

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Thursday, 9 October 2025

## DELIVERING DOCTORS WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST

More doctors are on their way to rural and regional Victoria – thanks to an expanded Allan Labor Government program that’s helping health services recruit and retain the doctors they need most.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced that the Connecting the Docs program will grow to include up to 10 additional public health services across Victoria – backed by a \$680,000 investment over the next two years.

Building on the program’s success in the Loddon Mallee region, the expansion will begin in East Gippsland with Omeo District Health, Bairnsdale Regional Health, Orbost Regional Health and Gippsland Lakes Complete Health among the new services to join.

Since launching in September 2023, Connecting the Docs has registered more than 70 doctors, with seven already successfully recruited to towns including Swan Hill, Kerang and Echuca.

The program is helping to address long-term workforce shortages by streamlining recruitment, supporting international transitions and creating flexible career pathways across hospital, community and primary care settings.

Connecting the Docs also helps reduce recruitment costs, strengthen smaller practices and build a connected network of healthcare professionals through peer support and ongoing career development.

The program is co-funded by participating health services, with the Labor Government support including an initial \$50,000 investment in 2023 to enhance its online job directory, digital content and recruitment campaigns targeting domestic and international candidates.

The expansion builds on the Labor Government’s significant investment in Victoria’s health workforce, which has grown by more than 50,000 staff over the past decade – including around 9,500 new nurses, doctors, allied health and support staff in regional and rural areas since June 2014.

While primary care is the responsibility of the Federal Government, the Allan Labor Government continues to step in to ensure Victorians can get care when and where they need it — through Urgent Care Clinics, the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, Nurse-on-Call and the Community Pharmacist Pilot.

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

*“This program backs our medical workforce and supports their development across rural and regional areas so they can continue to provide world-class care for all Victorians right across the state.”*

*“I’d like to congratulate everyone involved in Connecting the Docs for their success thus far and look forward to seeing the program grow over the coming year and beyond.”*

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