

Monday, 1 January 2024

WELCOMING THE FIRST LITTLE VICTORIANS BORN IN 2024

Victoria has rung in the New Year welcoming our newest and tiniest residents to the world – with around 40 babies born across the state in the early hours of 2024.

Acting Premier Ben Carroll and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas visited the Royal Women's Hospital this morning where four babies were born not long after midnight – meeting the newborns and their proud parents, and importantly, thanking the hardworking staff who have been caring for Victorians throughout the festive season.

The state's newest bundles of joy follow a busy year for maternity wards across the state, with more than 72,900 births registered in Victoria throughout 2023 – with March and August proving the year's busiest months for births.

It comes as the Allan Labor Government celebrates more than 60 pregnancies in 2023 as part of our Australian-first public fertility program – helping more Victorians realise their dream of starting or growing their family.

In 2023, the program expanded statewide, with eight new public fertility satellite sites opening in Epping, Mildura, Bendigo, Warrnambool, Geelong, Shepparton, Ballarat, and Sunshine. This will continue into 2024, with a site due to open in Heidelberg in the coming weeks.

Delivered in partnership with the Royal Women's Hospital and Monash Health, the Labor Government has invested \$120 million to deliver the landmark program which is helping up to 5,000 Victorians every year access these services closer to home – delivering up to 3,375 treatment cycles and helping them save up to \$10,000.

Australia's first public egg and sperm bank was also launched in July 2023, with the Royal Women's Hospital currently accepting generous egg and sperm donations from the Victorian community.

More broadly, 2024 will see the Labor Government continue to expand and improve access to healthcare for more women, parents and children closer to home.

As part of an \$86 million package to support families, babies are being given the very best start in life with the continuation of the successful Baby Bundle program – which has seen 150,000 bundles handed out since 2019, giving new parents a range of essentials to support the health, development and wellbeing of their babies.

Work is also underway to establish 20 new comprehensive women's health clinics, as well as an additional nine sexual and reproductive health hubs underway, adding to the 11 already operating.

The maternity workforce continues to expand with a range of ongoing Labor Government support, including the \$270 million Making It Free To Study Nursing and Midwifery initiative, as well as the Graduate Nursing and Midwifery sign-on bonus.

Quote attributable to Acting Premier Ben Carroll

"Welcoming a new baby into the world is a precious moment for thousands of Victorians each year – but there's something quite magical about the arrival of a baby in the first minutes and hours of a new year."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"2024 is an exciting year for women's and children's healthcare – we are delivering the best facilities and world-class services across Victoria, to ensure every Victorian can get the care they need, closer to home."

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