



Tamariki Niho Ora – MySmile

National will ensure that all children in New Zealand have true access to good oral health.

We will increase funding for childhood dental services by 30 per cent.

New Zealand has free dental care for children up to age 18. But too often this system is not comprehensive especially for the formative pre-school, primary school and intermediate years. The system is not performing well with New Zealand children having poor oral outcomes. There are currently 120,000 kids on the dental waiting lists.

National will provide the resources to ensure that Kiwi kids most at need can access quality dental care.

We will also introduce a comprehensive programme for pre-school, primary schools and intermediates initially in high need areas to improve child oral health from ages 3 to 13 modelled on Scotland's Childsmile programme which includes:

- All children provided with an annual dental health pack containing information material, a toothbrush and toothpaste for daily tooth brushing.
- Oral health education programme.
- Funding a free fluoride varnish.

Oral health is a key part of general health and it involves much more than a nice smile. It affects the way we chew, eat, smile, speak and can influence our overall wellbeing.

There are currently substantial disparities in dental care access across New Zealand and in low socioeconomic groups children's dental decay rates remain high.

Poor oral health is preventable. To tackle the broader issues of oral health for children, a focus on oral health prevention and promotion is necessary.

National will invest in our kids. We will increase the resources to paediatric and school dental services and introduce a comprehensive programme to improve child oral health in New Zealand.

Investment in Tamariki Niho Ora – MySmile is part of National's Social Investment approach. By providing a targeted intervention in childhood we can provide lifelong benefits to our kid's health.

This investment will also provide savings to future individuals and taxpayers as they will require fewer expensive dental procedures.

Currently \$100M is spent on childhood dental services. We will increase that by 30 per cent.

National will fund free targeted topical dental fluoride in line with the Ministry of Health recommendation.

Our policy

National will ensure that all Kiwi kids have access to the resources they need to have good oral health today and the education they need to have good oral health for life.

National will:

- Invest an additional \$30 million per year in our childhood oral health programme.
- Increase resources for the paediatric and school dentals service to ensure all children have appropriate access to high quality dental care.
- Introduce a comprehensive programme to improve paediatric and child oral health.

The Scottish Example

Scotland also had poor childhood oral health, especially for those in low socioeconomic households.



In the early 2000s Scotland acted and introduced the Childsmile programme, a national programme designed to improve the oral health of children and address the inequalities in oral health and dental services.

The Childsmile programme has been successful at improving oral health in Scotland. In 2008, pre-Childsmile, 42 per cent of 5 year olds had tooth decay. By 2014 this had declined to 32 per cent. The average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for 5 year olds had declined from 1.9 to 1.3.

Q&A

Is this compulsory?

No, this will be an opt-out policy. Parents will have the ability to opt-out their children for all or part of the programme.

Schools and kindergartens will also have the ability to opt-out of the programme.

We already have free basic dental care up to age 18, why is an additional child dental policy needed?

The existing children's dental policy is underfunded and not comprehensive. We will provide the resources to ensure that Kiwi kids can access quality dental care.

Our new programme is about prevention and education. In New Zealand oral health education is meant to be delivered chairside to primary school-aged children by Dental Therapists in the COHS. Staff shortages, time limitations and long waitlists are placing this service under pressure, limiting the ability of dental therapists to pass on education chairside as intended.

How much will this cost?

Tamariki Niho Ora - MySmile will cost an additional \$30 million annually. This is a 30 per cent increase over the \$100 million New Zealand currently spends annually on youth dental services.

This programme is also expected to save money in the long term, with the cost benefit analysis of the supervised tooth brushing alone being as high as 5.0. Indicating that for every \$1 spent there will be \$5 in benefit.

Who will benefit from this programme?

There are significant disparities in access to dental care in New Zealand. Tamariki Niho Ora - MySmile will be rolled out to high-needs areas initially, to help address this.