

Media Release

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



Thursday, 4 January 2024

FOUR MORE RAPID ACCESS HUBS TO DELIVER SURGERY SOONER

The Allan Labor Government is delivering a further four Rapid Access Hubs as part of its landmark \$1.5 billion dollar *COVID Catch Up Plan* – supporting an additional 6,000 planned surgeries annually.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited The Alfred where a new hub will begin admitting patients next Monday – announcing the other locations at Moorabbin Hospital and Royal Children’s Hospital, as well as the Northern Hospital, which is now fully operational having opened in September 2023.

Established to repair the planned surgery system and ensure more Victorians get the surgery they need sooner, the hubs offer an alternative pathway to care, on-the-spot procedures, and reduced wait times for low-risk procedures.

The hubs will be used exclusively for planned surgery to relieve pressure on main theatres, avoid impact to emergency procedures and free up staff – with minor upgrades undertaken at each hospital to accommodate:

- **Northern Hospital** (now open) – \$1 million for new equipment, making an existing theatre space operational to deliver an additional 1,000 procedures annually
- **The Alfred** (opening 8 January) – \$3.5 million to add an operating room, enabling an extra 1,350 procedures annually, including hernia repairs, cataract removals and joint replacements
- **Moorabbin Hospital** (opening May 2024) – \$6.1 million for a dedicated orthopaedic surgery centre, featuring up to 12 consulting rooms and a telehealth hub for post-operative follow up, delivering an additional 2,160 orthopaedic admissions annually
- **Royal Children’s Hospital** (opening May 2024) – \$3 million to support a six-bed increase in overnight stay capacity, supporting an extra 1,560 admissions annually

The new Rapid Access Hubs join the eight sites announced in 2022, with services up and running at six locations – Broadmeadows Hospital, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Sandringham Hospital, St Vincent’s on the Park, University Hospital Geelong, and Werribee Mercy Hospital.

Construction has been completed on two hubs at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the Royal Women’s Hospital, with both health services set to begin admitting patients early this year.

To support the *COVID Catch Up Plan*, the Labor Government is investing in the training and development of 2,500 healthcare workers, as well as an additional 2,500 medical professionals recruited from overseas since 2022.

The benefits of the plan are already being highlighted across the system, with 51,361 patients admitted for planned surgery in the first quarter of 2023/24, decreasing the wait list by a further 3.3 per cent.

All Category 1 patients received their surgery in the clinically recommended timeframes – and median waiting times improved yet again for Category 2 and 3 patients by 21 and 40 days respectively since the same time the year prior.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“These four new Rapid Access Hubs will help to boost Victoria’s planned surgery capacity – relieving pressure on existing resources and freeing up our dedicated surgical workforce.”

“The significant investment made via our COVID Catch Up Plan is changing how we approach planned surgery in Victoria, delivering important reform to give more people access to the care they need sooner.”

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Quote attributable to Member for Southern Metropolitan Region John Berger

“The delivery of a new operating theatre as part of our investment in a Rapid Access Hub at The Alfred is going to be game changing for people waiting for planned surgery in Melbourne’s south.”