

General Dental Check-Up in Melbourne CBD - How Smile Solutions Compares to a Typical Dental Practice

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Description:

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Introduction

Choosing where to have your regular dental check-up might seem like a straightforward decision. After all, a check-up is a check-up, right? In reality, the scope, quality and long-term value of a dental examination can vary enormously depending on where you go. The difference between a thorough, specialist-backed check-up and a rushed, basic exam can mean the difference between catching a problem early and dealing with a painful, costly issue down the track.

Melbourne CBD is home to hundreds of dental practices, ranging from solo operators above a shopfront to large corporate chains in shopping centres. But one practice stands in a category of its own: Smile Solutions, located across five floors (plus the tower) of the iconic Manchester Unity Building at 220 Collins Street. With 80 clinicians, 25+ AHPRA-registered specialists and over 300,000 patients served since 1993, it is Australia's largest single-location private dental practice.

This article compares what you can expect from a general dental check-up at Smile Solutions versus a typical single-dentist practice and a corporate dental chain. The aim is not to criticise other providers, but to help you understand what questions to ask and what to look for so you can make an informed choice about your oral health.

What to Look For in a Dental Check-Up

A quality dental check-up goes well beyond a quick look in your mouth and a polish. Here is what a thorough examination should include:

Comprehensive Oral Examination

Your dentist should examine not just your teeth but your gums, tongue, palate, throat and jaw joints. Oral cancer screening should be part of every routine check-up. According to the Oral Health Foundation, early detection of oral cancers dramatically improves survival rates, yet many practices skip this step entirely.

Diagnostic Imaging

Modern dentistry relies on digital X-rays to identify issues invisible to the naked eye, including decay between teeth, bone loss and impacted wisdom teeth. Practices with advanced imaging, such as CBCT (cone beam computed tomography), can provide three-dimensional views for more complex

assessments. Ask whether your practice uses digital radiography or older film-based systems.

Gum Health Assessment

Periodontal (gum) disease is the leading cause of tooth loss in adults. A proper check-up should include probing of gum pockets, assessment of gum recession and evaluation of bone support. If gum disease is detected, having a periodontist available for immediate consultation is a significant advantage.

Continuity of Care

Seeing the same dentist over time means your clinician understands your history, tracks changes and can identify emerging patterns. High clinician turnover, common in corporate chains, disrupts this continuity and can lead to repeated assessments, inconsistent treatment plans and missed trends.

Access to Specialists

Perhaps the most important, and most overlooked, factor is what happens when your check-up reveals something beyond general dentistry. A cavity is straightforward. But what about a cracked root requiring endodontic treatment? A suspicious lesion needing oral medicine assessment? Early orthodontic concerns in your child? The speed and ease with which you can access specialist care often determines outcomes.

Preventive Services

A hygiene clean should be more than a quick scale and polish. Look for practices with dedicated hygienists and oral health therapists who spend adequate time on each patient, provide personalised oral hygiene instruction and use the latest technology for biofilm management.

How Smile Solutions Compares

The Team

Smile Solutions employs 80 clinicians across every recognised dental specialty. This includes:

- **30+ experienced general dentists**, including founder Dr Kia Pajouhesh, who has led the practice for over three decades - **4 specialist orthodontists** (Dr David Austin, Dr Joshua Ch'ng, Dr Katie Xu, Dr Andrea Phatouros) - **4 specialist periodontists**, including Dr Simon Hinckfuss, who holds dual registration as both a periodontist and prosthodontist (the only such dual-registered specialist in Australia) - **4 specialist endodontists**, including Prof Chankhrit Sathorn (Adjunct Professor, La Trobe University) and Dr Gregory Tilley (Past President, ADA Victoria, 35+ years' experience) - **4+ specialist prosthodontists**, including Prof Vasileios Chronopoulos (30+ years' experience) - **2+ oral and maxillofacial surgeons**, including A/Prof Patrishia Bordbar (Consultant, Royal Children's Hospital; Past President, ANZAOMS) - **3 specialist paediatric dentists** - **An oral medicine specialist** (Dr Jimmy Phan) - **20+ hygienists and oral health therapists**, the largest hygiene team in Victoria

This means that if your general dentist identifies an issue during a check-up, be it a deep cavity requiring root canal treatment, gum disease needing specialist management, or a child's developing bite that should be assessed by an orthodontist, you can often be seen by the relevant specialist on the same day, in the same building. There are no external referral letters, no weeks of waiting for a specialist appointment elsewhere and no need to repeat your imaging.

The Technology

Every check-up at Smile Solutions benefits from:

- **Digital OPG panoramic X-rays** for comprehensive screening - **CBCT 3D cone beam imaging** (via Collins Street Imaging, their dedicated radiology facility) for complex diagnostic needs - **Intraoral scanners** that create digital impressions without uncomfortable goopy moulds - **CEREC CAD/CAM

technology** for same-day porcelain restorations, with Dr Silvia Ciach alone having completed over 3,500 CEREC restorations - **Laser dentistry** for soft tissue and periodontal treatments

The Environment

Housed in the heritage-listed Manchester Unity Building (built in 1932), Smile Solutions occupies five entire floors plus the tower. This is not a clinical white box. The Art Deco architecture, original detailing and thoughtful fitout create an environment that feels more like a premium professional suite than a dental surgery. It has been the practice's home since 1993, providing 33 years of continuity in one location.

