

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **Australian dental health set to improve with \$31.6m funding boost**

Australians will benefit from improved dental health due to the \$31.6m funding for a new Oral Health Cooperative Research Centre, Federal Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, The Hon Kim Carr announced today.

The new CRC, to be based at the University of Melbourne, will further the work of the existing CRC for Oral Health Science on the discovery and development of new preventive products and treatments for oral diseases such as caries (dental decay) and periodontitis (gum disease) which currently cost Australians some \$6 billion a year.

Anti-decay technology developed within the current CRC is already being used in food and drink and oral care products around the world.

“This really is an investment in Australia’s reputation as a world-leader in oral health research. The contributions by government and the CRC collaborators will result in substantial benefits to Australia both by reducing the burden of oral disease and in developing world-first knowledge and intellectual property,” says the CEO of the new Oral Health CRC and Head of Melbourne Dental School at the University of Melbourne, Professor Eric Reynolds AO.

Professor Reynolds says unlike many disease groups, oral diseases are mostly preventable. Despite this, he says, one in four Australian adults have untreated dental decay and just less than one in three have moderate or severe cases of the gum disease, periodontitis. In addition, almost half of Australia’s six year-olds have cavities in their teeth. More than one million work days a year are lost through poor oral health.

“The research programs of the Oral Health CRC will focus on the prevention and early diagnosis of oral disease, and on the known links to systemic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer,” Professor Reynolds says.

The new CRC includes research and manufacturing partners from Australia and overseas who will develop novel consumer and professional dental products to prevent and treat oral diseases including early diagnostic tools and a vaccine against periodontitis.

Professor Reynolds says the government funding will make it possible for the researchers to test and commercialise the current CRC’s recent scientific discoveries, as well as enabling investigation into frontier technologies for the regeneration of lost and damaged teeth. It will also support the development of a tooth safe logo to inform consumers of foods and beverages that are safe for teeth.

In addition, the CRC’s researchers will examine how dental workforce shortages can be alleviated, and how evidence-based oral health promotion campaigns can reduce the need for clinical treatment.

Major collaborators in the new CRC include the University of Melbourne, CSL Limited, Colgate Palmolive Pty Ltd, GC Australasia Dental Pty Ltd, Cadbury Enterprises Pte Ltd and Murray Goulburn Cooperative Limited.

### **Further information**

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