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**Victorian dentists strike**

By DTI

**MELBOURNE, Australia:** On Wednesday, 22 August, dentists across Victoria stopped working for half an hour as a form of protest against unacceptable waiting times for public dental care. The strike action follows intense advocacy activity by the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB), which has shown a light on the fact that dentists employed in the state’s community health centres are the lowest paid public sector dentists in the country.

Dr Michelle Patterson, a senior dentist at Your Community Health, who took part in the strike, said: “The work we do is so important to the overall health of disabled, elderly and disadvantaged Victorians, yet we all feel overlooked and underappreciated by the Victorian Government.”

According to the ADAVB, at a community health care clinic in Darebin, the wait for eligible adults seeking general dental care is 22.8 months. Some Victorian dentists say this is due to insufficient funding, which results in the inability to retain experienced clinicians.

However, an interactive map released by the ADAVB shows a far greater problem, reportedly exposing waiting times of up to four years for some vulnerable Victorians. Additionally, less than 20 per cent of eligible Victorians are accessing care annually and there are more than 150,000 remaining on waiting lists. ADAVB President Dr Kevin Morris noted that the data from the interactive map means that just over a third of all courses of care are for emergency treatment rather than routine care, which puts more strain on the public system.

“The ADAVB is calling on both the State and Federal Governments to support an increase in funding, with a target to double the number of patients being treated on a yearly basis to 800,000 by 2023/24. This would represent approximately 29 per cent of the eligible population,” said Morris.