

# Victorian Budget 2023/24



**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Minister for Health

**The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP**  
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers

**The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP**  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Mental Health

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## DOING WHAT MATTERS FOR PATIENTS AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS

We've always invested to make sure Victorians have the world-class healthcare they need, when they need it, close to home.

It's never been more important than right now, as health systems around the world continue to recover from the pressure of the pandemic.

The Andrews Labor Government is doing what matters: giving our healthcare system – and the dedicated workers who care for Victorians – a \$4.9 billion boost in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*.

This Budget will deliver on every promise we made to Victorians at the election – with more healthcare workers, new services, the latest equipment and new and upgraded hospitals across the state.

That's on top of more than \$54 billion we've invested in our healthcare system – as well as the workers we need to run it – since coming to government in 2014.

The backbone of any world-class health system is its workforce. Since launching our \$12 billion *Pandemic Repair Plan* last year, we've trained and recruited more than 4,500 healthcare workers – across nursing, midwifery, paramedicine, allied health and indigenous healthcare.

With this Budget, we're investing an extra \$338 million to make sure every Victorian health service has the dedicated staff patients can count on.

In 2015, we enshrined nurse-to-patient ratios in law. Now, we'll strengthen them to give nurses the support they need to keep caring for Victorians. More than \$167 million will put more nursing staff in intensive care, high dependency and coronary care units – and more nurses and midwives in our maternity services.

As part of this package, we'll make sure Victoria continues to be the best place to be a nurse – with sign-on bonuses for graduate nurses and midwives, funding to attract more international healthcare workers and the recruitment of an extra 450 nurses.

Since 2014, we've put more than 2,200 extra paramedics on the road – because we know how much Victorians value the lifesaving work they do.

A \$247 million investment will hire more paramedics – and upskill and train them, establishing Australia's first Centre for Paramedicine alongside Victoria University – as well as freeing up crews to get to patients faster.

We'll train 40 extra highly-skilled Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) paramedics, and we'll also train and deploy 25 paramedic practitioners – an Australian first.

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Victoria's Virtual Emergency Department has been accessed by more than 100,000 patients – diverting thousands of Victorians from long waits at hospitals and putting thousands of ambulance crews back on the road sooner.

We're ensuring it reaches more Victorians while boosting Ambulance Victoria's Secondary Triage service and 22 Medium Acuity Transport teams.

Victorians on the NDIS shouldn't be kept in hospital while they wait for long-term support packages – they should be recovering at home with loved ones. While we work with the Commonwealth on reform of the disability scheme, we'll invest \$9.1 million to expand *Pathways to Home*, getting NDIS patients home as soon as it's safe to do so.

The pandemic put Australia's primary care system under a microscope. Too many Victorians can't get in to see a GP right now – let alone one who bulk bills. That's why we're investing \$32 million to get new trainee GPs into the workforce, covering the costs of their medical exams and encouraging students to choose a career in general practice.

We'll invest \$20 million for a 12-month pilot program expanding the role of community pharmacists – so Victorians don't need to pay or wait days to get into a GP when they need treatment for minor illnesses and infections, vaccinations and reissued contraceptive prescriptions.

Last year, we announced we would establish 25 Priority Primary Care Centres across Victoria. They're local, free and easy to walk into – and they've diverted thousands of Victorians from busy emergency departments. We'll keep them open with an investment of \$20.2 million, alongside investments by the Albanese Government.

While our hospitals continue to see record demand because of the pandemic, we'll support them with more than \$2.3 billion – with more than \$960 million to ensure new and upgraded facilities are patient-ready as we open expanded emergency departments, the new Victorian Heart Hospital and 30 new beds at the Royal Children's Hospital.

To build a better healthcare system, we need the infrastructure to make sure patients get the care they need, when they need it, no matter where they live.

A new \$320 million *Hospital Infrastructure Delivery Fund* will kickstart planning, development and land acquisition for new and upgraded hospitals across the state.

The fund will support the new hospital for West Gippsland, the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Ringwood East and major upgrades at the Northern Hospital, Austin Hospital, Dandenong Hospital, Wonthaggi Hospital and the Monash Medical Centre.

