

A Reason To Smile

Smile Dental has been at the forefront of dentistry in Townsville for 10 years, and soon its owners and staff will have even more to grin about. **JASMINE PHILLIPS** finds out how this modern surgery earned its name and what's in store for the future.



For many people, the sheer thought of visiting the dentist can bring on cold sweats and panic. The traditional surgery, with its sterile waiting room and reclining 'torture' chair is enough to make you forget you ever had a tooth-ache. So why is it that clients at Smile Dental in Mundingburra not only keep their appointments, they actually enjoy them?

Founder and principle of the surgery, Dr Cameron Arnold, believes the extra qualifications his staff hold, along with their goal to provide a really positive experience is what sets them apart. "We always wanted to have a real concierge type service," he explains. "We accept that the dentist isn't everybody's favourite place, so we go out of our way to improve that."

When clients walk into Smile Dental they are met with the smell of freshly-baked bread and gourmet coffee. Soft music, candles and aromatherapy create a relaxing mood and the decor is straight out of a day spa. If a patient needs to be in the dentist chair for a while, they'll be offered a hand massage with a hot towel and fresh juice as you leave.

Luxuries aside, Smile Dental has a reputation for delivering some of the most modern treatments and procedures available and Cameron is one of only 20 dentists in Australia to complete full training in neuromuscular dentistry in the US. "Fillings were the

bread and butter of dentistry 20 years ago, but it's really about being a 'whole mouth doctor' now. I'm doing things like computerised dentistry with lasers, using jaw tracking equipment and measuring muscle activity, which I never would have conceived of when I started."

Cameron has attended the Las Vegas Institute of Comprehensive Dentistry and has undertaken advanced study in laser, neuromuscular and cosmetic dentistry and dental implants in Australia, New Zealand and America. He prides himself on being at the cutting edge of technology and believes the right dental care can not only improve your health but increase your life expectancy. "The latest techniques can help people suffering from chronic migraines and headaches as well as sleep apnea," he claims. "Research shows these can take 10 years off your life, so to diagnose and treat it can make a huge difference."

To stay at the top of this field, Cameron travelled to the US twice last year for extra training. This year, he is planning to visit San Francisco with wife Sarah, who helps manage the busy practice, to attend a conference run by the International Association of Comprehensive Aesthetics. During the year, other trainers from the US will fly to Townsville to present lectures and conferences to Smile staff and other dental workers from across Australia.

The next 12 months will also see some bright new changes to the practice, with renovations and refurbishments planned. "We are increasing the size of our staff room and putting in a kitchen and catering section," Cameron reveals. "The conference room will be bigger and we are putting in a sixth surgery and generally sprucing the place up."

Running Smile Dental is a great challenge, but Cameron and Sarah manage to juggle this with raising five children, aged from 18-months to 20-years-old. "I try and work only four days a week so I have plenty of time to spend with the kids," Cameron grins. "Sarah is here at the practice full-time and I also feel really lucky that my second oldest child Hamish (18) is working with us for his 'gap year'. Our nanny brings baby Beatrice in for around an hour every day, so half the family is here at least some of the time."

Cameron admits it's the support of his family, in particular Sarah, that makes leading such a fast-paced life possible. "We are both very passionate about what we are doing with Smile and I think that comes through in the practice and in our staff. Making an income from your work is great, but what we really want is to make our clients happy and deliver a great service." **CL**