

Media Release

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



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DELIVERING A HEALTH-BASED RESPONSE TO PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring the right programs and systems are in place to help people who are drunk in public get the support they need to stay safe.

Minister for Health Martin Foley today announced four trial sites that will help develop a health-based response to public drunkenness.

The four trial sites are located within varying local government areas – including two in regional Victoria – ensuring the model is tested in diverse settings.

The sites in the City of Yarra, the City of Greater Dandenong and the City of Greater Shepparton and Castlemaine will be established and managed in partnership with local health services and Aboriginal organisations.

The trial sites will inform how this new public health model will be rolled out across the state. Trial sites will begin operations over the coming months, beginning with outreach teams to provide on-the-ground support for people who need it.

The new health model will promote therapeutic and culturally safe pathways to assist people who are drunk. This will include more outreach services, training for first responders and new sobering up services – making sure people are transported to a safe place where they can receive appropriate support.

The trials are the first step towards implementing the *Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Act 2021*, which paves the way for public drunkenness to be treated as a health issue and not a crime.

Current public drunkenness laws have caused an unacceptable and disproportionate impact on Aboriginal Victorians and reform is long overdue.

The Government is continuing to work with Aboriginal communities, health experts and stakeholders – including Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Aboriginal Community Justice Panels, and unions – to ensure a safe and effective model that strikes the right balance between protecting people who are drunk in public and community safety.

The Government has invested \$26.4 million to establish the trial sites and provide safer pathways to help people who are drunk on our streets.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“A drunk person should be looked after, not locked up. It is a health issue – we’re making sure it’s treated as one.”

“This health model will mean people who are drunk in public get the help they need, and it will save lives.”