

CARLTON NORTH

Fairy's vital message

Paul Maud

THE tooth fairy was in full flight in North Carlton.

The fairy, a dental nurse with private dental practice Smile Solutions, spent half an hour with North Carlton Primary School students sharing tips for looking after teeth and gums.

Almost half of Australian children aged five and six have one or more cavities in

their first teeth, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's latest Child Dental Health Surveys.

More disturbingly, one in 10 in that age group has more than seven cavities and nearly half of all 12-year-olds have at least one of their permanent teeth damaged.

Major risk factors listed by the institute include

substandard cleaning habits, poor diet with high exposure to acid foodstuffs and fermentable carbohydrates, such as sugars, as well as limited exposure to fluoride.

For tips on caring for young teeth go to thetoothfairy.com.au. The website is an initiative of Melbourne dentistry Smile Solutions, which claims to be Australia's largest dental practice.



Indy and Millie, of Carlton North Primary School, enjoy a visit from the Tooth Fairy.

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HEALTH

Unlocking the mysteries of a long life

Madeline Healey

IT might be a nip of gin each night, Sunday trips to church or long years of hard, physical work.

In the last decade Reservoir's John McCormack has heard all sorts of advice on how to live to 100.

Mr McCormack, a senior lecturer in health sciences at La Trobe University, has spent years meeting, interviewing and researching the lives of Australia's centenarians.

He's met 130 people who are over 100, focusing particularly on those nearing or reaching 110.

Once he has met them, Mr McCormack must verify their ages so they can be officially recognised by gerontology researchers internationally.

"You do need birth certificates, but often people don't have them as they'd been destroyed in fire or lost during wartime," Mr McCormack said.

"We'll look for other sorts of corroborating evidence — the ages of their parents and siblings, school records which show their age in different years, job records and, by the end, the corroborating ages should agree."

He estimated there were only three or four people aged more than 110 living in Australia at the moment.

While all those Mr McCormack has interviewed have their own unique take on why they've lived to an advanced age, he said there were trends.

"I haven't really come across anyone who would be regarded as overweight let alone obese," he said.

"Keeping your weight down seems to be something associated with longevity."

He also found very few smokers among centenarians and that a third of his sample had no children.

Mr McCormack said he had heard of research claiming at least half of babies born today could live until 100, but he was sceptical.

"We've got things like obesity reducing life expectancy, it's more complicated now because of our lifestyle," he said.

AT A GLANCE

- There are about 4000 Australians aged over 100
- The oldest verified woman in Australian history was Christina Cock, from Portland, who died age 114 and 148 days in 2002
- The oldest verified Australian man was John Lockett, from Bendigo, who died aged 111 and 123 days
- Centenarians are aged 100 to 104, semi-centenarians are 105 to 109 and super-centenarians are 110-plus

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