

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 19 March 2020

EXTRA FUNDING BOOST FOR HEALTH SYSTEM COVID-19 RESPONSE

Victoria's health system is getting a massive \$437 million boost from the Andrews Labor Government to help respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, on top of the \$100 million elective surgery blitz announced on Sunday.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos announced the boost today, which includes new beds, additional equipment, funding for EDs and ICUs, additional resourcing for pandemic containment activities and support for workforce continuity throughout the pandemic.

More than \$80 million will be invested in bringing more beds online over the next 12 weeks, in time for the peak of the pandemic, including 84 beds at the old Peter Mac Hospital and 45 beds at Bendigo Health. These 129 beds are in addition to the 140 new beds that are coming online at Casey Hospital.

Baxter House will be recommissioned to keep regional Victorians safe – with consulting rooms and virus clinic capacity at Barwon Health.

Victoria's hospitals will be better prepared for the significant and prolonged increase in demand with an \$115 million injection to cover an extra 45,000 emergency department presentations, 5,000 hospital admissions, and a further 2,000 intensive care unit admissions during the pandemic peak.

Healthcare workers will have the tools they need to care for sick COVID-19 patients with \$107 million to buy life-saving equipment, including 4,000 high flow oxygen therapy units for patients in acute respiratory failure, 130 dialysis machines and 1,200 patient monitors.

An extra \$22 million of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – including 275 million pairs of gloves, 8.6 million face masks, and 1.7 million gowns – will keep workers safe while they help others. This is in addition to the \$10 million for PPE previously announced.

A further \$97 million will also be set aside to backfill the healthcare workforce in the event that staff need to self-isolate through exposure or infection – protecting both staff and patients throughout the outbreak.

Public health staff working around the clock to track and contain the virus will be supported with \$37 million to increase surveillance across the state, allowing for more targeted case identification, contact tracing, isolation advice and confirmation of individuals who are no longer infectious.

The contact tracing team will increase from 57 to 230 people – doing the important work of case and contact management, triage and information, outbreak management.

This package follows the Labor Government's elective surgery blitz, which is set to start today and see more than 7,000 Victorians fast-tracked for urgent procedures before the pandemic peak hits.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"This funding will mean more patients get the care they need in our emergency departments and ICUs as we hit the peak of the coronavirus pandemic."

"Hospital staff are working around the clock helping others – we'll make sure they have the equipment they need to stay safe."

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Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

“This funding boost is about looking ahead and making sure our hard-working doctors, nurses, paramedics and public health clinicians have everything they need to tackle this pandemic head on.”

“With more staff, beds, equipment, PPE and other resources being pumped into our hospitals Victorians can be reassured that our health professionals have the best possible chance of managing the challenges of COVID-19.”