

Media Release

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



Friday, 26 November 2021

ELECTIVE SURGERY INCREASES FOR REGIONAL AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Public hospitals in Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton and the Latrobe Valley can resume up to 50 per cent of normal elective surgery from Monday 29 November, as Victoria continues to safely manage COVID-19 hospital admissions.

Private hospitals and day procedure centres currently operating up to 50 per cent of elective surgery capacity will be able to move up to 75 per cent from Monday 29 November, so long as they continue to first assist with the COVID-19 response.

Rural and regional health services not operating major COVID streaming sites have generally continued all categories of elective surgery, only postponing non-urgent surgery in response to local outbreaks.

At an operational level, health services will still have the option to reduce non-urgent surgery, if deemed necessary due to challenges associated with the pandemic.

Major metropolitan public hospitals and Barwon Health will continue to provide urgent elective surgery and emergency surgery only. This ensures adequate capacity within the health system is retained to care for patients with COVID-19 requiring hospitalisation, including ICU admission and sustain other critical services.

With high vaccination rates across Victoria, the number of COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalisation has reduced and stabilised – meaning our health services can cautiously increase elective surgery capacity.

The situation will continue to be monitored closely to ensure there is capacity available in the system in case hospitalisations surge.

Further increases to elective surgery capacity will be considered in the coming weeks – and will be announced when it is safe to do so.

Health services are also carefully managing the wellbeing of staff to ensure our dedicated frontline workers are rested and supported as regular non-COVID activity increases.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“Victoria’s magnificent efforts in getting vaccinated mean the number of patients requiring hospitalisation has stabilised, with most people safely managing their illness at home.”

“Reducing hospitalisations has given us the flexibility to further expand elective surgery and help ease the burden on Victorians waiting for procedures.”

“We will continue to monitor the situation closely so that we are ready to respond to any surges in COVID-19 activity, while also making sure we are supporting the dedicated staff who keep our operating theatres running.”