

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

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FINAL GP RESPIRATORY CLINICS TO TRANSITION TO GP CLINICS

The last of Victoria's state-funded GP respiratory clinics (GPRCs) will transition back to regular GP practices as we continue to wind down our pandemic response.

Established in response to the pandemic when demand for respiratory care was at an all-time high, the clinics helped ease pressure on hospitals by providing free and accessible respiratory care to communities across the state at a time when GPs were not readily accepting patients with respiratory issues.

Since then, demand for GPRCs has declined – with many GP clinics recommencing face-to-face respiratory care along with an expanded range of urgent care options now available to the community, like the Priority Primary Care Centres (PPCCs) and the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED).

In line with this reduced need and increased primary care services, some GPRCs have already transitioned to become PPCCs or back to regular GP practices.

While the remaining GPRCs will transition back to being regular GP practices at the end of October, the Melton GPRC will transition to a PPCC - giving the community treatment close to home for a larger range of common ailments that require urgent attention but not a hospital-led response.

Free to anyone with or without a Medicare card, the PPCC will continue to provide care for people with respiratory conditions, while also being able to treat other conditions such as minor infections, cuts and burns, in addition to facilitating pathology and imaging services.

Work is underway make sure GP clinics are well prepared for this transition and to ensure patients presenting with respiratory symptoms continue to get the care they need.

Victorians requiring respiratory care and treatment continue to have access to, GPs in person or via telehealth, calling NURSE-ON-CALL for free advice from a registered nurse, visiting one of Victoria's 27 PPCCs or contacting the VVED if they need urgent attention.

We know after a decade of neglect by the former Federal Liberal Government, it's never been harder to see a GP.

That's why in addition to establishing 27 PPCCs, the Allan Labor Government is investing \$32 million to encourage more graduates to become GPs – and \$20 million for the pharmacy pilot which will give Victorians more options to access the treatment and advice they need, when they need it – particularly in rural and regional Victoria.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"The Victorian Government stepped into primary care during the pandemic, providing immediate support to patients with respiratory illness and saving critical hospital resources for the sickest of patients."

"Now we are no longer in the emergency phase of the pandemic, our PPCCs are playing a similar role – providing Victorians with urgent care when they can't get in to see their GP but don't need to be at an emergency department."

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