



Martin Foley MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services

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HELPING OUR HEALTH SYSTEM RECOVER FROM CORONAVIRUS

As we continue to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, the Andrews Labor Government is opening more beds with more nurses in our hospitals, putting more paramedics and ambulances on the road and ensuring our health services are equipped to meet the unprecedented levels of demand we're seeing across the country.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* will deliver more than \$7.1 billion to upgrade and build more hospitals, improve local health services, and deliver the highest quality of care for more Victorians.

This includes more than \$759 million in funding for more paramedics, more triage care and support staff for Ambulance Victoria, as well as targeted funding to improve flow in our busy emergency departments.

The investment will also support the opening of new beds in health services across the state, supported by Victoria's hardworking healthcare workforce.

The global coronavirus pandemic has had a lasting impact on our entire health system – as is reflected in states and territories across Australia.

Last year, while the necessary restrictions were in place to save lives, many people deferred their normal check-ups and care routines, which means there is now a large number of Victorians presenting to our hospitals with more complex or more serious health conditions.

To help Victorians catch up on this deferred care, the Budget will deliver a \$91 million boost for community-based health services, including dental services, cancer screening, and maternal and child health appointments including catch up care specifically for Aboriginal Victorians.

With a \$300 million elective surgery blitz already underway, the Labor Government is ensuring even more Victorians can get the surgeries they need as soon as possible, with an additional \$136 million investment – the equivalent of 18,000 surgeries.

Another \$6.5 million will help expand women's reproductive health hubs and meet growing demand across 12 different women's health services.

Workforce fatigue from the global pandemic, cases being more complex and critical, staff having to don PPE and take extra COVIDSafe precautions with patients, and more people presenting to emergency departments also means Victoria's usual health performance measures have been impacted and may take some time to recover.

To speed up this recovery, the Labor Government will invest an extra \$266 million in Ambulance Victoria to support them with things like an expansion to secondary triage services and non-emergency patient transfers.

It will also help deliver new paramedics and additional support staff to help their hardworking colleagues – and reach Victorians when they're needed most. Another \$204 million investment will bolster Ambulance Victoria's resources through programs like Telehealth, and will deliver ongoing operational improvements across the state.

This will build on the more than 250 paramedics already recruited by Ambulance Victoria since November 2020 and the more than \$1 billion in funding for Ambulance Victoria since Labor came to Government.

With our Ambulances Services and hospitals so interlinked, it's important additional demand and patient care complexities are addressed as a whole.

The Labor Government will invest a further \$89 million to boost capacity and drive improvements and support flow through our busy emergency departments.

Another \$200 million will commission the opening of hospital facilities – including supporting the operation of previously announced beds and any additional staffing required – whether they be our hardworking nurses, allied health professionals or doctors.

To ensure our rapidly growing healthcare workforce is ready to hit the ground running, a further investment of \$13.2 million will expand Victoria's healthcare workforce pipeline through the delivery of an additional 200,000 student placement days and supporting clinicians to supervise them.

As part of our boost to health care, the Budget includes an extra \$28.8 million in additional services to reduce wait times and prevent patients ending up in acute care, with a boost to programs such as the Health Independence Program and extra dialysis and radiotherapy.

Another \$4.7 million will be invested in exome sequencing for rare diseases, providing patients with rare symptoms the peace of mind of a diagnosis, sooner.

Delivering on another election commitment, the Labor Government will help more Victorian families experience the joys of parenthood, by helping to cover the costs of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and other fertility care services with a \$70 million investment.

To ensure we continue our strong coronavirus response, an additional \$1.3 billion will be invested in the services that have kept us safe over the last year, including the continuation and expansion of our Local Public Health Units.

This includes more than \$329 million to continue rolling out the Commonwealth's coronavirus vaccine program across Victoria, which is key to our longer term social and economic recovery.

These investments will make sure our hospitals and local health services can keep doing the most important job there is: looking after our loved ones.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health and Ambulance Services Martin Foley

"The pandemic has had a lasting impact, and right across Australia we are seeing more ED presentations, more ambulance callouts – and fewer people seeing their GPs. This Budget will help Victoria recover faster and ensure our community continues to have access to the world-class care they deserve."

"Our paramedics, nurses, doctors and all healthcare staff are some of the hardest working in the country and this investment reinforces that we will always back them – and the extraordinary work they do."

"This Budget is providing a massive boost for community-based health, ensuring that services are there for Victorians to catch up on any vital treatments they may have put off during the pandemic."