

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Ageing

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Acting Minister for Health



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FREE DENTAL CHECKS AT THE ZOO TO KEEP KIDS' TEETH FANG-TASTIC

The Allan Labor Government's flagship Smile Squad program will pull up at Melbourne Zoo this Wednesday – with the mobile service providing free dental check-ups for kids visiting this school holidays.

Acting Minister for Health Ingrid Stitt visited the zoo's Lemur Island – joined by Smile Squad's newest furry ambassador, Dimby the ring-tailed Lemur who showed off his own pearly whites to encourage kids to keep their teeth healthy and clean too.

Dental conditions are one of the highest causes of preventable hospitalisations in children, with tooth decay now five times more prevalent than asthma among children.

This data highlights why the partnership with Zoos Victoria is so important – with the Smile Squad van visiting Melbourne and Werribee Zoos each school holidays, to give kids the knowledge they need for a lifetime of good oral health.

For families without private health insurance, the price of a visit to the dentist can be a deterrent to regular checkups – but with Smile Squad, maintaining oral health doesn't need to be a financial burden, with the service saving Victorian families up to \$400 a year per child on checkups, taking pressure off the hip pocket.

The mobile teams are made up of dedicated oral health clinicians who travel across the state in bright orange vans. The program provides free check-ups, x-rays, teeth cleaning, application of fluoride and dental sealants, fillings, and root canals to school students.

Since the program began, Smile Squad has visited more than 900 schools, providing checkups to more than 127,000 children and handing out more than 900,000 oral health packs which include a toothbrush, toothpaste and an oral health brochure.

More information on the Smile Squad program can be found at health.vic.gov.au/smile-squad.

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Health Ingrid Stitt

"It's essential we teach kids from a young age about the importance of good oral hygiene, helping them develop healthy habits to last a lifetime – and what better way to do that than with the help of some furry lemur friends."

"Not only is Smile Squad an important health and education program – it's also helping busy families save time and money."