



# Public Dental Clinic Locations, Treatment and Assessment Waitlists in NSW

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# **CPSA**

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## Introduction

This research was completed in order to map the demand and availability of public dental services in NSW.

Public dental care is designed to ensure that dental care is available to those who would otherwise be unable to afford it privately. To be eligible for public dental care in NSW you need to have a Health Care Card, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or Pensioner Concession Card.

This means that as of September 2023 almost 1.9 million people in NSW are eligible. Many of these people rely on income support payments as their main source of income and do not have the savings to afford private dental care.

Despite this desperate need, the public dental system cannot cope with the demand. As of September 2023, there were 73,122 patients waiting for treatment or assessment, up from 68,135 the previous month.

In order to prioritise those in the most need, patients are triaged so that urgent cases are seen first. However, there are more urgent cases than non-urgent cases continuously, so that it is virtually impossible for a person to receive a regular check-up if they don't have any other issues of concern.

This means small problems aren't caught or treated early enough and patients are left waiting until they are in extreme pain and can be moved to the top of the list as an urgent case.

Accessing public dental care is also made harder by the fact that many Local Health Districts have a very limited number of clinics. Public dental clinics in rural areas are few and far between. The Oral Health Fee for Service Scheme offers patients vouchers to use at private dental clinics, but many private clinics choose not to participate in the scheme.

Other than for major procedures such as dental surgery, dental patients are ineligible for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. This means that they receive no assistance in making the long trip to their closest public dental clinic.

For those in rural areas, public transport is limited at best and non-existent at worst. Patients are left with no option but to pay out of pocket for car trips that can be hours each way or to pay exorbitant amounts for taxis if they are unable to drive long distances themselves.

All people deserve the right to timely, preventative and accessible dental care. To all intents and purposes, such care is not available under the current system.

## Public Dental Treatment and Assessment Waitlists by Local Health District (LHD)

Note that some rural Local Health Districts only provided public information and were unable to share whether clinics were permanent or outreach. Clinics in metropolitan areas are all permanent.

**Total Waitlists: 68,135**

<b>Metropolitan</b>	<b>Waitlist - October 2023</b>	<b>Waitlist - January 2024</b>
Central Coast	3,550	4,011
Illawarra Shoalhaven	2,657	4,130
Nepean Blue Mountains	5,516	6,427
Northern Sydney	3,944	3,831
South Eastern Sydney	2,599	2,716
South Western Sydney	7,893	8,366
Sydney	2,897	4,122
Western Sydney	7,100	5,625
<b>Rural and Regional</b>		
Far West	946	931
Hunter New England	11,926	12,964
Mid North Coast	5,082	3,949
Murrumbidgee	1,929	1,926
Northern NSW	4,522	4,360
Southern NSW	1,647	1,345
Western NSW	3,290	5,311
<b>Other</b>		
Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network	2,637	3,108