

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**

Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Equality



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## **NALOXONE TO SAVE MORE LIVES UNDER AMENDED DRUG LAW**

The life-saving drug Naloxone will be more readily available to help those at risk of experiencing an overdose, giving more Victorians the chance to recover and sparing more families the heartache of losing a loved one, under a Bill to amend drug laws.

Minister for Health Martin Foley will today introduce amendments to the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act* that will allow people other than pharmacists to seek authorisation to supply Naloxone to people who are at risk of, or who may witness, an overdose.

This will include health workers in needle and syringe programs, and potentially other organisations that intersect closely with people who use opioids – including services such as alcohol and drug treatment providers, and through them, peers.

Naloxone is proven to save lives and can save many more if access to it is improved. It reverses the effects of overdose for opioid drugs like heroin, morphine and fentanyl. It can be easily administered by nasal spray, does not affect someone who has not used opioids and has no potential for misuse.

The Bill lays the platform to implement key government commitments in response to the 2018 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Drug Law Reform.

The government has been supporting access to naloxone through the Naloxone Subsidy Initiative, which enables people to obtain this essential medicine at no cost through 19 needle and syringe program locations.

Each year around 1100 Australians die from opioid overdoses with prescription painkillers such as oxycodone, morphine and fentanyl accounting for a significant number of these deaths. This death toll exceeds the number of people killed in road accidents.

The amended laws will also legalise the secondary supply of sterile injecting equipment obtained at needle and syringe programs – commonly referred to as peer distribution. This will maximise the effectiveness of the needle and syringe program to prevent blood borne virus transmissions in the community.

The proposed changes support recent Coronial recommendations to enhance the naloxone program and acts on the government's commitment to eliminate new transmissions of HIV and hepatitis B and C by 2030.

The Government has made record investments in alcohol and other drugs services with \$273.1 million in the 2019-20 Victorian Budget – a 65 per cent increase across the past five State Budgets.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley**

*“Too many Victorian families are losing a loved one to opioid overdose and the use of Naloxone while waiting for emergency medical help to arrive can be the difference between life and death.*

*“Whether it’s introducing real time prescription monitoring, establishing supervised injecting rooms, or increasing access to life saving medications - it is critical we do everything possible to end overdose tragedies.*

*“We are expanding access to a drug that will save more lives from overdose - giving more Victorians a chance to recover from addiction and go on to live full healthy lives.”*

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