

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Friday, 28 October 2022

DELIVERING MORE PUBLIC SURGERY FOR VICTORIANS

Thousands more patients will soon receive elective surgery in the public system and regional health services across Victoria will be upgraded, expanded and modernised – as part of a major boost from the Andrews Labor Government to ensure all Victorians continue to have access to the health care they deserve.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today officially opened the new Blackburn Public Surgical Centre, a dedicated facility which will exclusively perform elective surgery procedures for Victorians. The Centre started performing surgeries last week.

Now operated by Eastern Health, the centre will help more than 5,700 extra Victorians each year receive the care they need. Construction of two additional theatres at the centre will also begin soon, with both set to open in early 2023.

Once fully operational, the centre will have four operating theatres, a ten-bed day procedure unit, 43 inpatient beds and will offer a range of services including gynaecology and general surgery.

This is the second private hospital to be repurposed by the Labor Government as an elective surgery centre, with Frankston Public Surgical Centre having already transitioned to public hands in September. Together, once fully operational, the two facilities will deliver close to 15,000 additional public surgeries each year.

Delivered through the Government's \$1.5 billion *COVID Catch Up Plan* – the initiative is part of Victoria's long-term strategy to reform the elective surgery system and ensure every Victorian gets the care they need.

Under the plan, Victoria's health services will gradually build up to deliver a record 240,000 surgeries every year by 2024 – that's an additional 40,000 procedures annually compared to pre-pandemic levels.

To ensure continued support for our health services, the Government also today announced that more than \$70 million will be invested through the *Regional Health Infrastructure to Fund* (RHIF) to deliver 128 projects across regional Victoria.

Every single council in regional Victoria will see an upgrade – with the projects for hospitals, community health services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations also creating hundreds of jobs.

This investment includes projects to modernise and expand operating theatres, deliver new waiting rooms and hospital beds, create accessible paths and ramps, expand consulting rooms and deliver vital equipment upgrades.

The RHIF – now worth \$790 million – provides funding to rural and regional health services and agencies across Victoria so the services can continue to provide safe and efficient care to local communities.

Since establishing the RHIF in 2015, the Government has now funded more than 630 projects for regional health services – the largest investment ever dedicated to our rural and regional health services.

Quarterly performance data released today shows that despite record demand, a busy flu season and continued pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic – Victoria's health system continues to improve.

The elective surgery waiting list has decreased to 84,955, while the number of patients admitted from the waiting list was 45,760, which is an increase of 9.4 per cent compared to the previous quarter – and a 64 per cent increase since the *COVID-19 Catch Up Plan* was announced in February.

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Despite being the busiest first quarter on record and the second busiest quarter in their history, Ambulance Victoria performance times also stabilised with 64.3 per cent of Code 1 cases being responded to within 15 minutes, compared with 64 per cent the previous quarter.

Our hospitals continued to experience high levels of hospital admissions with 491,089 for the quarter, which is an increase of 16,339 from the previous quarter.

Only Labor has a plan to hire 24,000 health workers and make studying nursing free – to give every Victorian the healthcare they need.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“We’re already seeing the positive impact of our COVID-Catch Up Plan and these dedicated centres will ensure that the waiting list continues to come down and thousands more Victorians get the surgery they need.”

“This centre will be completely dedicated to planned surgery and together with the new Frankston Public Surgical Centre, they’ll be delivering close to 15,000 surgeries a year.”

“We established the RHIF to ensure our doctors and nurses have the best facilities possible to give Victorians the care they need, no matter where they live.”