Victoria
Dental Hygienists Association of Australia
East Grampians Health Service
IPC Health
Melbourne Dental School
Australian Network for Integration of Oral Health
North Richmond Community Health
Public Health Association Australia: Oral Health SIG
Uniting AgeWell
Victorian Alcohol and Other Drug Association
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
Victorian Healthcare Associations
Violet Vines Marshman Centre for Rural Health Research
Your Community Health