



Give a Smile Program: An Overview for ASO Members

It has become standard practice internationally, for professional bodies to have a benevolent 'arm', and I am proud to say that the Australian Society of Orthodontists is a world leader in this regard.

In 2005, the ASO launched the 'Give a Smile' program and it is one of the first established orthodontic charities in the world. Today, Give a Smile is a national program that has had a positive impact on the lives of more than 2000 patients in genuine need of orthodontic care.

Through Give a Smile, the ASO is able to demonstrate the philanthropic nature of ASO orthodontists. It is our way of giving back to the local communities that support us.

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Chair, Give a Smile**

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Introduction

The ASO's Give a Smile™ program is a goodwill initiative of the Australian Society of Orthodontists (ASO).

Launched in 2005, Give a Smile™ provides a way for ASO members to give back to the community by providing orthodontic treatment pro bono to those in genuine need, and for whom specialist orthodontic treatment is financially out of reach.

Many ASO members have always done something along these lines. But Give a Smile™ provides a formal and recognisable structure, as well as a straightforward mechanism, for receiving patients and providing them with pro bono treatment.

GAS also allows the ASO to demonstrate the strong philanthropic nature of ASO orthodontists.



About GAS

Since GAS was launched in 2005, the program has been well-supported by ASO members.

Today, there are GAS orthodontists in every state and territory with approximately 70% of eligible orthodontists around the country donating their time and expertise to GAS and receiving one GAS patient each year.

Retiring members account for a small drop-off in GAS orthodontists each year, however, we also continue to see new eligible orthodontists signing up to become GAS orthodontists.

It is imperative that the number of GAS orthodontists remains high. It is encouraging to see that new graduates often express an interest in becoming involved with GAS as soon as they start practising.

Where a new graduate who works as an employee signs up to become a GAS orthodontist, a practice principal where they work must also agree that the practice will take over the treatment of a GAS patient should the recent graduate move away from that practice. Recent graduates working as contractors will similarly need to discuss how GAS patients will be handled in the case of moving practices.

In 2020 Give a Smile's 2000th patient commenced treatment. The donation of services from the ASO equates to a saving to the public purse around \$1m per annum.

The reduction in the numbers on public waiting lists around Australia is approximately 10% thanks to Give a Smile™. In some areas, this has caused a reduction in waiting time from years to months. This is something about which the ASO is immensely proud. Without the ongoing support of GAS members, this valuable contribution to the community would not be possible.

How GAS works

Patients identified as being suitable GAS patients are selected from the top of orthodontic waiting lists in the public dental health departments of all Australian states and territories (**Screening**). This is done by dental personnel (Screeners) in the health department.

The patient's details are then sent to the GAS Liaison Officer in that state/territory who allocates that patient to a GAS orthodontist (**Allocation**).

The GAS orthodontist then fully treats that patient to the same high level of care and professionalism that are offered to full fee-paying patients for no fee in their private practice.

The GAS Liaison Officer keeps a record of allocations to GAS orthodontists and ensures, as far as possible, that each GAS orthodontist is allocated one GAS patient per year.

In states/territories where there are no public orthodontic waiting lists (NT, ACT, Tasmania) selection and allocation may be done in a different way – a way that better suits that state or territory. One method is self-screening.

Self-Screening is where a GAS orthodontist elects to take on an in-need patient from their own community rather than by being allocated a patient from the public dental health system.

In instances where a GAS orthodontist wishes to have more control over the selection of their “no-fee” patient, self-screening has also proved to be useful.

Certain criteria must be met for self-screening to be used. **Self-screening guidelines** along with other relevant self-screening documents are available in the ASO member resources area of the ASO website.

The percentage of self-selected patients is still relatively low, and this is desirable as we would still like most GAS patients to come from the public system. For obvious reasons, self-screening is not advertised to the public.

GAS Co-payments

In three Australian states (SA, WA and Victoria), patients treated in the public health system are required to pay a fee (co-payment) for their orthodontic treatment. These government fees still apply to those patients receiving treatment through the Give a Smile™ program.

