

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Thursday, 29 May 2025

VICTORIA'S NEW CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER APPOINTED

Following an extensive global recruitment process, the Victorian Government has appointed Dr Caroline McElnay QSO as Victoria's Chief Health Officer.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced that the highly respected and experienced, Dr McElnay, will commence in the role in August.

With more than 20 years public health experience in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, she has responded to a variety of complex health emergencies including leading New Zealand's COVID-19 response in her role as Director Public Health for New Zealand from 2017 to 2022, working alongside then-Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

A former President of the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine, Dr McElnay is highly regarded in the field with a strong background in communicable diseases, environmental health and epidemiology.

In 2023, Dr McElnay was named a companion of the Queen's Service Order in recognition of her significant service and contribution to public health in New Zealand.

Dr McElnay is also the recipient of the Royal Society of New Zealand's Liley Medal which recognises a significant piece of outstanding work that is internationally recognised.

As a strong advocate for health equity, she focused on increasing child immunisation rates in New Zealand – a priority for Victoria.

As Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Dr McElnay will provide expert clinical and scientific advice and leadership on issues impacting public health and oversee a variety of statutory functions under health and food-related legislation.

The role also includes informing and engaging with Victorians about public health issues and seasonal conditions that may affect their health and safety, such as flu, RSV, measles, extreme heat, and mosquito borne diseases.

Dr Christian McGrath and Dr Evelyn Wong will continue as Acting Chief Health Officers until August.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Dr McElnay is highly respected for her leadership, expertise and experience in public health – her appointment is a major win for Victoria. I look forward to working with her to ensure Victorians remain some of the healthiest people in the world."

"I also want to thank Dr Tarun Weeramanthri for his expert guidance in the Chief Health Officer role while the recruitment process took place, and Dr Christian McGrath and Dr Evelyn Wong for their continued leadership."

Quote attributable to incoming Chief Health Officer Dr McElnay

"I'm honoured to serve the Victorian community in this important role, and I look forward to working collaboratively with government and the health sector to protect the health and wellbeing of all Victorians."

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