

Media Release

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



Wednesday, 16 February 2022

FINAL STEPS TO RESUME ALL ELECTIVE SURGERY

All elective surgery across public and private hospitals can resume by the end of the month, as the impact of the Omicron wave continues to subside and stabilise.

The Minister for Health has signed off on a plan that balances the health system response and workforce pressures with ensuring Victorians can access important surgery they've been waiting for.

From Monday, 21 February public hospitals in metropolitan Melbourne will be able to perform Category 2 surgery.

The Minister will also consider further changes to allow all surgery to resume from 28 February, subject to supporting streaming sites, with a focus on treating Cat 1 and Cat 2 patients within clinically recommended time.

Each hospital will individually assess their own capacity based on staff availability and COVID-19 demands, with 44 hospitals still operating as COVID-19 streaming hospitals.

Private hospitals will also be able to increase their elective surgery activity as long as they can continue to provide support for public hospitals to respond to COVID-19 demands.

From Monday, 21 February, private hospitals in metropolitan Melbourne can undertake up to 75 per cent of any elective surgery activity, increasing from 50 per cent. The Minister will then consider increasing this on Monday, 28 February to up to 100 per cent.

In regional Victoria, the cap for private hospitals will increase from the current 75 per cent to up to 100 per cent on Monday, 21 February – while regional public hospitals continue to deliver any elective surgery based on their individual capacity.

The rolling seven-day average of COVID-19 hospitalisations is 457 patients, decreasing from a peak of more than 1,200 patients in mid-January 2022.

The number of staff unavailable due to COVID-19 has dropped by around two-thirds, currently at around 1,400 people.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"We understand that this has been a difficult time for many people waiting for surgery and we thank them for their patience while we managed the peak of the Omicron variant."

"With hospitalisations steadily declining and staff availability improving, we're in a strong position to remove the remaining restrictions and ensure delayed appointments can be rescheduled as quickly as possible."

"Our entire healthcare workforce has done an incredible job getting us through the Omicron wave. Our approach needs to be cautious and steady to ensure they're able to cope without being further affected by fatigue and furloughs."