

# NEWS RELEASE

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## ORTHODONTISTS Give a Smile™

Federal Minister for Health the Hon. Tony Abbott MP today launched a national philanthropic health initiative with the Australian Society of Orthodontists (ASO) that will help reduce Australia's public waiting lists.

Give a Smile™ is an initiative of the ASO whereby participating orthodontists welcome a patient who is currently on the public waiting list into their private practice each year and provide all orthodontic diagnosis and treatment for free.

Each full course of treatment being given by the orthodontists will take approximately two years and would typically cost up to \$5-7,000 per patient.

With around 2000 patients starting orthodontic treatment each year through Australia's public dental health services, Give a Smile™ will reduce the waiting lists by an estimated eight percent this year and possibly up to 15 percent in subsequent years.

The Give a Smile™ programme, which was conceptualised by the Federal President of the ASO Dr Ted Crawford, has proven so popular with the profession that 40 percent of the ASO's 395 full members have volunteered to join the program within weeks of its launch to the membership.

As the Chair of Give a Smile™ Dr Crawford said he was thrilled with the overwhelming support received for the programme by his fellow orthodontists and by each of the state and territory dental health departments.

"We have had a wonderful response to Give a Smile™ from all quarters and I think it's because people immediately recognise the goodwill spirit of the programme and want to become involved in some way," commented Dr Crawford.

"From our pro-bono partners who have helped make the programme a reality, we have also received offers of pro-bono assistance from specialist dental professionals such as oral and maxillofacial surgeons who may not be members of the ASO, but want to support the treatment of Give a Smile™ patients.

"The goal of Give a Smile™ is simple and heartfelt; it's to 'give a smile' both figuratively and literally to people in our community who face financial difficulties as well as having significant orthodontic needs.

"While there is already a strong culture of giving within the profession, 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," he said.

According to Dr Crawford the programme is truly national and reaches across the nation.

"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 centres and rural areas," said Dr Crawford.

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T | 03 9853 7000  
F | 03 9853 7333  
PO | Box 2422 Kew Vic 3101  
www | newsreleasexpress.com.au  
ABN | 27 840 139 517

"We have orthodontists who have volunteered to see patients in regional practices such as Narrogin, which is about 200 kilometres south-east of Perth, Clifton Hill which is around 2000 kilometres north of Brisbane and Mildura which is 600 kilometres out of Melbourne," he said.

For a patient to be eligible to participate in Give a Smile™, they must already be on the waiting list for orthodontic treatment in the public dental service of the state or territory in which they live.

In some Australian states and territories, patients treated in the public health system are required to pay a fee (termed a co-payment) for their orthodontic treatment and these government fees will still apply to those patients receiving treatment through the Give a Smile™ programme.

"We're finalising details of the ASO Give a Smile™ Trust Fund which will receive the relevant state and territory co-payments with which the trustees will have two options," said Dr Crawford.

"We are investigating the possibility of using some of the funds to pay for treatment within the Give a Smile™ programme that is not provided by an orthodontist and therefore incurs additional cost, such as jaw surgery, as well as the possibility of donating funds to other charities.

"The trust fund provides us with another layer of giving," he said.

The Give a Smile™ Charter document, which details the way in which the programme and trust fund works, is available on the ASO's website at [www.aso.org.au](http://www.aso.org.au).

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FROM THE DESK OF NewsReleaseXpress

Sally Romano

T 03 9853 7000

M 0438 122 340

E [sally@newsreleasexpress.com.au](mailto:sally@newsreleasexpress.com.au)