



Strategic Plan 2026



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Context

As outlined in the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards¹, acknowledgement of the effect of colonial policies and racism on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is important for providing culturally safe services that meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

SA Dental **respects** the stories, traditions and living culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the important role this plays in the overall health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

SA Dental **recognises** the impact of social determinants on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the significant barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience in accessing services, including dental services.

SA Dental **commits** to providing a culturally respectful environment which enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access safe and equitable oral health care.

¹ The Wardliparrangga Aboriginal Research Unit of the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute. National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards User Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. Sydney: Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care; 2017.





Statement of Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians on whose ancestral lands we provide dental services.

We acknowledge the deep feeling of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Country.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending our services.

We are committed to improving the oral health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Artwork by Alan Sumner.
Ngarrindjeri - Kurna - Yankunytjatjara - Artist South Australia

Foreword

Our Strategic Plan 2026 is about where we want to be, not where we are now. The vision is ambitious and reflects the importance of integrating oral health and general health. It emphasises the role we all have in actively working to improve integration, and ultimately oral health.

We have used South Australia's Oral Health Plan 2019 – 2026 as a foundation to reflect how the direction of SA Dental will work towards achieving the Oral Health Plan's objectives. The plan has been informed by passionate staff who provided feedback on how we should achieve our vision.

Whilst a 5-year Strategic Plan can seem a long way away from the majority of our day to day clinical service provision, we need a long term vision to highlight the importance of a clear and unified organisational direction. The benefit of having this vision can be seen when we reflect on some of the achievements from the previous Strategic Plan, with some of the highlights from that plan presented overleaf.

Our Strategic Objectives and areas of focus are deliberately broad enough that they provide direction for our organisation, whilst enabling our plan to remain agile and adaptable to our environment and opportunities as they present themselves. As outlined in the Next Steps, these opportunities and our priorities will be reviewed annually.

SA Dental has recently released our new brand. Together with our Strategic Plan 2026, we have a refreshed direction for our organisation, and look forward to you joining us on the journey.

Mark Chilvers

Executive Director
SA Dental



Strategic Plan Achievements: 2011-2018



Focus on high risk children with ongoing improvements in the number of preschool aged children receiving care, and reductions in 12 year old DMFT.

Initial Closing the Gap Funding for Aboriginal Oral Health Program in 2012 – now part of core business and sustained increases in the number of Aboriginal adults and children seen every year.

Implementation of specialist dental schemes, supporting reduction in specialist waiting lists.



Continued involvement of the Consumer Advisory Panel in shaping our service delivery and overseeing the Measuring Consumer Experience Survey, with consistently high scores received.

Roll out of T12 across all SA Dental Clinics.



Leadership of National Dental Directors Forum for most of the last 10 years, with advocacy contributing to the establishment of National Partnership Agreements and Child Dental Benefits Schedule funding arrangements.



Development and release of South Australia's Oral Health Plan 2019-2026.

Development and implementation of the Homelessness Oral Health Program.



Development of a 30 year Dental Education Partnership Agreement with University of Adelaide, incorporating the establishment of the new Adelaide Dental Hospital and Riverland Oral Health Centre, and the Graduate Certificate in Oral Health Science with 23 Dental Therapists completing to extend their scope of practice to patients of all ages.

Construction, refurbishment or upgrade of 34 dental clinics including Noarlunga, Modbury GP Plus, Marleston, Murray Bridge, Wallaroo, Magill, Linden Park and Port Adelaide.

Implementation of Hall Crown technique with reductions in waiting list times for children needing general anaesthetic.



96% of all clinics meet or exceed ACHS national clinical indicator benchmarks.

Engagement Plan

The development of the SA Dental Strategic Plan 2026 did not occur overnight. Starting from the release of South Australia's Oral Health Plan in 2019, the SA Dental leadership team began considering what SA Dental's role in implementing the plan needed to be, and how we need to configure our services to support this.

A series of workshops with the leadership team was conducted, which led to the development of a revised vision and mission statement, and strategic objectives for the organisation. These were linked to the key pillars of the Oral Health Plan.

The new vision and mission statement, along with the strategic objectives aligned to the key pillars, and a request for staff to identify what actions they thought we needed to pursue as an organisation were put to staff to seek their thoughts. A combination of online surveys and Listening Posts – posters displayed in clinics and work spaces, intended as talking points for staff to discuss and record their thoughts on – were used. The perspectives of our consumers are also critical, and our Consumer Advisory Panel were provided with a presentation, and an online survey.

The feedback received has led to the vision and mission statement being further refined and has also shaped the priority actions.



