

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services



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## FREE SPECIALISED DENTAL CARE IN REGIONAL HUBS

Children in regional Victoria will be able to access dental care closer to home as the Andrews Labor Government continues to invest in specialised dental hubs and satellite clinics.

The Labor Government is establishing three regional hubs in the Bendigo, Geelong and Latrobe Valley regions, to expand the metro Melbourne service – saving Victorian parents time, money and hassle when it comes to their child's health.

The hubs will offer a range of specialised dental care that not all general dentists are able to provide, including in areas such as paediatric dentistry, oral surgical care and treatment for children with special needs.

This means children in regional areas will no longer have to travel long distances to Melbourne to receive treatment through the public health system. The new hubs are expected to open later this year and will ultimately save families hours of travel time and will see more kids getting the specialist dental care they need closer to home.

The new hubs will also expand the state's dental workforce, creating more jobs and support the ongoing demand for Victoria's public dental service both now and into the future.

Additionally, the hubs will free up appointments for adults in the public health system and shorten wait times for those who need specialised dental care.

Children can be referred to these new services through the Smile Squad program, which gives free dental care to government school students throughout Victoria. Smile Squad offers free dental examinations and treatment to children in Victorian government schools.

The Smile Squad program's clinic vans first hit the road in 2019 and have since helped thousands of children receive free and high-quality dental care at school. The program offers specialised care beyond annual checkups such as fillings, root canals and crowns.

The *Victorian Budget 2022/23* provides \$327.7 million in funding to public dental services, which provides care to more than 330,000 eligible Victorians.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

*"Maintaining good dental health in children establishes lifelong healthy habits, which is why it's so important we provide specialised dental care in the regions."*

*"These new hubs will expand the overall capacity of our public dental system, meaning more Victorians can get the care they need sooner, and closer to home."*

*"These new hubs will also provide great career opportunities for those interested in dentistry and in a way that benefits regional communities."*