

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

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

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Wednesday, 16 September 2020

IMPROVING CANCER OUTCOMES FOR ALL VICTORIANS

The Victorian Government is working to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem under the state's bold new cancer plan.

Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos tabled the *Victorian Cancer Plan 2020-2024* in parliament today – the latest four-year state-wide plan to drive down the harm caused by all cancers.

The plan seeks to boost HPV vaccinations to vulnerable groups of young people and improve vaccination and screening reminders in order to eliminate cervical cancer. Alongside this, the plan will encourage the use of cervical screening self-collection tests to reach women who may be reluctant to have a conventional examination by a health professional.

This will be critical in the fight to eliminate cervical cancer as we know most women diagnosed have never been screened or are under-screened. The new plan is also focused on addressing disparities across cancer rates, care and outcomes particularly for Aboriginal, regional and culturally diverse Victorians.

Thanks to initiatives like the Government's \$10 million shade grants for schools and community groups, boosted breast and bowel screening programs, and redeveloped and expanded cancer centres in major regional areas, Victoria has come a long way in improving cancer outcomes and is on track to save 10,000 lives by 2025.

The average cancer survival rate for people living in metropolitan Melbourne at 70 per cent, is higher than for those in regional Victoria which sits at 66 per cent – and Aboriginal Victorians have significantly higher cancer incidence and mortality rates compared with other Victorians.

To address these gaps the new plan will focus on:

- Delivering more localised cancer treatment and care services for regional Victorians closer to home.
- Delivering more home-based care, telehealth, community-based care and self-management models of care to reduce barriers to accessing cancer services.
- More flexible use of the health workforce, for example more nurse-led care in regional Victoria and more indigenous health workers specialising in cancer care.

The plan will also work to respond to the impact of people deferring cancer screening, detection, diagnosis and treatment during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. There has been around a 30 per cent reduction in reporting for the five most common cancers (colorectal, prostate, breast, melanoma and lung) during the pandemic.

More than 500 Victorians had their say on the plan's development. It was also informed by wide consultation with the health and community care sector and the state-wide Victorian Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2019.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"Every single Victorian woman lost to cervical cancer is one too many, that's why we're working to end cervical cancer and that means encouraging more women to get screened."

"Our efforts to prevent and detect cancer earlier and ensure Victorians have access to the very best treatments mean more people are surviving and we are on track to saving 10,000 lives by 2025."

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