

Media Release

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



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MORE VACCINATORS TO RETURN TO HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Victoria's army of COVID-19 vaccinators will start returning to the public hospital system, following an extraordinary year delivering more than 6.1 million doses through the country's best performing state-run vaccination system.

With the Commonwealth cutting funding for the COVID-19 response beyond September and more people getting vaccinated at GPs and pharmacies, Victoria's network of vaccination centres will start to scale down.

The move will free up a workforce of highly skilled professionals to deliver other services across our health system.

By the end of May, approximately 30 state-run vaccination centres will remain in operation, with a focus on services in priority Local Government Areas and vulnerable communities.

The Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccination program will also continue through GP clinics and pharmacies, which are now delivering up to 75 per cent of doses in the program – up from around 50 per cent during the Delta outbreak.

While supporting the Commonwealth's COVID vaccination program was a critical priority in the race to vaccinate millions of Victorians in a short period of time, the time has come for workers to return to the public hospital system, which is still under pressure.

With demand reducing now and most Victorians have had a third dose, immunisation programs have a natural home in primary care and that's where the Commonwealth's program will endure over the long term.

The vaccination centre at the Alfred Hospital closed this week, having delivered more than 70,000 doses since it opened, while the high-volume centre at Cranbourne Turf Club will finish vaccinating Victorians in May.

Victoria is one of the most vaccinated places in the world. More than 96 per cent of adults have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, and two-thirds have had three doses – including around 90 per cent of those aged over 70.

If you haven't had your third dose, now's the time to visit a state-run centre, GP or pharmacy to get protected ahead of winter. To book, visit covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"Victorians will always have the ability to get protected against COVID-19 at the places most people usually go to for medicines and health services – their local GP or pharmacy."

"This has been one of the biggest and most successful public health programs in our history. Everyone who worked in a vaccination centre played a part in helping us become one of the most vaccinated societies on earth."

"While a lack of Commonwealth funding clarity has guided this decision, this is an appropriate step that reflects things getting back to normal, with more responsibility for immunisation programs returning to primary care."