

Media Release

The Hon Dan Andrews MP
Premier



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Sunday, 26 May 2019

THE SMILE SQUAD – FREE DENTAL VANS TO HIT SCHOOLS SOON

Victorian school students will have brighter smiles and hard-working families will avoid hefty dental bills, thanks to free dental care being rolled out at all Victorian public primary and secondary schools.

The *Victorian Budget 2019/20* provides \$321.9 million for the Andrews Labor Government's free dental care, as promised, with the first school dental vans to hit the road later this year.

Oral disease is one of the most common and expensive diseases to treat, but it's also the most preventable. Across Australia, a quarter of all children have untreated tooth decay; and in Victoria, dental conditions are the highest single cause of preventable hospitalisations for kids under 10.

The new fleet of dental vans will start visiting schools in Box Hill, Barwon South, Cranbourne and Wodonga in Term 3 this year, and will be rolled out to all Victorian public schools by 2022.

The Smile Squad vans will provide free check-ups and treatment including teeth cleaning, fluoride applications, fillings, root canals and any other non-cosmetic treatments to make sure our kids have healthy teeth.

All Victorian public primary and secondary school students will receive their own free dental packs, complete with a toothbrush, and lots of education about the benefits of a healthy, bright smile.

The Labor Government's landmark free dental care program will drive down big dental costs for families, with bills expected to be slashed by \$400 each year for each kid. It will also free up more than 100,000 places for adults in the public dental system each year, reducing wait times.

The full fleet of Smile Squad vans will hit the road by 2022, providing free check-ups and dental treatment for about 650,000 school kids every year. Around 500 dentists, oral health therapists and dental assistants will be employed to staff the vans.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We're making sure school students have a bright and healthy smile and we're helping hard-working families save on costly dental bills, as we promised we would."

"Kids' oral health is so important, but busy families can often struggle to find the time to get to the dentist. We're fixing that."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"Our kids deserve the best start in life, and good oral health is important to lay the foundations for good lifelong health and wellbeing."

"Tooth decay is preventable, but we all know dental bills hit the hip pocket hard. That's why our free dental care in public schools program is so important."