

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Friday, 16 July 2020

VICTORIAN HOSPITALS READY TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS

The Victorian Government will pause all Category 3 elective surgery in Metro Melbourne, as it continues to prepare the state's health system to protect Victorians from coronavirus.

Whilst all Victorians are urged to follow the rules to keep our community safe, the Government will pause all Category 3 elective surgery to ensure we have spare beds and workforce capacity, if the state was to experience an increase in cases.

Elective surgery will also be reduced to no more than 50 per cent of usual activity across all public hospitals and 75 per cent in private hospitals. This means private hospitals can continue to take on public category one and urgent category two surgery, while we free up extra capacity across the whole system.

There will be no changes to elective surgery in regional Victoria, but we will continue to ensure these hospitals are well prepared.

Hundreds of new beds and thousands of pieces of medical equipment also continue to be pumped into Victorian hospitals as the state's health system gears up for increased activity from coronavirus.

Hospitals have been preparing to tackle this unprecedented global pandemic since January – with the capacity to rapidly scale up and down based on current modelling from public health experts.

Since the pandemic began more than 1,000 spaces for ICU and critical care beds have been created or upgraded so they are suitable for coronavirus patients. Extra equipment continues to be delivered to activate these beds, with additional beds coming online each week while works are underway on converting more treatment spaces.

A key element of our plan has been reopening the former Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, now known as St Vincent's Hospital on the Park, to prepare an extra 84 beds into the health system. The \$30 million project saw 650 construction workers and tradespeople working over 60,000 hours to recommission the building.

Extra beds have also been delivered at Casey Hospital, Baxter House in Geelong, Bendigo Hospital and Shepparton Hospital to ensure patients can continue to get the care they need no matter where they live.

Should demand for ICU beds increase surge, plans are in place to convert a thousand more critical care spaces to treat coronavirus cases within our hospitals. This includes upgrading operating theatres, recovery and other ward areas, emergency department spaces, and if really required, more beds can be opened in modular facilities in hospital carparks.

More than 86 million gloves, more than 34 million surgical masks, 1.4 million N95 masks, 2.2 million face shields are currently available in Victoria's warehouse ready to be distributed to health services across the state.

We have more than 1,200 ventilators currently in Victorian health services, hundreds more ready to deploy in the warehouse if needed and thousands more on order – as well as more than a thousand IV pumps and hundreds of patient monitors.

For information about coronavirus or to find your nearest testing site visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au or call 1800 675 398.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We've got the beds and equipment ready to ensure our health system can rapidly scale up and down as needed – based on the advice and modelling of our public health team."

"We have thankfully not needed this extra capacity yet and I hope we never will – but we need all Victorians to stay at home to protect our health system and save lives."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

“Earlier in the year we started to prepare the system for a worst-case scenario to ensure that we had the equipment and resources necessary for our hospitals and ICUs to care for the needs of very ill coronavirus patients.”

“While we will not see the impacts of the current restrictions for at least another week we are confident that this additional capacity will ensure our health system can successfully manage the second wave of the outbreak.”