

# Media Release

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



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## HOSPITALS HOLD THE LINE AMID SIGNIFICANT DEMAND

Victorian healthcare workers and paramedics have again shown their dedication to caring for the sickest in our community despite ongoing pandemic pressures on the system – as the Andrews Labor Government’s \$1.5 billion *COVID Catch Up Plan* gets underway.

The latest health and ambulance performance data shows our emergency departments treated 462,934 patients across the first three months of 2022 – despite facing the global Omicron outbreak and subsequent record levels of sick or symptomatic staff in isolation that caused the state’s first ever Pandemic Code Brown.

Despite significant ED demand and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on staffing across the country, Victoria’s hospitals were still able to deliver 27,690 elective surgery procedures. This was around 6 per cent less than the previous quarter, due to the Omicron wave and Code Brown emergency management structure.

Importantly, 99.97 per cent of category 1 elective surgery patients were treated within the recommended time, while continuing to meet demand from COVID, ongoing ED pressures and managing the Code Brown.

Health services have started developing surgery action plans to address the waiting list – which is now at 89,611 – to deliver a record 240,000 surgeries each year by 2024 as part of the *COVID Catch Up Plan*.

While only three weeks into the multi-year plan, progress has already been made in a number of key areas – including appointing the Royal Melbourne Hospital’s Director of Surgical Services, Professor Ben Thomson as Chief Surgical Adviser to support its delivery.

Professor Thomson will provide expert advice and work closely with health services, workforce representatives, the Department of Health, and the new Surgery Recovery and Reform Taskforce to deliver the plan.

University Hospital Geelong has been chosen as the eighth location for a Rapid Access Hub, which will streamline surgical theatres, equipment and staffing to increase the number of surgeries that can be performed each day. Works will begin shortly across all eight sites, which will be operational next year.

The data also shows that Ambulance Victoria was able to stabilise its performance under significant pressure, with 66.8 per cent of Code 1 cases responded to within 15 minutes, compared to 66.5 per cent last quarter.

The Labor Government is investing record levels of funding across the healthcare system, including almost \$3 billion since February, to help meet deferred care and COVID demands, recruit more staff and boost surgical activity across Victoria.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health and Ambulance Services Martin Foley

*“While life has gone back to normal for most of us, we know our healthcare workers still face huge pressures every day – and that despite this, the most serious patients continue to receive the care and treatment they expect and need.”*

*“We know Victorians on the waitlist have sacrificed a lot and there’s always more we can do, which is why our record investment will support our healthcare workers and ensure we catch up on the deferred surgeries.”*

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