MEDIA RELEASE

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ADA NSW OFFERS PRO BONO TREATMENT TO ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM NAURU

The Australian Dental Association's NSW Branch welcomes the news that asylum seeker children are being removed from detention on Nauru, and that all remaining children will be relocated to Australia by the end of the year.

ADA NSW is offering pro bono oral health assessments and dental treatment at its clinic at St Leonards, in Sydney's north, for children and their families who have been held in detention on Nauru.

For the past 10 years, ADA NSW volunteer dentists have been providing pro bono dental treatment to asylum seekers. In recent months, they have treated three asylum seekers from Nauru.

In 2008, ADA NSW established a partnership with the Australian Red Cross to provide much-needed dental services for asylum seekers who have applied to the Department of Immigration for refugee status.

Addressing the mental health needs of children and adults who have been held on Nauru is clearly a priority. However, as reported by Human Rights Watch, dental services on Nauru have largely been limited to tooth extraction.

"Asylum seekers can have significant and complex healthcare needs. Many find it difficult to access mainstream health services, including oral health care, due to a lack of familiarity with the system and how to navigate it, as well as language and cultural barriers," ADA NSW President Dr Neil Peppitt said.

"While some may be able to access public dental treatment, often their dental health problems become acute while waiting," Dr Peppitt said. "We can help alleviate pain, treat decay and disease, and improve the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable people in our community."

Thanks to the compassion and commitment of ADA NSW's volunteer dentists, almost 1000 asylum seekers have been provided with dental treatment worth $500,000 – including dentures, root canal fillings and complex restorative care.

ADA NSW member dentists have a long history of providing dental aid to those most in need, who may struggle to access mainstream services. Many of our dentists treat patients with complex and chronic conditions over several appointments. Over the past year, across all of ADA NSW's dental aid programs, NSW dentists have provided pro bono treatment worth more than $310,000 to 288 patients.

Dr Peppitt said ADA NSW would like to see equity in access to oral health care.

"Our pro bono dental aid programs make a small contribution towards bridging this gap by providing the highest quality dental care and eliminating the barriers of access and affordability," he said.

For more on our Red Cross Clinics, visit: www.adansw.com.au/Community/Red-Cross-Dental-Care-Day

About ADA NSW: ADA NSW is the peak professional association for dentists and dental students in NSW and the ACT with 4,500 members. Our mission is to advance dentistry to improve the health of all Australians.

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