Although the level of co-payment varies in these three states, the amount of the co-payment is significantly lower than the fee for equivalent treatment in the private sector (approximately \$400 - \$1500).

As required by the state governments in those three states, co-payments for GAS allocated patients are directed to the GAS Trust account.



How to become a GAS Orthodontist

ASO members can sign up to be GAS orthodontists on the [ASO Website](#).

Upon registering to be a GAS orthodontist, ASO members agree to be bound by the terms of the GAS program and treat their Give a Smile™ patients with the same high standards of care and professionalism that are offered to full fee-paying patients.

GAS orthodontists commit to starting one GAS patient each year – either from the public dental health waiting list or self-screened.



GAS roles

Give a Smile™ Screeners

The Give a Smile™ Screeners are responsible for identifying potential recipients of orthodontic care through the GAS program.

Give a Smile™ Screeners are orthodontists who work in the public health system and who screen Health Care Card and Pension Card holders for placement on the public waiting lists for orthodontic treatment.

In Tasmania, ACT and NT, where there are no teaching dental hospitals, there is outsourcing of this work to private practitioner orthodontists who identify and allocate patients.

In Queensland, public orthodontic treatment is organised on a regional basis, so there are regional screeners who work with the Give a Smile™ Screener appointed for that state.

Give a Smile™ Liaison Officers

An ASO member is appointed as a Give a Smile™ Liaison Officer in each Australian state and territory.

Liaison Officers are responsible for matching a Give a Smile™ orthodontist with a patient from the public dental list provided by the relevant Give a Smile™ Screener.

In cases where a GAS orthodontist uses the self-screening method, the GAS orthodontist must advise the Liaison Officer in their state or territory when the patient commences treatment.



Patient protection, allocation and screening

Protection

Patients who are offered treatment through the Give a Smile™ program have no obligation to accept the offer and they can, without any disadvantage, choose to remain on the public list.

Patients who are treated through the Give a Smile™ program will have the same protection in law as all patients at the practice in which their treatment is provided.

Allocation

Allocation of patients will be largely based on geographic matching of participating orthodontists and 'in need' patients in the area. This scheme allows for patients from distant areas to be treated closer to their home than might be otherwise possible.

Screening

Screeners have the option of using a Treatment Priority Index, for example, the Index of Treatment Need (IOTN) as the selection criteria for patients offered access to the Give a Smile™ program. However, the overarching consideration must be the extent of financial hardship in any given case.

In the screening for potential recipients of Give a Smile™ orthodontic treatment, Screeners seek those who are in genuine need and use discretion, understanding, awareness and sensitivity in their dealings and decisions.

Possible “what ifs”

- *What if the practice has multiple orthodontists, all of whom administer treatment to all patients in the practice?*

Possible solution – All orthodontists in the practice volunteer to become part of the Give a Smile[™] program.

- *What if the orthodontist leaves the practice before treatment is completed?*

Possible solution – The practice takes over the patient’s treatment or the patient follows the original Give a Smile[™] orthodontist.

- *What if the patient transfers away (e.g. interstate) during treatment?*

Possible solution – The original orthodontist endeavors to find a suitable referral within the Give a Smile[™] program.

- *What if the patient requires additional dental services, such as extractions, oral surgery, periodontics, prosthodontics etc?*

Possible solution – The orthodontist endeavors to find a colleague who can offer the required services pro bono. Failing this, the public dental system can still be accessed for these treatment components.

- *What if the patient causes added cost to their treatment, for example, in non-compliance issues or the replacement of broken or lost retainers?*

Possible solution – patients/parents must be informed from the outset that such costs outside of the normal treatment arrangement can, at the discretion of the Give a Smile[™] orthodontist, be charged.

None of these problems are beyond solution – that is the spirit of giving and Give a Smile[™]. Some more frequently asked questions are available on the ASO website.



Contact details

Give a Smile is run by the ASO's Give a Smile Committee, led by Chair Jonathan Rooke. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Chair by emailing giveasmilechair@gmail.com or email Give a Smile at info@giveasmile.org.au.

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To join Give a Smile, please complete the [online registration form](#) on the ASO website.