Media Release

7 March 2017

Rebuilding smiles for victims of domestic violence on International Women’s Day and everyday

As part of International Women’s Day (Wednesday 8 March 2017), the Australian Dental Association Foundation (ADAF)’s Rebuilding Smiles programme are calling on the public to help dental volunteers provide much needed dental care to women and children who have suffered domestic violence.

Mr David Owen, Chair of the ADAF, said “Victims and survivors of domestic violence all need support so they can have a fresh start to their lives. International Women’s Day’s #BeBoldForChange theme says that we, as a community, can be part of this change”.

“Domestic violence survivors often experience, not just immediate dental trauma, but typically ongoing oral health problems related to the lack of dental treatment. Dental damage is a visible reminder of the abuse survivors have experienced which can greatly affect their self-confidence. From this perspective, restoring domestic violence survivors’ smiles and overall ‘oral health’ can make a massive difference.”

Rebuilding Smiles provides free oral health care to the victims of domestic violence through its network of dental volunteers.

The ‘Rebuilding Smiles’ project has had a promising start with pilots operating in Victoria and South Australia. Ms Amy Rust, Co-Founder for Essentials 4 Women SA, understands the benefits of referring women to the Rebuilding Smiles programme.

“We all tend to take for granted things like as a safe home and good health, including oral health”, Ms Rust, said. “However, many women who have been subjected to domestic violence have a totally different experience. Rebuilding Smiles, working with Essentials 4 Women SA, is performing a much-needed community service.”

South Australian dentist Dr Henry Gilkes, who is treating Griselle under the Rebuilding Smiles programme, said “Survivors of domestic violence face many challenges, such as re-engaging with the workforce and reconnecting with their friends and family. Under the Rebuilding Smiles programme, volunteer dental professionals are more than happy to volunteer our time to do our part in that process.”

Mr Owen concluded, “We want to congratulate Colgate for being a major sponsor of the Rebuilding Smiles programme, this means that more women and children can be treated for dental damage caused by domestic violence.”

If you would like more information on how you can be a Rebuilding Smiles Partner or would like to make a financial contribution to this project, please get in touch via info@adaf.org.au.

The mission of the ADAF is to address the inequality between those Australians who can access dental care they need and those who are less fortunate. The ADAF runs a variety of projects and initiatives based on the needs of different communities and through these, dental professionals across Australia have come together to improve the oral health of disadvantaged Australians.


Interviews available with:

- Mr David Owen, Chairman
- Dr Henry Gilkes, South Australian Dentist
- Ms Amy Rust, Essentials 4 Women SA
- Griselle

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