

Draft National Oral Health Plan 2015-2024

Client: National Oral Health Monitoring Group

Services: Development of a draft national oral health plan

Context

With the first National Oral Health Plan reaching the end of its ten-year lifespan in 2013, the Standing Council on Health through the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council needed a new national plan for 2014-15. Working closely with the National Oral Health Plan Monitoring Group, the AHHA collaborated on the development of the new plan, including chairing the project and conducting and commissioning research and literature reviews.

This National Oral Health Plan (2015-2024) outlines a blueprint for united action by all state and territories in conjunction with Commonwealth services, with the goal of ensuring all Australians have healthy mouths.

Approach

The development of the National Oral Health Plan required a thorough examination of current issues and opportunities facing the dental and oral health sectors. The AHHA conducted an initial organisational needs analysis, which identified existing and future workforce issues and relevant legislation and regulation affecting the delivery of effective and efficient oral health services.

The AHHA identified key stakeholders and established consultation and communication strategies to ensure optimal levels of engagement across a range of sectors. The AHHA also reported regularly to stakeholders and the Standing Council of Health and its subsidiary committees. This included a high level of negotiation and communication with relevant staff in the Department of Health.

AHHA's Executive Director chaired the development of the new plan. This role incorporated project management, workshop facilitation, writing and editing, consultation and negotiation. The AHHA undertook coordination of communications, document design and development, and also liaised with politicians from all parties and senior bureaucrats.

Results

The key challenge of the project was to source the opinions and input of a broad range of stakeholders across the oral health, health, education, aged care, disability, community care and hospital sectors, including professional colleges and associations, federal, state and territory governments and consumer groups. AHHA's staged communication and consultation strategy that incorporated a range of styles and media ensured that extensive useful feedback was obtained.

The greater challenge was to synthesise the often disparate views and aims of these groups and develop a consensus on the intentions, strategies and measures to include in the plan. This process required many rounds of consultation and negotiation which again utilised a range of strategies including workshops, focus groups and one-on-one negotiations. A focus on the overall goal and the ability to facilitate compromise supported the success of this approach.