

New staff bite into waiting list

BY TARA MURRAY

SUNBURY Community Health Centre's dental clinic will be able to take an extra 45 patients a week after two new staff started last week.

Centre chief executive Phillip Ripper told federal Health Minister Tanya Plibersek and McEwen MP Rob Mitchell, who visited the centre on Wednesday, that the new staff members would help reduce waiting times by half in the near future.

In February last year, adults faced a 27-month wait to see a dentist at the centre.

Mr Ripper said waiting times at the Macedon Street centre were currently in line with the state average.

In the March quarter, that average waiting time was 17 months, according to data from the Victorian Health Department.

Ms Plibersek was in Sunbury to gauge the effect of medical and dental funding on the local community.

"I was particularly interested in



Bigger, better: From left, dental assistant Leanne Douglas, Rob Mitchell, dentist Darshanjot Brar and Tanya Plibersek talk about shorter waiting times at Sunbury Community Health Centre's dental clinic.

their [SCHC's] dental service here because of the increased federal government funding and the Grow Up Smiling program starting in January," she said.

"The new people here will be kept busy and [the SCHC] expects to halve its waiting list in the near

future, and beyond that patients can be brought back for preventive dental care much sooner and more easily."

Ms Plibersek and Mr Mitchell also visited the Sunbury Medical Centre to discuss federal funding changes to the Medicare Local system.

The centre is one of six in Sunbury receiving after-hours funding from the Macedon Ranges and North Western Melbourne Medicare Local.

"It's obviously really important for an area like Sunbury to have good after-hours care to save a visit to the hospital," Ms Plibersek said.