

Media Release

Services awarded for improving oral health of kids

Seventeen Early Childhood Services in the Outer East region of Melbourne have received a Smiles 4 Miles award recently, recognising their work on improving the oral health of some of our youngest community members.

Smiles 4 Miles is an oral health promotion program for kindergarten-aged children developed by Dental Health Services Victoria and implemented in partnership with EACH Social & Community health throughout the Outer East.

Services achieve the Smiles 4 Miles award by implementing healthy eating and oral health policies, engaging with families about the importance of oral health, and educating children through a variety of fun learning experiences based on the Smiles 4 Miles key messages – **Drink Well, Eat Well and Clean Well.**

Croydon Early Learning Centre is one of 17 Early Childhood Services in the region that achieved a Smiles 4 Miles award this year. Their proactive work on oral health includes encouraging children to drink plenty of tap water, oral health information in their newsletters and providing information to families about accessing local dental services.

The centre has a weekly looking glass section with topics that vary each term, and regular group discussions about things such as “sometimes” and “everyday” foods and drinks, while incorporating visiting the dentist into routines.

Kiran from Croydon Early Learning centre proudly accepted the award on behalf of the centre, *“Feedback from the centre is that the children particularly enjoyed the dental visit and that many parents who also attended them found them very beneficial”.*

Smiles 4 Miles coordinator at EACH, Diana Brown says the program is a great way to help children have healthy teeth and gums for life, *“Good habits are formed early. Children take lessons they learn at a young age to adulthood. By promoting good oral health behaviours early in life, we can decrease the likelihood of poor oral health later in life”.*

These are the three steps to remember for healthy teeth and gums:

1. **Drink Well**- Drink tap water or plain milk and avoid sugary drinks like cordials, juices and soft drinks
2. **Eat Well**- Eat a variety of nutritious foods each day and limit sugary foods, particularly between meals
3. **Clean Well**- Brush teeth twice daily, adults should help children until at least the age of 7

For more information about the program or for media opportunities please contact Diana Brown - Smiles 4 Miles Coordinator on 03 97576200 or at diana.brown@each.com.au.