

EPC Dental Access Scheme temporarily opens again

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On Thursday June 19, the Senate successfully blocked the removal of the Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) Dental program by passing a Motion for Disallowance. This means that people with HIV (and other chronic and complex conditions) once again have access to Medicare funded dental care through private dentists.

It is likely there will be a further vote on this subject when the Senate meets again on August 26, however the outcome of such a vote will depend on the fine balance of power in the new Senate, and in the meantime the EPC program is currently open to new patients.

People with HIV are now eligible to enrol in the scheme (until a Senate vote might cancel it once again). The previously stated closing date of June 30, 2008 no longer applies. People with HIV are strongly encouraged to see their GP urgently for a referral to a dentist, and to begin their first dental treatment as soon as possible.

The *EPC Plan* funds dental care services for people with chronic conditions and complex care needs, including HIV, and uses private dentists not hospitals. This scheme was cancelled in March 2008, but has suddenly and unexpectedly become open again for a period.

It is not clear how long the scheme will now be open for. Accessing the scheme involves getting a dentist referral from your GP, which can sometimes be time-consuming, so it's important to act quickly. See www.acon.org.au [1] for further advice on how to commence the procedure to be eligible. It is unclear at this stage what alternative measures the Federal Government are proposing to put in place to assist people with chronic conditions, including HIV, with their dental needs.

- [oral health](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.acon.org.au>