

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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GREATER ACCESS TO LIFE-SAVING DRUG ACROSS THE STATE

The Allan Labor Government is continuing to strengthen its essential drug harm reduction initiatives with the life-saving opioid overdose reversal drug Naloxone now available in more places across Victoria.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced the new \$6.2 million Take-Home Naloxone Program will roll out this week – making it easier for those experiencing or witnessing an opioid overdose to access the reversal drug.

The program will support Naloxone to be made available at 48 Victorian Needle and Syringe Programs (NSP) providers and the Medically Supervised Injecting Room, as well as existing channels including over the counter at pharmacies or via prescription from a medical or nurse practitioner.

The Department of Health is continuing to work with the sector to ensure appropriate supply is available following national shortages.

This new program is in direct response to the 2018 Victorian Parliamentary Committee's Inquiry into Drug Law Reform, with these changes allowing approved workers in approved organisations to supply naloxone.

These permitted workers and organisations can supply naloxone to people who are at risk of, or who may be likely to witness, an opioid overdose including carers, families or friends.

Tragically, each year there are more than 1,000 deaths from overdose in Australia with opioids the most common class of drug involved – a death toll that exceeds the number of people killed in road accidents.

A safe and effective medication that is easy to administer, Naloxone presents low risk of adverse effects, making it lifesaving when used in a timely manner for an opioid overdose.

To help make sure Naloxone gets to those who need it most, the Victorian program allows for 'peer' distribution, meaning it can be collected for or given to another person for the purpose of opioid overdose reversal.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invested \$372 million in alcohol and other drug support services – doubling the yearly funding for services when the Labor Government came to office.

This ongoing investment supports a range of health and social outcomes for drug users, including AOD frontline treatment, harm reduction and prevention services, and ensuring access to safe and effective residential rehabilitation services for those who need it.

If you or someone you know is seeking help or support with alcohol or drug use, call DirectLine on 1800 888 236 or visit directline.org.au for information and support to access treatment. To find a NSP provider, visit health.vic.gov.au/aod-treatment-services/needle-and-syringe-program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

"Every overdose is a tragedy that no loved one should ever have to experience – by making Naloxone more accessible, it will help save lives and avoid unnecessary heartbreak."

"This new Take-Home Naloxone Program is part of our harm reduction initiatives to improve the lives of those with substance use or addiction issues."

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“We know addiction remains a serious health issue across Victoria – that is why we are continuing to invest in critical initiatives to address the devastating impact of addiction and help people make lasting changes in their lives.”