

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Wednesday, 4 May 2022

DELIVERING CRITICAL HEALTH CARE FOR BALLARAT PATIENTS

Ballarat and Grampians patients will have better treatment closer to home for cancer therapy, surgery and mental health as part of the major expansion of health care announced in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23*.

Patients at Ballarat Base Hospital will benefit from a \$6.5 million investment in robot-assisted surgery that will deliver the best possible surgery outcomes and reduce recovery time.

The innovative technology sees surgeons control the movements of robotic arms for some procedures, which is less invasive and can result in less scarring and blood loss, and lower risk of infection.

The Ballarat Austin Radiation Oncology Centre will receive \$3.5 million for a replacement radiotherapy linear accelerator (Linac) to treat cancer patients and reduce the need for Ballarat patients to travel to Melbourne for treatment.

The machine, which uses high-energy radiation beams to treat many types of cancer with pinpoint accuracy, can treat more patients than other standard radiation treatments.

The investment is part of an \$11.1 million investment in three new and replacement radiotherapy linear accelerators in regional Victoria.

The Grampians Public Health Unit will share in a \$40 million statewide boost, allowing them to provide community care and guidance as part of the ongoing COVID-19 response and deliver local responses to other public health issues.

Staffing at regional hospitals and healthcare services, including Ballarat, will also be bolstered as part of the statewide initiative to help 1,125 registered undergraduate nursing students enter the workforce earlier, as well as the recruitment of a further 2,000 ex-pat and international healthcare workers.

Hundreds of regional health projects will be funded through a massive \$300 million boost to the *Regional Health Infrastructure Fund*, taking the total investment in the fund to \$790 million since it started in 2016.

As part of a \$20 million package, we're expanding support for Victorians with eating disorders across key regional centres, including Ballarat, to ensure they don't have to travel to the city to find specialist care and support.

The funding will enable health services to employ specialist multidisciplinary teams to deliver tailored patient-centred care that also involves families, carers and supporters.

The Budget supports the continued vital work to improve acute mental health services in Ballarat – as one of three regional health services that will share in \$35.5 million to start the planning for an additional 33 acute mental health beds at the Ballarat Base Hospital.

Delivering on key recommendations of the Royal Commission, these new beds form part of the Labor Government's investment in delivering or planning for 64 additional acute mental health beds across regional Victoria – so people can be treated and begin their recovery close to home and local support services.

Media contact:

Ballarat will also share in an additional \$10 million to start plans for an emergency department hub to support people with mental health and alcohol and other drug issues. The hubs are also planned for Bendigo and Shepparton.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“The people of Ballarat deserve the best quality health care and this Budget will put patients first.”

“Whether it’s cutting-edge surgery, treatment for cancer, specialised mental health support or simply knowing your local health service is there to support you – this Budget is about making sure you care you need, closer to home.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“These projects will make it easier for people in Ballarat to get world class treatment and health care closer to home.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

“We want people right around the state to have the best resources possible close by to support their mental health, which is why this budget is funding more acute mental health beds in Ballarat.”

Quote attributable to Member for Buninyong Michaela Settle

“Having some of the world’s best medical technology in our own back yard will be a huge boost for patients in and around Ballarat.”

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

“We’re making sure we have the best mental health services possible for people in Ballarat – giving them the wrap around support that’s required in their time of need.”

Media contact: