

# Media Release



23 November 2017

## Dentists volunteering for domestic violence survivors

Australian dentists are restoring the smiles and confidence of domestic violence survivors. The Rebuilding Smiles Program is a social responsibility program that provides much needed dental health care to domestic violence survivors. The Australian Dental Association (ADA) has been overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of its members who have volunteered to be part of this program and is taking the opportunity to thank them as part of White Ribbon Day 2017 on Saturday 25 November.

Launched just over one year ago by the ADA's philanthropic arm, the Australian Dental Health Foundation, the Rebuilding Smiles Program has been rolled out nationally and 55 women so far are enrolled to receive much needed dental treatment.

*"The ADA is extremely proud of our members who have volunteered their time, skills and expertise to be part of the Rebuilding Smiles Program; which is restoring the smiles, confidence and wellbeing of those who are very much in need of support in our community",* Dr Hugo Sachs, ADA President said.

Dr Sachs continued, *"We also would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have provided financial contributions, volunteered lab services, appliances and materials, and dentists' support staff. All of you have played a part in making Rebuilding Smiles a reality".*

Eighteen months ago, Melissa and her son lived in fear, poverty and violence. Melissa left the relationship and engaged with the Nexus Family Violence Support program; a program that provides intensive therapeutic support to women, children and their families experiencing family violence.

Despite leaving the relationship and being well supported by her Family Violence (FV) caseworker, Melissa felt socially isolated, lacked the confidence and overall sense of well-being to participate in the community. In particular, Melissa experienced ongoing pain from untreated tooth decay and had a front black tooth. This caused Melissa great discomfort, as well as made her feel embarrassed and self-conscious.

Aware of Melissa's distress, her FV case worker, Julia applied to the Rebuilding Smiles Program.

*"Melissa is now pain free and nearly finished her treatment. She has been cared for by a very gentle and caring dentist, which really helped as she was very nervous prior to going. Being pain free and more confident with her smile has assisted Melissa immensely. Rebuilding Smiles is an important support system that has helped Melissa rebuild her new life",* said Julia.

Adelaide based dentist, Dr Don Wilson is currently treating his second patient under the Rebuilding Smiles Program and knows all too well how important oral health is to our overall health and wellbeing.

*"Good oral health contributes significantly to general health, personal confidence and quality of life. Knowing that I can make a difference and contribute to the health and wellbeing of those in need in my community has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience for me as dentist and I would encourage others in the profession to become involved in this program",* said Dr Wilson.

Julia concluded, *"The Rebuilding Smiles Program has contributed significantly to Melissa's outlook on life. She is now confident, studying, caring for others, building social networks, and looking forward to working in her chosen field".*

If you would like more information or would like to assist with the Rebuilding Smiles Program, please get in touch and register your interest at [info@adhf.org.au](mailto:info@adhf.org.au) or contact us directly on 02 8815 3333.

**Interviews available with:**

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- Dr Hugo Sachs – ADA President
  - Julia – Family Violence Caseworker