

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Equality



Thursday, 11 November 2021

## MORE ELECTIVE SURGERY TO RESUME

More elective surgery will resume in Melbourne and Geelong from Monday, with current COVID hospitalisation numbers allowing for a safe and modest restart of non-urgent elective surgery in the private sector.

Private hospitals and day procedure centres in Melbourne and Geelong will be able to scale up to 50 per cent of their normal elective surgery lists, including non-urgent surgeries, provided enough capacity is kept aside to assist with the COVID response.

This will ensure that non-COVID public patients can continue to be treated at private hospitals, to help free up beds for COVID patients at our public hospitals.

Private hospitals and day procedure centres will continue to prioritise time-critical and urgent elective surgery to make sure urgent patients – both public and private – get the care they need.

The easing of some restrictions on non-urgent surgery follows COVID hospitalisations slowly starting to stabilise – however with further surges in COVID cases still predicted to come, the situation will be closely monitored and restrictions may be applied again if necessary.

These changes will bring Melbourne and Geelong into line with private hospitals in Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton and the Latrobe Valley, which are already on the 50 per cent cap.

A small number of metropolitan public hospitals that are not designated as major COVID streaming sites will also expand surgery to 50 per cent of their normal activity. They will continue to prioritise patients based on clinical need.

Other regional and rural public hospitals will continue to provide elective surgery as they have been doing but may temporarily defer non-urgent elective surgery if necessary to support local outbreaks.

Public health services operating COVID streaming sites will continue to provide urgent elective surgery and emergency surgery only. This is to ensure adequate capacity within the health system is retained to care for patients with COVID requiring hospitalisation, including ICU admission and sustain other critical services.

Patients waiting for non-urgent elective surgery impacted by the current measures are encouraged to seek medical attention should they experience a change in their condition so they can be clinically assessed and re-prioritised to a more urgent category if required.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

*“Some elective surgery was paused as hospitalisations surged but with the rapid take up of vaccines helping reduce numbers, we can now make these cautious changes and help ease that burden on unwell Victorians.”*

*“We always said we would increase our elective surgery capacity when we could – but COVID is not over yet and we will closely monitor the number of cases and hospitalisations to ensure we can respond as needed.”*