

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



Monday, 20 March 2023

BRINGING MORE SMILES TO VICTORIAN STUDENTS

More Victorian students are getting critical early oral care they deserve – free of charge – as the Andrews Labor Government’s Smile Squad continues to roll out.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited Glenroy Central Primary School to celebrate World Oral Health Day and announce that all Victorian government primary, secondary and specialist school have now been invited to participate in the program.

Smile Squad gives students in government schools completely free check-ups and treatment – including teeth cleaning, fluoride application, fissure sealants, fillings and root canals – to ensure our children have healthy teeth and save parents time and money.

Smile Squad has already provided care to more than 82,000 students and handed out more than 350,000 oral health packs.

Dental conditions are the highest single cause of preventable hospitalisations for kids under 10 in Victoria. 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 Labor Government invested more than \$321 million to deliver Smile Squad to all Victorian government schools – and we’ve promised to deliver a further \$17 million investment to expand Smile Squad free dental van to all low-fee independent and Catholic schools from 2026 – saving parents time and money on trips to the dentist.

With more Victorian students accessing free oral care, the Labor Government is also recruiting more dental assistants.

Our Dental Assisting Traineeship Program is supporting recruits with training, mentoring and supervision to undertake the Certificate III Dental Assisting traineeship. As part of the program recruits earn and learn for 12 months before being offered opportunities for ongoing career progression.

The Labor Government invested \$3 million to deliver this program through Jobs Victoria which provides employment opportunities to people who are experiencing long-term unemployment, culturally diverse, women aged over 45, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and newly arrived migrants.

Trainees through the program have found positions at health services across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria – the majority of recruits are women, and one in five are newly arrived migrants to Victoria.

Those recruited through the program are learning skills that can lead to many career opportunities including working with the Smile Squad program. To learn more and apply, visit jobs.vic.gov.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“Good dental health is critical to good overall health – that’s why we are taking action to prevent tooth decay and keep Victoria’s youngest smiles bright and healthy.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

Media contact: Harry Adam 0448 505 876 | harry.adam@minstaff.vic.gov.au

“Smile Squad gives our kids healthy smiles and saves parents time and money – great news for Victorian families as the cost-of-living rises.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Employment Ben Carroll

“This is a great opportunity for people looking to work in the public dental sector to get the skills to set themselves up for rewarding careers.”

Quote attributable to Member for Broadmeadows Kathleen Matthews-Ward

“It’s great to see Smile Squad visiting Glenroy Central Primary ensuring local kids get the oral care they need – at no cost to their families.”

Quote attributable to Dental Assistant recruit Sasi Jaksic

“I’m being paid to learn, meeting new people and gaining lots of experience with a certificate at the end.”