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Australian Society of Orthodontists launches Give a Smile™ program

On June 8, the Australian Society of Orthodontists (ASO) announced its new goodwill program — Give a Smile™ — to the public during a special celebration at Luna Park in Melbourne, Australia.

The Give a Smile™ program is enabling ASO orthodontists to give a smile both figuratively and literally to people who are in great need of orthodontic care, but whose financial circumstances prevent them from accessing treatment through the private health system. On an annual basis, each participating orthodontist will provide free orthodontic treatment to one fellow Australian who is a public patient. With around 2,000 patients starting orthodontic treatment each year through Australia's public health services, the Give a Smile™ program will reduce waiting lists by an estimated 8 percent this year and possibly up to 15 percent in subsequent years. Currently, 47 percent of the ASO's 395 full members have volunteered to participate in the program.

“Australia, like all developed countries, has a significant section of its community where circumstances deny those individuals and their families access to private orthodontic care,” said ASO President Dr. Ted Crawford, who founded the program after receiving the inspiration for it from his wife, Di. “As orthodontists, we occupy a special and privileged position in the community. Giving back — in the form of our skill and care — is an important part of the responsibility that comes with that privilege. Give a Smile™ provides us with a structured framework in which to give as many smiles as we can to the people in our community who need them the most.

Practitioners who currently work within the public dental health departments will serve as screeners for the program. Each state and territory has at least one Give a Smile™ screener. In addition, the ASO has selected a member in each state and territory to coordinate the process and match the patients with

orthodontists. Other dental professionals, such as oral and maxillofacial surgeons, have also offered their services for this program.

“We are very proud of the fact that we will be able to offer the benefits of Give a Smile™ in every state and territory of Australia, and, importantly, in both metropolitan centers and rural areas,” Dr. Crawford said.

For more information on Give a Smile™, go to www.giveasmile.org.au.



Australian Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott joins ten-year-old Emma, the first Give a Smile™ patient (in white), and local students at Luna Park, an amusement park in Melbourne, Australia. The minister was launching a national philanthropic health initiative by the Australian Society of Orthodontists whereby participating orthodontists welcome a new patient who is currently on the public waiting list into their private practice each year and provide orthodontic diagnosis and treatment for free.