

Media Release

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



Thursday, 9 June 2022

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 \$50 million over two years to continue the trial site operations that will help develop a health-based response to public drunkenness ahead of the statewide rollout of the reforms.

Four trial sites will begin operating in the City of Yarra, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Greater Shepparton and Castlemaine from mid-year onwards and be managed in partnership with local health services and Aboriginal organisations. These trials will inform how a new public health model will be rolled out across the state.

The investment will provide outreach services in all four trial locations and sobering facilities in Yarra, Dandenong and Shepparton – ensuring intoxicated people are transported to a safe place where they can receive appropriate support.

All trial sites will provide culturally safe support for all Victorians, and trials in Yarra and Shepparton will be expanded to include standalone services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The trial sites and health-based model builds on three decades of work and activism, including key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and the Coronial Inquest into the tragic death of Tanya Day.

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

The Labor Government will introduce legislation that will ensure decriminalisation comes into force in November 2023.

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 model strikes the right balance between helping people who are drunk in public and community safety.

The Government has now invested more than \$76 million to establish the trial sites and provide safer pathways to help people who are drunk in public.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“We remain dedicated to decriminalising public drunkenness and ensuring people get the help they need to recover and to live healthy lives.”

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

“The current laws have had a profound and disproportionate impact on Aboriginal communities. These reforms are long overdue and are an important first step to ensure those who need support have access to culturally appropriate care.”

Media contact: Hannah Jenkins 0403 177 892 | hannah.jenkins@minstaff.vic.gov.au