Women and girls make up half more than half of our population – but for too long, their healthcare concerns have been ignored, dismissed or undiagnosed.

We'll invest more than \$153 million to establish 20 new comprehensive women's health clinics, an Aboriginal-led clinic and a mobile health clinic, nine new women's sexual and reproductive health hubs, scholarships to expand the women's health workforce, an inquiry into women's pain management and 10,800 extra laparoscopy surgeries.

We'll support our public aged care sector – the largest public aged care service in Australia – to help Victorians live with dignity as they age, with more than \$162 million for new facilities at Cohuna, Maffra and Numurkah.

We promised Victorians we'd build our mental health system from the ground up, and that we'd implement every single recommendation from the Royal Commission. Implementing those recommendations will take a decade or more of reform – and across the last three Budgets, we've invested \$5.7 billion to get on with it.

This year, we'll invest a further \$776 million for critical bed-based services, AOD services, infrastructure, earlier support in community mental health services, better mental health in the workplace and the rollout of the new *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act*.

By 2026, we'll set up 50 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, with \$77 million to open the new "front door" for mental health support – giving Victorians free, local mental health care as soon as they need it, reducing the need for more acute care down the track.

For those who do need hospital-based treatment, \$157 million will fund 96 mental health beds across the state to give an additional 908 Victorians intensive support.

We'll invest \$97.4 million to recruit more forensic mental health staff, support 84 workers to specialise in alcohol and drug services, and deliver *Earn and Learn Traineeships* – so mental health staff can work while they study.

This Budget backs local programs that know the specific mental health needs of their communities, with \$2.5 million to establish an LGBTIQ+ suicide aftercare service, continue *Strong Brother Strong Sister* for young Aboriginal Victorians in Geelong and deliver *Youth Live4Life* for young regional Victorians.

We're supporting Victorians living with addiction to rebuild their lives – with \$256 million to support a health-based response to public intoxication, continue the life-saving North Richmond Medically Supervised Injecting Room and expand our Naloxone and Pharmacotherapy programs.

Our Local Public Health Units have risen to the occasion time and time again through the pandemic, natural disasters and communicable disease outbreaks. We'll help them keep our communities healthy, with a \$103 million boost for local health promotion, disease prevention, outbreak management and public health response.

We'll make sure our Aboriginal community health organisations – who know best what their communities' unique needs are – have support to do their critical work, with \$35.1 million to deliver 100,000 extra additional Aboriginal community healthcare appointments.

More than \$13 million will support our community health services, provide more care to refugees and asylum seekers, and deliver programs tackling skin cancer.

We're establishing Victoria as a global leader in paediatric cancer research, with \$35 million for the Victorian Paediatric Cancer Consortium to revolutionise childhood cancer treatments and give more children the chance to grow up happy and healthy – while also helping childhood cancer survivors manage their long-term health.

Becoming a parent is a great joy – but it's not an easy journey for many Victorians, and cost shouldn't be a barrier. We're keeping the promise we made to Victorians who dream of starting a family, expanding the Australian-first free IVF service, with nearly \$50 million to establish sites across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

We're also prioritising parents at the start of their life as a new family – investing \$86 million to increase the time newborns spend with maternal nurses, help mums struggling with breastfeeding, support new dads – and expand our Early Parenting Centre network with a new centre in Northcote and an Aboriginal-led centre in Frankston.

**Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas**

*“We’re doing what matters – building hospitals and recruiting thousands of healthcare workers – so Victorians can get the care they need, where and when they need it.”*

**Quote attributable to Minister for Ambulance Services and Mental Health Gabrielle Williams**

*“With more ambulances on the road, more resources to train our paramedics and more work to build the mental health system our state deserves, we’re supporting every part of our healthcare system – because that’s what matters to Victorians.”*

**Quote attributable to Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Lizzie Blandthorn**

*“Victorians in aged care deserve to be treated with dignity – we’re building them the homes they deserve, expanding our nation-leading public aged care services.”*