

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Ambulance Services



Sunday, 1 September 2024

## NEW HELPLINE TO MAKE SURE PATIENT VOICES ARE HEARD

The Allan Labor Government is making sure patients always have a voice – with the launch of a new family escalation system to ensure their concerns are heard.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today launched the Urgent Concern Helpline service which will initially be trialed at select Victorian health services, beginning with Northern Health from early September.

Established by Safer Care Victoria (SCV) as part of the Safer Care for Kids initiative it will be operated by the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED).

It will provide an important escalation process for patients and their families when they have concerns about a patient's condition deteriorating or feel their concerns are not being heard.

The escalation system is in response to feedback from families and will provide an additional point of contact for advocacy or support when local responses have been exhausted.

The helpline is part of acquitting a recommendation from the *See Me, Hear Me Report* that identified actions required to improve the care children receive.

The Labor Government is implementing all the recommendations made in the report to improve paediatric care.

At the centre of this reform is the families who have lost their child – and Safer Care for Kids is being co-designed with these parents and carers, as well as health services, to ensure the program's success as it rolls out.

As part of this reform, Victoria last year also mandated the use of updated, standardised and age-specific Victorian Children's Tool for Observation and Response (ViCTOR) charts whenever a child's vital signs are recorded.

Work is also underway by SCV to develop a 24/7 virtual paediatric consultation and retrieval systems, in collaboration with the VVED, Paediatric Infant Perinatal Emergency Retrieval, and the Victorian Paediatric Clinical Network.

The Labor Government established Safer Care Victoria in 2017 to improve the quality and safety of healthcare and introduced a Statutory Duty of Candour in 2022 – an Australian-first legislative reform that introduced open disclosure guidelines and clinical incident review protections for all public and private health services.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

*"It's our responsibility to learn from every sentinel event to ensure it never happens again and that Victorians are receiving the best possible care."*

*"We're making significant changes to the way our health services respond to patient deterioration because we know this has historically, and unacceptably, been a significant factor in paediatric sentinel events."*

*"The new Urgent Concern Helpline will support families and patients and ensure they have somewhere to turn if they feel their concerns aren't being heard."*

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