

Tuesday, 24 September 2024

## SUPPORTING VICTORIA'S MULTICULTURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

The Allan Labor Government is supporting healthcare workers who cannot shave due to religious, cultural or medical reasons.

Premier Jacinta Allan today confirmed the Singh Thattha technique can now be used in Victorian health services.

This move follows updated guidance by WorkSafe Victoria, the Department of Health and Safer Care Victoria and follows a two-year statewide trial led by the Royal Melbourne Hospital of the elastic band technique, Singh Thattha.

The trial involved 245 healthcare workers from across 40 organisations, with more than 200 successfully fit tested with at least one of the commonly available N95 masks.

The technique involves using an elastic band to cover the beard to create a smooth surface, which is then tied to the top of the wearer's head, with the respirator mask worn and the seal formed on the band.

The purpose of fit testing is to ensure a face mask model and size fits the wearer and can form a safe seal that provides protection against airborne risks like COVID-19.

The Victorian trial builds on international and national work including a study in NSW in 2022 which found the under-mask beard cover technique was successful in a trial with 30 healthcare workers.

Health services are encouraged to work closely with multicultural and multifaith workforce, including Sikh Victorians, to support the implementation of Singh Thattha.

### Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

*"We know this has been a long-held issue of concern for members of our Sikh community – this is a significant step forward in making our healthcare system culturally inclusive for all our hardworking staff."*

*"The ongoing advocacy from our dedicated multicultural health workers and local Sikh community members has played an important part in the success of this trial and will go a long way to keeping Victorians safe."*