

# Healthy families Healthy smiles

Issue No 25 December 2022

## Aboriginal Health Practitioners applying fluoride varnish in the community

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) play a critical role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Earlier this year, a Drugs and Poisons Regulations amendment approved Aboriginal Health Practitioners (AHPs) to apply fluoride varnish to children, to help prevent tooth decay.

Following this decision, the Department of Health funded a project to train AHPs and support ACCHOs to embed fluoride varnish application in their practice.



Twelve AHPs from across Victoria received training, led by RMIT and DHSV in Bendigo and Melbourne, consisting of knowledge building and skill building. The Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles team supported this training, leading a workshop designed to support AHPs to promote the oral health of very young children and pregnant women in their everyday practice.

Facilitating AHPs and ACCHOs to deliver oral health prevention and promotion will enable more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access oral health care.



## Merry Christmas

Thanks again to all our dental health friends and partners for your continued support in working together to improve the oral health of young children and pregnant women.

Dental Health Services Victoria offices will be closed from Wed 21 Dec to Tues 3 Jan inclusive.

We wish you a wonderful holiday season and look forward to working together again in 2023.

# Baby teeth need cleaning too! Evaluation snapshot of our Maternal and Child Health tooth pack program

We have recently conducted an evaluation of our *Baby Teeth Need Cleaning Too! 2021-22* initiative, to understand how it is helping Maternal Child Health (MCH) nurses support families to adopt good oral health behaviours.

By providing MCH nurses with tooth packs (adult and children's toothbrushes and toothpaste and information for parents and carers) to share with families, the initiative aimed to support nurses to incorporate a Lift-the-Lip check (for early signs of tooth decay) and demonstrate toothbrushing to parents.

We distributed 6,100 family tooth packs to MCH locations where children have a higher risk of poor oral health.

Thanks to the MCH services who supported the initiative and our evaluation.

Key findings:

- 96% of families provided with tooth-packs received a Lift-the-Lip check
- oral disease was detected in 8% of these children
- 67% of families received a toothbrushing demonstration
- 16% of children were referred to a dental professional



Feedback from MCH Coordinators/Team Leads highlighted:

- Tooth packs helped facilitate conversations with families and education about oral health.
- Tooth packs helped address cost barriers faced by some families.

Reassuringly, the program supported professionals to incorporate oral health promotion into their practice, as well as support families to adopt good oral health behaviours. This feedback helps us improve our process and future initiatives.

An evaluation report is currently being finalised and will be shared with participating services.

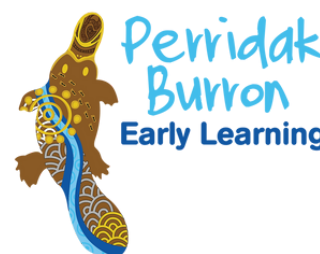
## New video: Watch how one early childhood education and care service promotes dental health

**Perridak Burron Early Learning, an Aboriginal community-owned education and care service in Brown Hill (Ballarat district), are helping families build healthy habits that will set them up for life.**

The service recently implemented the Smiles 4 Miles program, a whole-of-service approach to help improve the oral health of children and families.

Smiles 4 Miles Coordinator (Ballarat Community Health Service) supported staff to adopt key oral health practices:

- a healthy eating and oral health policy,
- activities that engage families about the importance of oral health,
- educate children through a variety of fun learning experiences around: Drink well, Eat well and Clean well.



Perridak Burron also worked closely with Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) to provide healthier food and drink to children.



[Watch the video](#)

## Pharmacies supporting oral health: pilot online training with staff

Because pharmacies are often the first point of contact for Australians seeking health advice, the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles team are trialing an online training course in Supercare Pharmacies. The course is designed to build the capacity of pharmacy staff to promote good oral health among customers and provide appropriate prevention advice.

Supercare pharmacies are a Victorian Government initiative aiming to increase public access to health advice and support. A pharmacist and a registered nurse is on-site (6pm-10pm daily) and the Pharmacy is open seven days a week.

The oral health online training program, developed by the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles team, has been shared with all 20 Supercare Pharmacies across the state. This pilot aims to provide insight into how best to develop support the professional development of this sector and will help us to determine the next steps. Thanks to everyone involved.

Please contact Olivia Bottomley, Health Promotion Officer, [olivia.bottomley@dhsv.org.au](mailto:olivia.bottomley@dhsv.org.au) for more information.

## Healthy families, Healthy smiles updates

We welcome back a former colleague, Robyn Alexander, Health Promotion Officer who will be leading initiatives for supported playgroups and libraries (Brush Book Bed), and early childhood educators (Healthy Little Smiles).

Sadly, we farewell Lauren Zappa, the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles Team Lead, who has taken up a role in the gender equity/prevention of violence against women sector.

Lauren made an amazing contribution to the program and DHSV during her time, including developing and strengthening relationships with new and existing partners, leading the development of several new projects and resources and most of all, being a wonderful source of support, wisdom and expertise to the team. We wish Lauren all the best in her new role.

## Australian research: Water fluoridation safe for children

Researchers from The University of Queensland (UQ) examined whether the addition of fluoride to the community water supply (water fluoridation) has any impact on a child's brain development, and found no link, supporting the continuation and expansion of water fluoridation as an important and safe public health initiative.

Fluoride is an important mineral that helps to protect teeth from decay, and fluoride in drinking water is the most effective way to provide the benefits of fluoride to the public. Currently water fluoridation is available to more than 90% of Victorians.



[Read more about the research](#)



[Visit the Department of Health's website](#) if you, or your families, need more information about water fluoridation, including what you can do to protect your teeth if your community does not have access to fluoride in tap water.

## get in touch

### Olivia Bottomley

Health Promotion Officer

e: [olivia.bottomley@dhsv.org.au](mailto:olivia.bottomley@dhsv.org.au)

### Robyn Alexander

Health Promotion Officer

e: [robyn.alexander@dhsv.org.au](mailto:robyn.alexander@dhsv.org.au)

### Shelley Pham

Health Promotion Officer

e: [shelley.pham@dhsv.org.au](mailto:shelley.pham@dhsv.org.au)