

Media statement

18 July 2019

Filling the gaps for our regional kids

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) is proud to see the oral health of the Sunshine Coast community improving, particularly for our younger generation.

The 2018 report of Queensland's Chief Health Officer shows the percentage of children aged five to six years old who had experienced decay in 2014-2017 on the Sunshine Coast was 7 percent below the Queensland average.

SCHHS Director of Oral Health, Dr Elaine Mawdsley, said: "Where possible, children of school age are offered an appointment by the oral health service at least once a year. This is very important for our kids located in more rural areas, getting to a private dentist regularly can be difficult.

"We have recently received five new dental vans to replace older vans for our Gympie, Nambour and Caloundra Oral Health teams. In total, the Oral Health Service has 16 mobile dental vans dedicated to providing dental care for students in all public, private and independent schools across the SCHHS area."

Dr Mawdsley said: "We've also been very fortunate to have Shanae Barrett join our team this year. She is an Oral Health Therapist who recently graduated from Central Queensland University, the only university in Queensland who offers a Bachelor of Oral Health."

Ms Barrett said her bachelor degree has given her the ability to carry out more complex procedures when working with children.

"I'm able to take on more involved cases, work that a dentist would have previously had to do for children," she said.

"I'm just loving working with kids at the dental van in the Gympie region. It is so rewarding knowing the habit of having a regular check-up can set the stage for good oral health care throughout their entire life.

"Our team doesn't just check for decay, we examine the health of the soft tissue including gums, roof of the mouth, back of the throat and around the tonsils. A regular check-up also means any areas for concern are identified early," Ms Barrett said.

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“Parents are grateful that we can provide their children better access to dental services, our model of care means if a child does require further exploration we are able to see to it promptly”.

Ms Barrett said: “Oral health has been closely tied to overall health of our entire body, so making sure our Sunshine Coast children have the best oral health goes beyond simply a great smile.”

Each year the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service dental vans and clinics care for approximately 15,000 Sunshine Coast children.

ENDS

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Media are invited to attend the Oral Health van located at Gympie State High School for a photo/ interview opportunity with a student as well as Oral Health Therapist Shanae Barrett.

When: Friday 19 July, 9:50am

Where: 2 Everson Road, Gympie (Cootharaba Road side)

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