

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



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NEW PHARMACIST PILOT TO DELIVER MORE AFFORDABLE CARE

For too many Victorians, it's incredibly hard to get in to see a local GP – particularly one who bulk bills.

When you wake up feeling sick, need a quick vaccine before heading overseas – or for women who need to renew a script for something like the pill – having to wait to get an appointment with a busy local doctor can make a stressful situation worse.

That's why from October this year, the Andrews Labor Government will give Victorians an alternative, expanding the role of community pharmacists as part of a new 12-month pilot.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the HealthSmart Pharmacy in Parkville – one of the Labor Government's 24/7 Supercare Pharmacies – to announce the Labor Government will introduce legislation to allow community pharmacists to provide treatment and advice for common conditions and basic health care needs.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invested \$20 million to establish the pilot with legislation being introduced today to Parliament to amend the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* allowing pharmacists to treat minor skin conditions and reissue oral contraceptives and medication for uncomplicated UTIs.

Modelled on similar schemes in New South Wales and Queensland, participating pharmacist immunisers will also have their scope expanded to administer travel and other public health vaccines.

Waiting around to see a GP for a straightforward issue – let alone one that bulk-bills – is a frustrating and stressful experience for many and the pilot is a simple way to increase affordable primary health care in the community, free up GPs to provide more complex care and reduce non-urgent presentations to our busy emergency departments.

The design and implementation of the pilot will be guided by expert advisory and clinical groups representing consumers and the pharmacy and medical professions.

The pilot will be evaluated and any recommendations will help inform longer-term decision making around the role of community pharmacists.

This is just one of the many initiatives we're delivering as part of our massive \$4.9 billion investment in the *Victorian Budget 23/24* to give Victorians the right care, when and where they need it.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"We're doing what matters – making it easier and cheaper for Victorians to get the care they need."

"It's hard enough to see a GP, let alone one that bulk bills and that's why we're launching a 12-month pilot to test an expanded role for community pharmacists."

"Our community pharmacists have a wealth of experience and knowledge – they can recognise when there's a simple solution and when things need to be escalated to a doctor."