

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Equality



Saturday, 20 March 2021

## HEALTHIER SMILES FOR ABORIGINAL KIDS IN LODDON MALLEE

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring Aboriginal children in the Loddon Mallee region have strong and healthy teeth.

The \$360,000 Loddon Mallee Fluoride Varnish program will help protect 600 Aboriginal children in schools, Aboriginal-specific early years services and Aboriginal childcare organisations at heightened risk of tooth decay.

Fluoride varnish applications reduce tooth decay in young children by 37 per cent by providing a protective covering. The varnish also prevents an existing tooth decay from progressing further.

The preventive oral health program provides including twice-yearly fluoride varnish applications, oral health promotion and free tooth packs to Aboriginal children across the Loddon Mallee region.

The expanded program builds on a successful pilot in 2018/20, which reached 200 Aboriginal children aged up to 18 across the region.

The program is being delivered by the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative in partnership with community dental agencies and other local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Health promotion, screening and early detection and prevention is crucial to reducing the chances of oral disease.

The program is on top of the Labor Government's \$321 million *School Dental Program – Smile Squad* that is providing free annual dental care for all children at government primary and secondary schools across Victoria.

While there have been significant improvements in oral health over the last 30 years, tooth decay continues to be a problem among many Victorians. Advanced tooth decay is 1.9 times more common in Aboriginal young children than non-Aboriginal children.

### Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

*"As a parent, I know how important good oral hygiene is for young kids. Tooth decay is completely preventable, so we're ensuring Aboriginal children in the Loddon Mallee get the dental care they need for a healthy smile."*

### Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan

*"Good dental health is the foundation for good overall health throughout life – that's why we are taking action to prevent tooth decay and keep smiles bright and healthy in the Loddon Mallee."*

### Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

*"We're making sure no local Aboriginal kids miss out on the very best dental care and a great and healthy smile."*

### Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards

*"World-class dental healthcare for kids in the Loddon Mallee is good news for the health and well-being of our community, and even better news for high-skilled local jobs."*

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