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The smile-makers



Orthodontist Bill Medland has given 15-year-old Taralee Carter something to smile about

Photo: DAVID CLARK

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TARALEE Carter cannot stop smiling.

The 15-year-old had her braces taken off in April but the best part is they were free.

After being selected to take part in the nationwide Give a Smile program – a charitable arm of the Australian Society of Orthodontists – her \$7000 treatment was carried out by Dr Bill Medland, of Medland Orthodontics in Benowa.

Medland Orthodontics has three doctors taking part in the program,

who are each assigned a case a year.

Since 2005, they have been able to help more than 15 Gold Coasters who otherwise would not have been able to afford treatment.

Dr Medland said Taralee's teeth needed fixing but the non-urgency of her case could have left her waiting in the public system for decades.

That was not an option for the bubbly teen, who wanted to have beautiful teeth so she could become a professional dancer.

"I was so grateful and lucky to be chosen," she said. "It changes the entire way you look."

There are 260 Give a Smile orthodontists across Australia taking part in the program, nine of them based on the Coast.

Together they have helped reduce public orthodontic waiting lists by about 10 per cent.

Patients must first be on a public dental waiting list and, if deemed suitable, they are offered a full program of orthodontic care.

So far the program has helped more than 700 children across Australia.

Dr Medland said it was a way for orthodontists to give back to those in need in the community.

"Life's been great to us and this

is a little thing we can do to give back and give someone a great start with nice teeth," he said.

"Taralee had bad teeth, bad enough it was affecting her chewing and social impediments, but she wasn't bad enough to have treatment in a timely fashion through the public system."

Queensland Opposition Leader and former dentist John-Paul Langbroek said public dental health waiting lists were too long and people were suffering.

Mr Langbroek talks more about the state of public dental health at goldcoast.com.au