

# QCoal Community Dental Service

Having celebrated its first birthday earlier this year, the QCoal Community Dental Service continues to achieve milestones as it travels across the vast regional Queensland landscape providing a free mobile dental service to remote communities. Recently the service treated its 3,000th patient in the remote town of Dajarra, approximately 150 kilometres south of Mount Isa.

Operated by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), it was on the second visit by the service to Dajarra when the dental team met with local patients, including young Caiden Jack.

Caiden is four years old and has endured dental problems for over a year. Despite efforts for Caiden to receive oral health care, several obstacles had delayed his treatment.

The normally mischievous boy was hesitant, however after a lot of encouragement from his grandmother, Barbara Clarke, Caiden received the treatment that he greatly needed. Over three sessions the QCoal Community Dental Service team completed two extractions and eight fillings.

Principal Dentist, Ian Odendaal who leads the five person dental team, said that the service was making a real difference in areas that would not otherwise have access to this level of oral healthcare.

"Oral health is one of the most consistently unmanaged health issues presented to the RFDS clinicians. Often by the time the patient presents, their oral health is in the late stages of deterioration because rural and remote Australians do not have the same access to oral health services as their metropolitan counterparts."

"Here in Dajarra we are still primarily providing an acute service to counteract years of oral neglect," Dr Odendaal said.

The QCoal Community Dental Service is a free service funded by Queensland mining company, QCoal, through the QCoal Foundation. Comprising of two dental surgeries in a purpose-built semi-trailer, the service provides preventative dental care and treatment in communities where there is limited access to oral health services. Anyone can make an appointment and there is no out-of-pocket cost for patients.

Since commencing operations in February 2013 the QCoal Community Dental Service has visited 13 towns in rural and remote Queensland.

QCoal Group Managing Director Christopher Wallin said the service aimed to bring quality oral health care to people in rural communities.

"When we originally conceived the service together my thoughts went back to my own experiences in regional Queensland and the lack of dental care that was available. Partnering with the Royal Flying Doctor Service allowed us to bring together the medical expertise of the RFDS with an innovative method for delivering the service so that even the most remote corners of Queensland can access state-of-the-art technology," Mr Wallin said.

The service has now had the opportunity to visit a number of communities regularly over the past 16 months. For those communities, such as Collinsville, who have had regular visits the incidence of acute treatments are beginning to fall and preventative procedures are becoming common.

The schedule for the second half of 2014 has just been confirmed with the service set to visit the following towns:

- > **Sapphire:** 28 July – 9 August
- > **Clermont:** 18 August – 30 August
- > **Collinsville:** 8 September – 20 September
- > **Bowen:** 29 September – 11 October
- > **Springure:** 20 October – 1 November
- > **Theodore:** 10 November – 22 November
- > **Monto:** 1 December – 13 December

For more information about this service please visit [www.flyingdoctor.org.au/dental](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/dental) or call: 1800 002 507.

Left > The QCoal Community Dental Service team in Dajarra with 3000th dental patient, four-year-old Caiden Jack and his grandmother Barbara Clarke.

Below > (l-r) RFDS Qld Chairman Bill Mellor, the tooth fairy (RFDS Graduate Dentist Christine Farrelly) and QCoal Group Managing Director Christopher Wallin in Collinsville to celebrate the first anniversary of the QCoal Community Dental Service.

