

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP

Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Equality



Thursday, 19 November 2020

ALL SMILES AS SCHOOL DENTAL VANS BACK ON THE ROAD

The Andrews Labor Government's *Smile Squad* free dental vans are getting back on the road, after a temporary pause as part of the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Thanks to Victorians playing their part, staying home and getting tested, we've been able to ease some restrictions, including increasing access to public dental services.

Last week, *Smile Squad* began resuming rolling out for Term 4 in regional schools in Greater Bendigo and Latrobe to be followed soon by Wodonga. *Smile Squad* services will return gradually, progressing towards rollout across the state from Term 1, 2021.

While the mobile service was paused, Smile Squad was able to provide services to over 1200 students via phone check ins and treatment in fixed clinics. The *Smile Squad* initiative means children across the State can receive free dental care and families can save hundreds of dollars every year.

Tooth decay is one of the most prevalent disease in Victoria with almost half all children affected. And dental conditions are the highest single cause of preventable hospitalisations for kids under 10.

The *Smile Squad* vans provide free check-ups and treatment to all students in Victorian public schools, including examinations, teeth cleaning, fluoride application, fissure sealants, fillings, root canals and any other non-cosmetic treatments to ensure our kids have healthy teeth.

Smile Squad encourages all Victorian children and their families to keep looking after their oral health by eating well, drinking tap water and brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

The Andrews Labor Government's \$321.9 million free dental care program started six months ahead of schedule in August last year – saving families time and money sooner.

Once fully rolled out the program will offer check-ups and dental treatment to more than 650,000 public school kids every year.

More information about the program can be found at smilesquad.vic.gov.au

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"Our Smile Squad vans can safely hit the road again delivering free dental care to our kids thanks to Victorians staying home and following the restrictions, which helped us get on top of the coronavirus pandemic."

"I'm confident families have been looking after their oral health over recent months by eating well, drinking tap water and brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste – but the return of Smile Squad will really put a smile on their faces."

"Our kids deserve to have healthy happy smiles but some families struggle to find the time and money to get to the dentist – that's why the Smile Squad comes to students where they are to provide free dental care."

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