Consumer Statement

The SA Dental Consumer Advisory Panel (CAP) engages with officers of SA Dental and provides input from a number of personal, community perspectives and experiences with particular regard to the specific needs of Aboriginal people; those of early childhood years through to adolescence; rural and remote residents; mental health additional needs; challenges presented for those living with a disability and those who are financially disadvantaged; ageing; from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and broader community needs.

It is a privilege for CAP to be able to input, for consideration, issues noted or observed in the community or personally experienced. Senior and Executive SA Dental officers regularly present to CAP the agency's proposed work, and that which is in progress or completed. Through direct access to this senior level there is a genuine sense of accountability, with a particular emphasis on collaboration and ongoing consultation. This engagement includes involvement in reviews, development of strategic initiatives and genuine stakeholder consultation and collaboration reported in this Strategic Plan. Happily there are lots of opportunities to recognise and celebrate ongoing achievements.

As with any human service, especially in health service delivery to vulnerable individuals in our community, there are many issues and processes still to address. CAP members look forward to assisting in their development.

Dr Sophia Matiasz
SA Dental
Consumer Advisory Panel

South Australians value and improve their oral health, understanding its importance for their overall health and wellbeing.



Leads population oral health improvement

SA Dental is the leader in policy, advocacy, education and health promotion to improve oral health for all South Australians, with a specific focus on increasing equity in oral health for priority population groups.

Delivers service to eligible individuals

SA Dental supports individuals to improve their oral health by providing dental care to eligible adults and all children.

State Oral Health Plan Foundation Areas

| Systems Alignment and Integration | Oral Health Promotion and Prevention | Accessible Oral Health Services | Workforce Development | Safety and Quality | Research and Evaluation |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| We create opportunities to integrate oral health into public and private health services | We lead public oral health, providing and supporting population education and programs | We are a leader in service design, advocating policies and providing advice to improve access to oral health care | We support and develop the current and future workforce to meet the oral health needs of the community | We provide safe and quality public oral health services that meet the needs of priority and eligible populations | We grow a culture of curiosity and inquiry, using research to inform service models and planning |

The SA Dental Role and Contribution: Our Strategic Ambitions

Our Strategic Objectives

| | |
|---|---|
| Lead advocacy and collaboration for oral health in the State and Nationally, focusing on integration and sustainability to support good oral health for all | Be an employer of choice, with SA Dental staff supported to utilise and extend their skills, knowledge and abilities to work to the top of their scope of practice so that our dental workforce can be used optimally |
| Improve oral health knowledge and behaviours through a comprehensive promotional and educational program | Partner with education providers and the existing health workforce to ensure a skilled and sustainable oral health workforce and the integration of oral health practices in the broader health workforce |
| Improve the oral health of priority populations through targeted population health strategies | Ensure safe and high quality services and infrastructure through continuous review and improvement |
| Review services and models of care to ensure they are safe, contemporary, meet the needs of our consumers and support improved access to oral health services | Enhance the cultural safety of services provided by SA Dental |
| Improve service and business processes to maximise patient access, efficiency and value to consumers and staff | Enhance innovation and improve service delivery by partnering with staff and external partners to create, use and disseminate evidence, data and knowledge |



SA Dental Strategic Plan 2026

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Government of
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SA Dental Vision and Mission

Oral health is an integral component of overall health and wellbeing. Poor oral health interferes with daily function, impacts on social interactions and work productivity and is associated with a range of poor general health outcomes.

The awareness and link between oral health and general health is a key focus of the SA Dental Strategic Plan 2026, reflected in a new vision and mission statement.

Vision

South Australians value and improve their oral health, understanding its importance for their overall health and wellbeing.

Mission

Leads population oral health improvement:

SA Dental is the leader in policy, advocacy, education and health promotion to improve oral health for all South Australians, with a specific focus on increasing equity in oral health for priority population groups.

Delivers service to eligible individuals:

SA Dental supports individuals to improve their oral health by providing dental care to eligible adults and all children.

SA Dental Values

The SA Dental values are the foundation for how we work together and how we treat others. They underpin the principles we strive for, in ensuring that we value diversity and partner with the community to enable all South Australians to achieve better oral health and wellbeing.

Staff feedback reiterated that these values remain important and, for the most part, are evident in daily interactions. A continued focus on values remains part of our core business in how we work.

#ourway

SA Dental will utilise the hashtag 'Our Way' to promote our values, highlight examples of our values in action and build staff engagement with the strategic plan implementation.



SA Dental Values

We work with the community to enable all South Australians to achieve better health and wellbeing. We value diversity and provide additional support for those groups within the community who find it more difficult to access services and maintain good oral health.

Demonstrating the SA Dental Values in our daily interaction with clients and colleagues supports the health, safety and wellbeing of all.

