

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



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PRIORITY PRIMARY CARE CENTRES OPEN AND MORE ON THE WAY

The Andrews Labor Government has delivered ten Priority Primary Care Centres (PPCCs), with 15 more on the way – giving Victorians a free alternative to visiting a busy emergency department (ED).

Premier Daniel Andrews and Acting Minister for Health Colin Brooks today visited the recently opened Heidelberg PPCC to announce that another 12 are on track to open by early February.

Nine other PPCCs have opened recently in Ballarat, Dandenong, Epping, Frankston, Glen Waverley, Moonee Ponds, Narre Warren, Prahran and Sunshine, with the remaining centres to support:

- Albury Wodonga Health – Wodonga
- Box Hill Hospital
- Footscray Hospital
- Goulburn Valley Health – Shepparton
- Latrobe Regional Hospital
- Maroondah Hospital
- Mercy Werribee
- Northern Health – Craigieburn
- Royal Children's Hospital
- St Vincent's
- University Hospital Geelong
- West Gippsland Healthcare Group

Work is also underway to finalise the locations and timing of an additional three centres in Bendigo, Mildura and Sunbury.

Working in close partnership with local Primary Health Networks, the ten existing PPCCs have seen more than 6,000 patients – many of whom would otherwise have gone to an ED, despite needing lower-level care.

As health services continue to face record levels of demand, the PPCCs are not only playing a crucial role in reducing wait times in EDs but also providing an alternative local health service for patients who might not be able to see their regular GP.

The centres accept bookings and walk-ins, with doctors and nurses on site to treat a range of conditions like mild infections, fractures and burns, in addition to diagnostic services including pathology and medical imaging.

Many of the clinics are operating seven days a week and up to 16 hours a day, even over the summer break.

Early data has shown that the PPCCs are helping to reduce pressure on nearby EDs – with patients' feedback overwhelmingly positive, due to much shorter wait times.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$70 million to deliver this free service for all Victorians, with or without a Medicare card – because we know too many people can't get in to see their GP or, with bulk-billing doctors now few and far between, the cost is too high.

Given this lack of access, there is no more urgent priority for National Cabinet than reforming primary care – and the Labor Government will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth on behalf of Victorians.

PPCCs are part of a suite of measures the Labor Government is taking to fill gaps in primary care across Victoria, including an expansion of the Virtual ED and Better at Home programs, the ongoing rollout of Ambulance Victoria's Secondary Triage Service and 30 state-funded GP respiratory clinics.

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Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Far too many Victorians can’t get in to see a GP at all, let alone one who bulk bills. It is a basic right that if you’re sick, you should be able get care at no cost – so we’re doing something about that.”

“Our primary care system is broken, and National Cabinet must make reforming the system its priority for 2023 – so every Australian has easy access to the affordable healthcare they deserve.”

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Health Colin Brooks

“Our Priority Primary Care Centres are giving Victorians the care they need – so fewer people end up in an emergency department because it’s the only free healthcare available to them.”

“PPCCs are helping reduce waiting times in our EDs, while giving Victorians another option for non-emergency care – ultimately taking pressure off our hardworking doctors and nurses.”