

Media Release

The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples
Acting Minister for Health
Acting Minister for Health Infrastructure
Acting Minister for Medical Research



Friday, 15 September 2023

DELIVERING PREVENTATIVE DENTAL CARE FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring Aboriginal children can access vital dental healthcare closer to home by providing more opportunities for Aboriginal health practitioners to take part in preventative dental training.

Acting Minister for Health Gabrielle Williams announced the second round of training grants is now open for practitioners wanting to become accredited in the application of fluoride varnish – a preventative dental treatment that reduces the risk of tooth decay in children by approximately 40 per cent.

Dental Health Services Victoria and RMIT University will conduct the training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in October, aiming to increase access to dental care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Victoria.

Participating Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCOs) can apply for individual grants of up to \$45,000 (with a total of \$650,000 allocated) to roll out this important intervention locally, teaching them to administer two fluoride varnish applications, six months apart, to up to 350 children aged between 3-17 years.

The latest funding follows a successful inaugural round of this initiative earlier this year that saw eight individual Aboriginal health practitioners accredited.

These first accredited practitioners span from several ACCOs across the state including:

- Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services in Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang
- Njernda Aboriginal Corporation in Echuca

The training was made possible after amendments were made to the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017* in February 2022 – championed by the Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group (LMARG) who worked with the Government and Department of Health to establish the changes.

The updated regulations see trained Aboriginal health practitioners as the first non-dental health professionals allowed to apply fluoride varnish, improving better health outcomes in Aboriginal communities by ensuring the delivery of the preventative treatment is done in a culturally appropriate way.

Expressions of Interest for the second round of the Aboriginal Health Practitioner Fluoride Varnish program are now and close on Wednesday, 27 September.

Applications can be made via the Aboriginal Health Practitioner Fluoride Varnish Program [EOI form](#).

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Health Gabrielle Williams

“We know that poor oral health can contribute to longer term health issues making the upskilling of our Aboriginal health practitioners to deliver preventative dental care so important.”

“The impact of this program extends beyond oral health – by delivering equitable healthcare and better access to training, there becomes a broader ability to break down barriers and close the gap.”

Media contact: Isobel Loschiavo 0431 963 479 | isobel.loschiavo@minstaff.vic.gov.au