

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLA

Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Health

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SURGERIES ON HOLD IN REGIONS TO BOOST HOSPITAL CAPACITY

Public hospitals in regional Victoria will begin winding back all non-urgent surgery on the eve of restrictions coming into force across the state, as we step up protections against the coronavirus pandemic.

From 11.59pm tonight, regional Victoria will be under Stage 3 restrictions, where there are only four reasons to leave the house: care and caregiving, shopping for the things you need, exercise, and work and education – if you can't do it from home.

To ensure our hospitals have the beds, equipment and staff they need to continue the fight against coronavirus, the Victorian Government will pause all Category 3 and non-urgent Category 2 elective surgery in regional Victoria.

Where possible, Category 3 and non-urgent Category 2 surgery which is already booked should still take place, however that will be at the hospital's discretion. No new non-urgent surgeries will be booked.

This announcement follows on from the recent decision to pause all Category 3 and non-urgent Category 2 elective surgery in metropolitan Melbourne and reduce elective surgery lists across public and private hospitals.

Category 1 and urgent Category 2 surgeries will continue to take place – so regional Victorians can be assured that if they need emergency care, they will still be looked after. IVF activity will also be exempt from these restrictions.

With coronavirus numbers continuing to grow at a slow, but steady rate in regional Victoria it is more likely that our hospitals will have to manage additional patients and we need to ensure they are equipped to do so.

Pausing all non-urgent elective surgery across the state will create additional capacity within the health system – which is particularly necessary in the event of large scale aged care outbreaks, where in some cases, the best option for the patients is to transfer them out of aged care facilities and into hospitals.

The decision on whether to transfer an aged care resident to hospital is made on a case by case basis, taking into account what is clinically best for the patient.

The Government will reinstate an elective surgery blitz across the state as soon as it is safe to do so – aiming to catch up on any backlog and get as many Victorians as possible into the operating theatre and back on their feet.

Massive efforts across the health system mean we now have 800 ICU beds across the state, with hundreds more ready to be rapidly scaled up and down as needed to be suitable for coronavirus patients.

We also have more than 1,500 ventilators currently in Victorian health services, can access thousands more if needed to convert additional beds into ICU capacity – as well as more than a thousand IV pumps, hundreds of patient monitors and plenty of PPE to distribute to frontline workers.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

“While we won't be taking any new bookings for the time being, regional Victorians can be assured that where possible, already booked elective surgery will proceed, as well as for those who need unexpected, urgent care.”

“We know this will mean an anxious time for many Victorians whose surgery is delayed, but we'll resume our elective surgery blitz as soon as it's safe to do so, to catch up any backlog as quickly as possible.”

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