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BRIGHT SMILE, BRIGHTER FUTURE: FUNDING BOOST FOR KIDS DENTAL PROGRAM

Vulnerable children from across the Hunter region will have more to smile about thanks to a partnership between LIVEfree Project and Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation (NPCF).

The \$270,000 grant over three years will see the expansion of LIVEfree Project's Smile and Thrive Dental and Mentoring Program, which was previously funded by NPCF in 2021.

Proper dental health is a crucial part of children's overall health and wellbeing. However, it is one of the most common health issues affecting Australian children with the Australian Dental Association reporting in 2024 that over a third of children aged 5-6 years having experienced decay in primary or baby teeth, while 27 per cent aged 5-10 years having untreated tooth decay in primary teeth.

Over the next three years, LIVEfree Project aims to expand the Smile and Thrive Dental and Mentoring Program into seven partner schools, reaching approximately 400 primary school students across Newcastle and surrounding suburbs.

The program facilitates regular dental appointments for vulnerable primary school students with the goal of promoting positive dental hygiene and healthy behaviours for the child and their family.

The funding will also help to deliver Dental Hygiene Workshops within each of the participating schools, providing preventative education information sessions to around 1,100 students.

NPCF spokesperson Kirrah McClelland said the Foundation is proud to support the initiative.

"Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation is committed to helping improve health outcomes and wellbeing for individuals and families across our communities," Ms McClelland said.

"We are proud to continue to build on our partnership with LIVEfree Project and help deliver their Smile and Thrive program and Dental Hygiene Workshops to more children in need throughout the Hunter.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up healthy and confident. By supporting access to preventative dental care, we are helping children avoid issues before they become more serious, while also providing families the support they need to build healthy habits that can make everlasting impacts."

LIVEfree Project Program Coordinator Rachel Gaunt said the program builds confidence, provide encouragement and a walk alongside approach for children and families who are doing it tough.

Media Release



"We are incredibly grateful to the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation for believing in the vision behind LIVEfree Project's Smile and Thrive initiative and for making this partnership possible," Ms Gaunt said.

"For many children and families experiencing hardship, accessing dental care can be difficult, and the impact of untreated dental concerns can reach far beyond a child's teeth. Through Smile and Thrive, we are able to come alongside children with practical dental support, mentoring and encouragement.

"This generous funding over the next 3 years will allow us to continue removing barriers and creating positive experiences that can make a lasting difference in the lives of local children and their families."

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Media enquiries:

Scarlett Hurst - 0435927935

About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation

Since its establishment in 2003, the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation has provided more than \$27 million to not-for profit organisations and community groups throughout regional NSW, supporting important projects and initiatives aimed at improving community health and well-being for those most in need.