

Happy Teeth

Project update



OVERVIEW: ORAL HEALTH AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY PROJECT

The **Happy Teeth Project** is working to improve oral health for people with intellectual disability.

We are working together with:

- people with intellectual disability
- families and carers
- disability support workers
- disability organisations
- researchers and oral health professionals.

Together, we will create an online oral health education resource for disability support workers. The resource will help support workers learn more about oral health and how they can help people with intellectual disability look after their teeth and mouth.

The project aims to support better prevention, earlier identification of oral health problems, and better access to oral healthcare. The project is funded by the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and is led by Professor Nathan Wilson from Western Sydney University.

ISSUE 1
SEPTEMBER
2026

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Happy Teeth



FIRST LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

Thursday 25 June 2026 at Greystanes

In June, our Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) met for the first time at Greystanes Disability Services in Leura. Professor Nathan and co-chair Dr Lily introduced the Happy Teeth Project and welcomed Skye, Lachlan, Julie, Lynn, Don and Sonia. Kylie, our LEAG Co-Chair, and Renee, our Research Assistant, also joined the meeting, along with Kylie's support dog, Alfie. We discussed the group's role and co-design agreement. Thanks, GDS!



Kylie, our LEAG Co-Chair, and her support dog Alfie stayed cosy under a blanket on the drive to Leura for our first LEAG meeting.

Happy Teeth Voices

Meet the Advisory Group

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Lynn Ringland

Why did I want to get involved with this advisory committee?

Well, as the mother of a now 39-year-old man with intellectual disabilities dental care for our Alex has been one of the most difficult things to navigate throughout his life.

It is traumatic for both Alex and for us, his parents. He requires a general anaesthetic just to have a simple examination of his teeth, let alone any dental work. This becomes a nightmare as he is scared of needles and pushes a mask away. Oral x-rays are impossible.

My hopes are that this advisory committee will set out guidelines for all carers and support workers of people with disabilities, providing guidelines for daily oral health care (to make sure teeth are brushed correctly for example) and maintenance on a daily basis. This should lead to much better dental care outcomes in the long-term for people with intellectual disabilities. Dental health is a major contributing factor to other areas of Health including cardiac, digestive, pulmonary and all over well-being. So fingers crossed that my little contribution might have ongoing oral health benefits for all people with intellectual disabilities into the future. That's why I signed up to be a part of this advisory committee.



ARTS-BASED WORKSHOPS: HAPPY TEETH LOGO

Hosted at Greystanes Disability Services

In June and July, 16 creative people with lived experience intellectual disability from Greystanes Disability Services and NADO joined our three arts-based workshops, together with their support workers. Kylie, our Chief Investigator with lived experience, also took part. Artists Clare and Belinda brought creativity, encouragement and enthusiasm to the workshops, supporting participants to explore oral health and express their ideas through art. Our Happy Teeth logo was created using ideas, shapes, colours and words shared by participants during the workshops.



Researchers Dr Gisselle, Dr Sam, Professor Nathan, Dr Lily and Research Assistant Renee also joined the workshops. Participants created many amazing and unique artworks, using colour, shapes and different materials to share their ideas and experiences about oral health. Thank you to GDS and their staff for hosting and supporting all three workshops. Creativity, connection and lots of smiles!

Something to smile about

By Lynn Ringland

Did you hear about the dentist who won the Best Dentist Award?

He won a little plaque!



IADH 2026 CONFERENCE

Dublin, Ireland

In August, Professor Nathan Wilson presented the Happy Teeth Project at the 2026 International Association for Disability and Oral Health (iADH) conference in Dublin, Ireland. He shared our arts-based workshops, the participants' creative work, and our new project logo, showing how lived experience and art are helping shape the project together.



Professor Nathan Wilson presenting the Happy Teeth Project and our arts-based workshops at the 2026 iADH Conference in Dublin.



Happy Teeth Project researchers at the conference in Dublin. From left to right: Associate Professor Caoimhin Mac Giolla Phadraig (Ireland), Professor Nathan Wilson (Australia), Dr Inès Phlypo (Belgium), Dr Katrina Byrne (Ireland) and Dr Archana Pradhan (Australia).

Other Happy Teeth Project researchers also attended the conference. Associate Professor Caoimhin Mac Giolla Phadraig, Dr Inès Phlypo, Dr Archana Pradhan and Dr Katrina Byrne joined Professor Nathan in Dublin. Some also shared their research with colleagues, including ideas about disability, oral health, dentistry and the MOSST oral health screening tool, which will be used in our project.

Thank you to our supporter: SPARX^{LAB}

A big thank you to **SparX Lab** for kindly donating the 3D printed teeth and mouth models, which participants really enjoyed using during our arts-based workshops.

