

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Leader of the House
Minister for Health
Minister for Health Infrastructure
Minister for Ambulance Services



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PUBLIC FERTILITY CARE FOR FAMILIES ACROSS VICTORIA'S SOUTH WEST

The Allan Labor Government is making it fairer, easier and more accessible for people in Warrnambool and across the region to start or grow their family, with a new public IVF service now available at South West Healthcare's Warrnambool Base Hospital.

Part of the state's nation-leading public fertility care service, the Warrnambool satellite is the third to open in regional Victoria – offering face-to-face and telehealth specialist consultations, diagnostic tests, ultrasounds and medications, it will help patients cut down on travel time and save up to \$10,000.

In-cycle management and education, such as consultation on hormone injections prior to egg collection with a fertility nurse, will operate via telehealth with the Royal Women's Hospital, who are co-leaders in the statewide program alongside Monash Health.

Satellite services are already up and running at Bendigo Health and Mildura Base Public Hospital, with additional sites set to open in Shepparton, Ballarat and Geelong in coming months. Two further Melbourne services will also open in Heidelberg and Sunshine, with one at the Northern Hospital in Epping already operational.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$120 million into its Australian-first public IVF initiative – including an addition \$49.9 million in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* to further expand public fertility services.

Once fully operational, it will give up to 5,000 Victorians per year access to the service and provide up to 3,375 treatment cycles – easing financial pressure for thousands during what can be a challenging experience.

This latest service follows the launch of Australia's first public egg and sperm bank in July 2023 – operating at the Royal Women's Hospital, the service is currently accepting egg, sperm and embryo donations from the community.

It also marks one year since the roll out of public fertility care in Victoria – the landmark service has already made it easier and more affordable for more than 1,100 prospective parents to commence their treatment journey.

Access to public fertility care is available through a GP or specialist referral which is sent to the Royal Women's Hospital or Monash Health who then organise eligible patients to receive treatment at their closest health service.

More information is available at betterhealth.vic.gov.au/public-fertility-care-services.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Our satellite services are delivering affordable and accessible fertility care to regional Victorians – because we don't think people shouldn't be limited by where they live in order to realise their dream of starting or growing a family."

Quote attributable to Member for Western Victorian Jacinta Ermacora

"Being able to access public fertility care closer to home is a demonstration of the Allan Government's commitment to regional communities. For many families in Warrnambool and across the South West – this will save money and time, while also being closer to the support of loved ones."

Quote attributable to Director of Obstetrics and Gynecology South West Healthcare Dr Rosy Buchannan

"A public IVF service ensures that many more people have equitable and affordable access to fertility and have the chance to realise their dream of having a family, and that's something we are keen to support."

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