

Oral health needs in Gippsland



Good oral health is fundamental to overall health and wellbeing.

Policy context

Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives: National Oral Health Plan 2015-2024
The Victorian action plan to prevent oral disease 2020-30
identifies four priority areas for action:

- Improve the oral health of children.
- Improve oral health promotion, screening, early detection and prevention services.
- Promote healthy environments.
- Improve oral health literacy.

Dental Health Services Victoria Strategic Plan 2016-2021

It is estimated that **54.4%** of the Gippsland population is eligible for public dental services (compared to 44% across Victoria).

28% of eligible people in Gippsland accessed public dental care.

People eligible for public dental care:

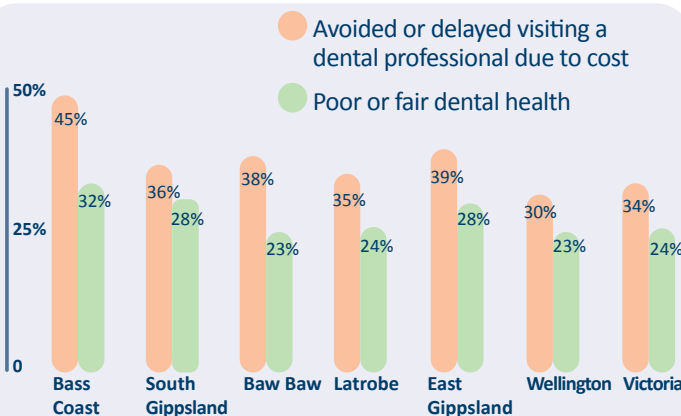


- All children aged 0–12 years
- Young people aged 13–17 years*
- People aged 18 years and over*



- All children and young people in out-of-home care
- All people in youth justice custodial care
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- All refugees and asylum seekers

* Who hold a healthcare or pensioner concession card, or who are dependants of concession card holders



Impact of poor oral health is associated with chronic conditions including:

- Adverse pregnancy outcomes
- Lung conditions
- Cardiovascular disease
- Oral cancers
- Diabetes
- Stroke

A national survey shows that many adults are impacted by dental issues:

- 35%** are uncomfortable about their dental appearance
- 24%** avoid foods
- 20%** have a tooth ache (35% of Indigenous adults)

Groups more likely to have poor oral health:

- People who are socially disadvantaged
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People in regional and remote areas
- People with a disability
- People living with complex medical needs, including dementia and mental illness

Dental care was commonly reported as a service gap in community interviews.

"There is now affordable dental in town and it's reasonably good"

"Up to 2 years wait for public affordable dental"



There is awareness that poor dental health is associated with poverty.

*In Australia, **58%** of dental services are paid for by individuals as 'out of pocket costs' as dental services are not supported by Medicare as Other Primary Care.*

30% of community survey respondents had not seen a dentist in the past 12 months.

"I've needed a filling for 2-3 years and have to cope with pain every day because it's not available on Medicare benefits."



Oral health services in Gippsland

Oral health promotion and prevention initiatives offered in Gippsland include:

Healthy Families Healthy Smiles supports health and early childhood professionals, working with children aged 0-3 years and pregnant women.

The Smiles 4 Miles program aims to improve the oral health of preschool aged children.

The Oral Cancer Screening and Prevention Program supports oral health professionals to detect oral cancer earlier.

Smokefree Smiles supports oral health professionals to use the brief Advice model (Ask, Advice, Help) when having conversations with clients on how to quit smoking.

Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation operates the Gippsland Dental Practice in Sale with up to three dental chairs. The clinic is primarily self-funded through dental fees.

General practice

The most common treatments provided by GPs include prescriptions for pain relief medication, antibiotics and referrals to dentists.

Federally Funded initiatives

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule is available for children who are 2 to 17 years old, eligible for Medicare and receiving an income support payment at least once a year, or have a parent receiving an income support payment at least once a year.

State funded services

Smile Squad is a program that will provide all Victorian public primary and secondary school students with a free, high quality annual dental health examination and free follow up treatment as needed.

Provider	Capacity (chairs)
Bairnsdale Regional Health Service	6
Bass Coast Health (Wonthaggi)	5
Central Gippsland Health Service (Sale)	5
Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative	2
Latrobe Community Health Service (Churchill)	3
Latrobe Community Health Service (Moe)	9
Latrobe Community Health Service (Morwell)	7
Latrobe Community Health Service (Warragul)	5
Orbost Regional Health	2
Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria (Omeo)	1

Private providers

50 general dental practices in Gippsland are listed in the National Health Services Directory.

Innovative service models for improved oral health

Gippsland Oral Health Consortium

Six community dental agencies of the Gippsland Oral Health Consortium (GOHC) have been working together to improve public dental services across the Gippsland region.

Latrobe Health Assembly

Partnered with Latrobe Community Health Services in several Oral Health projects in 2018 to reduce the General Dental and Denture LCHS waiting lists.

Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative Ltd (GEGAC) Dental

Outreach program for Indigenous communities.

Pregnancy Referral Program

This Latrobe Community Health Service program aims to create awareness of the importance of good oral health during pregnancy

Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria

Partnership with Dental Health Services Victoria and the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch. Gippsland services include a fixed clinic in Omeo with visits every 2-3 weeks (a partnership with Omeo District Health) and a mobile dental clinic visiting Dargo, Gelantipy, Buchan, Bonang, Bendoc and Foster once every 18-24 months.