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## EXCELLENCE IN DENTAL JOURNALISM RECOGNISED

The alarming prevalence of infant tooth extractions and the causes of child tooth decay were the subject of the winning entries for this year's Australian Dental Association (ADA) Media Awards.

The recipients of the Excellence in Dental Journalism Awards for stories produced in 2018, were Fiona Pepper and Jane Barry, each receiving \$5,000.

Fiona, an ABC radio journalist/producer based in Victoria who produced an 11 minute segment on childhood teeth extractions for Radio National's Life Matters program, won the awards' electronic category.

"There has been a huge focus from both government and community health organisations on high sugar diets and the increasing frequency of diabetes and obesity," said Fiona.

"I interviewed a range of dentists who were conducting major dental surgery on children and were struck by how troubled they were about what sugar was doing to the teeth of Australian children. This dental surgery could easily be avoided if the child's diet was improved."

The print category was won by Jane Barry in Queensland. Jane is a midwife, child health nurse and health writer who wrote two articles – one on the link between a pregnant mother's oral health and her baby's health, and the second on childhood tooth decay and preventive measures.

"What fueled me to write on the topic of how parents can get their kids into the best oral health and brushing habits was that there's a certain resignation from many parents that decay is something that just happens," said Jane.

"They normalise it and don't view themselves as the primary force in prevention.

"It's not only the financial cost of restoration, but the biological cost as well, as decay is the ultimate gift which keeps on giving. Teeth are so important, there's so much information currently about gut health but people don't realise the gut begins in the mouth.

"Mothers, the target audience for the magazine *Kidspot* in which my entry appeared, are intrinsic to their child's oral hygiene."

The ADA's Excellence in Journalism Awards have been going for seven years. "With these awards we aim to encourage journalists and producers to reach out to a wide audience in ways that promote optimum oral health goals for the readers, viewers and listeners," said ADA President Dr Carmelo Bonanno, "as well as draw attention to the issues facing the dental profession around the nation."

The Awards attracted entries from TV, radio, websites, metro and regional newspapers and magazines around Australia.

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Other subjects covered in this year's entries included the resistance of some NSW communities to the introduction of fluoride into the water supply, the personal journey of a woman having her jawbone surgically improved with the insertion of a device created using 3D printing, the links between teeth and the health in the rest of the body, and an expose on one particular mobile dental clinic provider.

There was also a story on the ADA's own Dental Health Foundation and the Rebuilding Smiles program, in which dentists work for free to restore the oral health and dignity of women who have experienced domestic violence.

Applications for the next awards in 2021 will be open towards the end of 2020.

**Interviews available with:** Dr Carmelo Bonanno, President. Call Media Advisor Jenny Barlass on 0484 869 086.

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**Note to Editors:**

The ADA is the peak body representing dentists in Australia, with over 16,000 members. It exists to promote the art and science of dentists and to promote the oral health of Australians.