

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier

Victorian
Labor

**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Sunday, 18 November 2018

BRINGING BACK THE FREE DENTAL VAN TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Students right across the state will now have a brighter smile with a re-elected Andrews Labor Government to provide free dental care at all public primary and secondary schools.

The \$395.8 million initiative will save families around \$400 a year per child in dental costs, as well as the inconvenience of taking time off work for appointments.

It will also free up more than 100,000 places in the public dental care system each year, which has been left reeling thanks to the Liberals' cuts. These cuts – which represent 30 per cent of public dental funding – have left 140,000 Victorians waiting longer or missing out on vital dental care altogether.

Oral disease is one of the most common and expensive diseases to treat, but it is also the most preventable. Public dental care is available for Victorian children aged up to 12 years, but less than 20 per cent of eligible children take it up.

That is why Labor will make it easier to access with dental vans visiting all public schools, saving parents both time and money. The initiative will cover oral health education and check-ups, radiographs, teeth cleaning, application of fluoride and dental sealants, fillings, root canals and impressions for mouth guards.

Students will also be provided with a free dental pack each year to promote ongoing oral health. Across Australia, a quarter of all children have untreated tooth decay. In Victoria, dental conditions are the highest single cause of preventable hospitalisations for kids under 10.

At the end of 2021, we will review the program with a view to expand it to low-fee Catholic and independent schools.

Scott Morrison and the Federal Liberals have taken an axe to dental services – with funding cuts to the tune of \$30 million leaving the system in decay, and waiting lists growing ever longer. We've already invested \$12.1 million on a waiting list blitz to fix their mess – but there is more to do.

Only Labor will make sure around 500 dentists, oral health therapists and dental assistants are employed to staff the 250 dental vans over the next four years.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"As a parent, I know how important and expensive good oral hygiene is for young kids. Tooth decay is completely preventable, so we're ensuring all Victorian students at government schools can get the dental care they deserve."

"The dental bill is something every parent dreads. Labor's investment means kids will have a great, healthy smile without parents having to worry about the costs."

Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"Only Labor will make it easier for children to access the very best dental care cutting down on the hassle of organising family trips to the dentist."

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Quote attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

“We know the Liberals’ cuts to funding have created a significant backlog of Victorians needing dental care. This program will free up the existing public dental program so that more Victorians get faster dental care.”