

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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## FREE DENTAL GIVES THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES A REASON TO SMILE

Victorian families are saving up to \$400 a year per child on dental checkups, with the Allan Labor Government's *Smile Squad* school dental program continuing to take pressure off the hip pocket.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas and Minister for Education Ben Carroll today visited Keilor Primary School – one of the more than 900 Victorian government schools, and more than 127,000 children, to receive a visit from the van since the program began in 2019.

For families, 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.

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

With Term 2 now underway, parents are encouraged to register their child to take part in the program – and it's now easier than ever, with a new simplified form available in 31 languages making sure parents from any background can provide consent ahead of a visit to their child's school.

Dental conditions are one of the highest causes of preventable hospitalisations for children. Improving access to dental care is critical, with tooth decay now five times more prevalent than asthma among children.

Students can also access free care at Smile Squad Specialist Hubs in Geelong, Bendigo and Gippsland, while specialised dental care is available to all children referred through the program.

Smile Squad is one of a suite of programs funded by the Labor Government to ease the cost of living pressures on families including the \$400 School Saving Bonus, Glasses for Kids program, school breakfast clubs, discounted student travel, and free swimming lessons.

More information on the Smile Squad program can be found at [health.vic.gov.au/smile-squad](https://health.vic.gov.au/smile-squad).

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

*"Smile Squad is saving families time and money and keeping our youngest smiles bright and healthy."*

*"Good dental health is part of good health overall – that's why we are encouraging parents to make sure they have signed their new consent form so when Smile Squad comes to their kids' school they can use this free service."*

### Quote attributable to Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Member for Niddrie Ben Carroll

*"Smile Squad is just one way we are supporting the health of young Victorians – with parents also saving money with through the popular \$400 School Saving Bonus."*