

Thursday, 29 August 2024

MAKING URGENT CARE EVEN MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR VICTORIANS

The Allan Labor Government's Priority Primary Care Clinics – which are currently averaging 7,000 patient visits each week through both walk ins and appointments – are this month marking half a million visits from Victorians in need.

Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited Access Health and Community in Richmond to announce the clinics will now be known as Urgent Care Clinics, to make it simpler for Victorians to know how and where to get the right kind of care.

The 29 clinics were set up by the Labor Government to reduce pressure on busy emergency departments, with patient survey data revealing around 50 per cent would have gone to emergency if the clinics did not exist.

General practitioners are the backbone of primary care, which is why highly experienced GPs lead the clinics, backed by nurses.

The clinics are free for anyone with or without a Medicare card. People can seek care for a range of reasons including sprains, broken bones, mild burns, respiratory illness, tonsillitis, ear infections and urinary tract infections.

Hospitals, paramedics, Nurse on Call, and the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED) are also using the clinics as a safe and effective referral option, with around 36 per cent of patients coming via these services. The clinics also receive referrals from GP clinics and pharmacies.

The clinics are popular with regional Victorians, with more than 142,000 patients seen at the nine clinics in country Victoria.

Due to the inaction of the former Federal Coalition Government, too many Victorians are unable to secure an appointment or afford to see a GP.

As these clinics become further embedded in our health system, it is also important to ensure they are aligned with national Medicare Urgent Care Clinics. The Commonwealth has now taken over funding 10 of Victoria's existing clinics as part of its responsibility for delivering primary care across Australia.

Continued investment in the VVED is also helping to relieve pressure on hospitals and paramedics, with more than 360,000 virtual consultations completed since 2020. 86 per cent of these callers did not require a physical care.

If faced with a medical emergency, people should still call Triple Zero or present to their closest hospital ED. For locations or more information, please visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/urgent-care-clinics.

Quote attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"Hundreds of thousands of patients have been diverted away from our busy EDs and ambulances through these free clinics."

"We're calling them Urgent Care Clinics so Victorians know how and where to get the right kind of care."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Our Urgent Care Clinics are taking pressure off our emergency departments by offering an alternative option when Victorian families need urgent, but not emergency care."