Honesty & Integrity

We are recognised for high ethical standards, people can trust what we do and say

Respect & Compassion

We treat everyone with respect, showing understanding and empathy, not judging

Creativity & Innovation

We challenge existing ideas to constantly improve the way we work

Commitment to Excellence

We strive for excellence in all we do

Teamwork

We work together in partnership to achieve common goals

Communication

We communicate openly and honestly to build effective relationships

About Us

SA Dental is South Australia's major public dental provider and has responsibilities across the state. Governance of SA Dental is through the Central Adelaide Local Health Network.

SA Dental consists of two clinical streams, Statewide Dental Services and the Adelaide Dental Hospital. Statewide Dental Services (SWDS) comprises Child and Adult dental services as its two core programs as well as private sector schemes, remote dental services and attraction and retention of clinic staff. The Adelaide Dental Hospital (ADH) comprises six specialty dental services, general and emergency services, and provides infection control leadership across SA Dental.

Under arrangements with the University of Adelaide, SWDS and the ADH provide up to 90 undergraduate student chairs in which students undertake clinical placements. The ADH is the main dental teaching site for postgraduate students and SWDS supports postgraduate paediatric dentistry placements.

Our clinical streams provide direct care to eligible clients. For children's services, we provide universal access to public dental care for all children under 18 years. For adult and specialist services, public dental care is available to eligible card holders. SA Dental also provides dental care to public hospital inpatients in emergency situations, prisoners, and a limited number of services to full fee paying clients in emergency situations or where specialist expertise only available in SA Dental is required.

SA Dental non-clinical streams are the Service, Quality and Performance Improvement, and Corporate Services teams. The Service, Quality and Performance Improvement Unit has responsibility for health promotion and programs, communications, strategic and operational planning, capital planning, safety, quality and risk, client relations, workforce development and evaluation and research. Corporate Services manages biomedical engineering, contracts, leases, corporate records, and policy administration, as well as oversight of building management, ICT and procurement. Human Resources support is provided by CALHN, while SA Dental business managers support the delivery of effective financial management and reporting, and compliance with government and legislative financial requirements.

Our clinical and non-clinical teams work in partnership to provide system leadership of oral health care in the state, to support the promotion and improvement of oral health for all South Australians, irrespective of eligibility for direct care.

Client care remains the heart of our business, and our strategic plan actions support our staff to continue to deliver services and for our clients to continue to receive this care, whilst also partnering with a range of organisations to support improved oral health care.

About Us

Each Year



We provide more than
60,000 general and
specialist services at the Adelaide
Dental Hospital

We manage **40** School Dental Clinics and Vans across
the State, and partner with private providers in remote
areas, to provide more than **130,000** dental
visits to children



1,000 adults experiencing
homelessness and
680 residents of Supported
Residential Facilities are supported
to access priority dental care



We employ **950** staff
Our operating budget is almost
\$69 million
Our website receives
350,000 hits

We provide emergency public dental care for older
people living in Residential Aged Care Facilities who are
unable to leave the facility to attend a Community
Dental Clinic

We provide more than
100,000 dental
visits to eligible adults
across our
30 Community Dental
Clinics or through
partnerships with private
dentists

The average waiting time
for adult restorative treatment
in 19/20 was

13.8 months



5,275
Aboriginal adults and
4,820
Aboriginal children
receive priority dental care

Almost **400** University
of Adelaide dentistry
students undertake clinical
placements in our clinics

Our Six Strategic Ambitions

The SA Dental Strategic Plan is underpinned by six strategic ambitions, which reflect the foundation areas of South Australia's Oral Health Plan 2019 – 2026 and SA Dental's role in supporting these foundation areas. These ambitions have points of intersection, and contribute to the achievement of the other ambitions. Some of the ambitions, such as workforce and safety and quality, are ambitions in their own right as well as being critical enablers supporting the other ambitions.

As the State's public dental provider we balance our responsibilities in promoting oral health for all, while recognising that a considerable portion of our service delivery and organisational priorities are targeted towards priority populations, as defined in South Australia's Oral Health Plan 2019 – 2026.

Wrapped around and underpinning our organisational priorities is the imperative for our organisation to champion innovation and become digitally mature – to embrace digital and technological innovation in all aspects of our work – from supporting accessibility, to care provision, expanding our online presence and data and information capability.

Systems Alignment and Integration

We create opportunities to integrate oral health into public and private health services.

Promotion and Prevention

We lead public oral health, providing and supporting population education and programs.

Accessible Services

We are a leader in service design, advocating policies and providing advice to improve access to oral health care.

Workforce

We support and develop the current and future workforce to meet the oral health needs of the community.

Safety and Quality

We provide safe and quality health services that meet the needs of the community.

Research and Evaluation

We grow a culture of curiosity and inquiry, using research to inform service models and planning.

Our Strategic Objectives

1. Lead advocacy and collaboration for oral health in the State and Nationally, focusing on integration and sustainability to support good oral health for all.

