

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



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HOME BASED CARE ALREADY EASING PRESSURE ON OUR HOSPITALS

Tens of thousands of Victorians are taking up the home-based care programs across the state – easing pressure on the health system – with nearly 56,000 people receiving care from the comfort of their home since *Better at Home* started last year.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited St Vincent's Hospital, which has one of the fastest growing home-based care programs in the state – with a 95 per cent increase in home-based care in the last year.

Better at Home allows Victorians to access experienced nurses, clinicians and allied health professionals at home, surrounded by their loved ones, as part of a more convenient and tailored experience for patients.

The program also works to free up much-needed capacity across our hospital network, with an extra 200 beds freed up across Victoria since the program started in July last year.

Since the program began, regional health services have also delivered more than 71,000 days that would have been spent in hospital at home for almost 10,000 patients across 25 regional health services in Barwon, Gippsland, Loddon Mallee, Hume and the Grampians.

St Vincent's has expanded its *Hospital in the Home* (HITH), *Rehab@Home* and *GEM@Home* programs after receiving more than \$8.1 million in funding from the Andrews Labor Government through *Better at Home* in 2021/22.

Since July last year, around 1,600 people have accessed the St Vincent's HITH program, which sees patients receive hospital-level care in the comfort of their own home during visits and checkups from healthcare staff.

Around 200 Victorians have been supported through the St Vincent's *Rehab@Home* program since *Better at Home* started, while more than 330 patients have accessed geriatric services through its admitted *GEM@Home* program.

Earlier this year as part of the *Victorian Budget 2022/23*, the Labor Government announced a further \$698 million to expand *Better at Home* to help an additional 15,000 Victorians access home-based care each year.

This is on top of 2.5 million telehealth appointments that have also been delivered through the program – helping more Victorians avoid a hospital or specialist doctor visit.

The funding is part of the \$12 billion *Pandemic Repair Plan* which sets out a long-term strategy to deliver more staff, better hospitals, and funding for a range of primary care initiatives to keep the pressure off local hospitals.

A \$162 million package was also announced last week to double Northern Health's Virtual ED, deploy specialist staff across 12 major hospitals to improve patient flow and make innovative changes to better balance the load across the system.

Victorians can help ease pressure on the system by staying up to date with their COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations, staying home when unwell, wearing masks in crowded indoor environments and using air purifiers where possible.

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Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Giving more Victorians access to world-class healthcare in the comfort of their own homes not only means a more comfortable experience for many patients, but it’s also helping take the pressure off our hardworking frontline nurses, paramedics and doctors.”

“I know from my own experience just how helpful getting care at home can be – it makes treatment and recovery so much easier when you’re able to get personalised care brought directly to you, surrounded by your loved ones.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“We’re investing heavily to help reduce pressure on the health system amid the ongoing effects of the pandemic, winter respiratory illnesses like the flu, two years of deferred care and many sick healthcare workers.”

“St Vincent’s home-based care programs are great examples of how our health system is adapting to meet increasing demand for care outside the hospital, while also taking significant pressure off of our busy emergency departments.”