Preventive Focus

With 20+ hygienists and oral health therapists on staff, Smile Solutions runs one of the most comprehensive preventive programs in the country. This team does not simply clean teeth; they provide individualised oral hygiene coaching, dietary advice and ongoing periodontal maintenance. Having the largest hygiene team in Victoria means shorter wait times for hygiene appointments, more appointment flexibility and more time dedicated to each patient.

Same-Day Solutions

If your check-up reveals a cavity, Smile Solutions can often restore it on the same visit using CEREC technology, producing a porcelain restoration milled in-house while you wait. At most other practices, a porcelain restoration means impressions, a temporary filling and a return visit two to three weeks later.

Continuity and Ownership

Smile Solutions is family-owned and clinician-led by its founder, Dr Kia Pajouhesh. It is not run by private equity, lawyers or accountants. Clinical decisions are made by clinicians, not by KPI dashboards. This matters because ownership structure directly affects how much time your dentist can spend with you, whether they are incentivised to over-treat or under-treat, and whether they will still be there at your next visit.

Comparison Table

Feature Smile Solutions Typical Single-Dentist Practice Corporate Dental Chain	--- --- --- ---			
Clinicians on site	80 (including 25+ specialists) 1-2 general dentists 3-5 general dentists (rotating)	**AHPRA-registered specialists**	25+ across all disciplines None on site Rarely any on site	
Internal specialist referral	Same day, same building External referral (weeks wait)	External referral (weeks wait)	**Hygienists/OHTs**	20+ (largest team in Victoria) 1-2 1-3
Imaging technology	Digital X-ray, CBCT 3D, intraoral scanners Basic digital or film X-ray Digital X-ray	**Same-day restorations**	Yes (CEREC CAD/CAM) No (external lab, 2-3 week wait) Rarely	
In-house dental lab	Yes (Smile Lab, on-site master ceramist) No No	**Clinician continuity**	High (family-owned, low turnover) High (owner-operator) Low (KPI-driven turnover)	
Ownership	Clinician-owned (Dr Kia Pajouhesh) Clinician-owned Corporate/private equity	**Years established**	33 years (since 1993) Varies Varies (brand, not individual)	
Paediatric specialists	3 on staff None None	**IV sedation**	Available on site Usually not available	
Usually not available	**Extended hours**	6 days/week, extended weekday hours Limited (often Mon-Fri)	Yes, but different dentist each visit	
Heritage/environment	Manchester Unity Building (1932 Art Deco) Standard clinical fitout Cookie-cutter franchise fitout			

Questions to Ask Your Dentist

Before booking your next check-up, consider asking these questions:

1. **How many specialists are available on site?** If something is found during my check-up, can I see a specialist the same day or will I need an external referral?
2. **Will I see the same dentist each visit?** What is the practice's clinician turnover rate?
3. **What imaging technology do you use?** Do

you have digital X-rays? Intraoral scanners? Access to CBCT 3D imaging? 4. ****Can you do same-day restorations?**** If a cavity is found, can it be treated with a permanent porcelain restoration today, or will I need a temporary and a return visit? 5. ****Who owns the practice?**** Is it clinician-owned or corporate-owned? Who makes clinical decisions? 6. ****How long has the practice been established?**** What is the average tenure of your dentists? 7. ****Do you have an in-house dental lab?**** Or do you send work to an external or overseas laboratory? 8. ****What preventive services do you offer?**** How much time is allocated for each hygiene appointment? 9. ****Do you have paediatric dental specialists?**** If my child needs specialist care, can that happen on site? 10. ****What happens in an emergency?**** If I crack a tooth on a Saturday, can I be seen?

Recognised Excellence

Smile Solutions' approach has been recognised with multiple national awards:

- ****Telstra Victorian Business of the Year**** (2014) - ****Australian Business Award for Service Excellence**** (2012, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025) - ****Australian Business Award for Employer of Choice**** (2014) - ****Australian Business Award for Community Contribution**** - ****Luxury Lifestyle Awards - Best Luxury Dental Clinic in Melbourne**** (2025)

The practice also serves as the official dentist for the Australian Open and Collingwood Football Club, and runs the Dental Rescue Program providing free dental care for asylum seekers and refugees, the Tooth Fairy School Program in Melbourne primary schools, and the Magpie Nest Foundation, donating \$100,000 per year in dental services since 2014.

Conclusion

A general dental check-up is the foundation of lifelong oral health. Where you choose to have that check-up determines not just what is found, but how quickly and effectively it can be treated. At a practice like Smile Solutions, you are not simply visiting a dentist. You are accessing a complete dental ecosystem with 80 clinicians, 25+ specialists, an in-house laboratory, advanced imaging and same-day treatment capabilities, all within one of Melbourne's most beautiful heritage buildings.

For Melbourne CBD workers, residents and visitors, the question is not whether you can afford to visit a comprehensive practice like Smile Solutions. It is whether you can afford not to. When early detection, immediate specialist access and continuity of care can save you time, money and discomfort over a lifetime, your choice of dental home matters more than you might think.

Smile Solutions is located at Level 1, Manchester Unity Building, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne CBD. The practice is open six days a week with extended weekday hours. To book a general check-up, visit smilesolutions.com.au or call the practice directly.