- a) Increase involvement in advocacy and policy development to ensure oral health is represented in broader forums
- b) Partner with Wellbeing SA to enhance oral health and general health linkages
- c) Lead Commonwealth negotiations for long term future funding for oral health

2. Improve oral health knowledge and behaviours through a comprehensive promotional and educational program.

- a) Collaborate with the Department for Education to promote key oral health messages for children, and access to “SA Dental for Kids”
- b) Develop oral health education action plans for priority populations, with oral health messages and strategies tailored to each priority group

3. Improve the oral health of priority populations through targeted population health strategies.

- a) Improve access to general and specialist services for the rural and remote population
- b) Implement a population health strategy to improve fluoride varnish application rates for children considered at high risk for dental disease

4. Review services and models of care to ensure they are safe, contemporary, meet the needs of our consumers and support improved access to oral health services.

- a) Refresh our consumer engagement strategy, to ensure consumers have a voice in the planning and review of services
- b) Review the models of care for our priority populations
- c) Identify opportunities to develop integrated care models to improve linkages with general health

5. Improve service and business processes to maximise patient access, efficiency and value to consumers and staff.

- a) Leverage the opportunity created by a single electronic client record
- b) Ensure our business processes support our service delivery needs

Our Strategic Objectives

6. Be an employer of choice, with SA Dental staff supported to utilise and extend their skills, knowledge and abilities to enable them to work to the top of their scope of practice so that our dental workforce can be used optimally.

- a) Ensure career pathways exist across all dental professions
- b) Support ongoing staff education and training including mandatory training and leadership capability development

7. Partner with education providers and the existing health workforce to ensure a skilled and sustainable oral health workforce and the integration of oral health practices in the broader health workforce.

- a) Partner with university and TAFE sectors to embed health promotion and oral health competency into allied health and community services training
- b) Partner with the university to ensure the dental workforce of the future is appropriately skilled

8. Ensure safe and high-quality services and infrastructure through continuous review and improvement.

- a) Develop and maintain a clear strategic asset management and replacement programs to ensure infrastructure is contemporary and fit for purpose
- b) Promote a robust incident reporting culture using the Safety Learning System
- c) Ensure our electronic client record software remains contemporary and optimised to support clinical care

9. Enhance the cultural safety of services provided by SA Dental.

- a) Establish mechanisms to engage with our Aboriginal communities
- b) Maintain access to the Aboriginal Oral Health Program
- c) Ensure our physical environments and services meet cultural accessibility requirements

10. Enhance innovation and improve service delivery by partnering with staff and external partners to create, use and disseminate evidence, data and knowledge.

- a) Have processes to engage with staff about research and service improvement opportunities
- b) Enhance clinical data linkages so our clinicians have timely feedback
- c) Enhance internal and external quality improvement benchmarking systems

Next Steps

Each year, SA Dental undertakes an annual operational planning exercise, to determine priority areas for the coming financial year to support the achievement of the SA Dental goals and maximise the quality of care provided to our clients.

Of course, continuing to maintain our high standards of service delivery as we provide over 300,000 dental visits to our clients effectively and efficiently each year remains our core business, and these actions run in parallel to front line services, to continuously improve and support our frontline care.

The key agreed action areas to pursue as our initial priorities are outlined below. It is expected these actions will be the focus for the 2021/2022 planning cycle.

These actions have been grouped into six key areas:

1. Develop and implement a Promotion and Education Strategy - develop a comprehensive promotion and education strategy targeting services for children.
2. Model of care review – as part of a broader, continuous improvement program to ensure models of care are contemporary and meeting consumer needs.
3. Business process redesign project – leverage the functionality of a single T12 database to streamline administrative processes to support clinic operations.
4. Implement population health strategies including a focus on the rural and remote population, and fluoride varnish program for high risk schools.
5. Undertake a digital capability improvement strategy to streamline our digital processes.
6. Review and benchmark our consumer engagement strategy.

How will we measure our progress?

SA Dental is committed to improving the oral health of all South Australians, and there are a number of ways we will track how our strategic plan supports this. As an organisation, our managers and executive regularly review a range of operational measures on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. Specific actions related to our strategic plan will also be regularly reviewed. These will be communicated to our staff through regular updates, as well as the annual SA Dental Year Book which outlines our key safety, quality, and activity metrics, as well as describing our organisational actions and outcomes. We will:

- > Measure patient experience of our services
- > Track population level oral health outcomes
- > Ensure our services are delivered in alignment with population oral health principles
- > Record and review all of our clinical incidents
- > Monitor our staffing levels and ratios, and annual turnover rates
- > Continuously monitor our waiting lists and access to services
- > Measure the quantum and cost of care we provide.



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