

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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## **STRENGTHENING VICTORIA'S MATERNITY AND NEWBORN SERVICES**

Victoria's maternity and newborn services are already some of the safest and highest quality in the world – and they will be strengthened through new reforms from the Allan Labor Government's maternity taskforce.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today released the final report from Victoria's landmark maternity taskforce, which was established to ensure families have access to safe, reliable care close to home.

The taskforce looked at the challenges impacting maternity, including workforce recruitment and retention – with a particular focus on our regional and rural communities.

The taskforce undertook extensive consultation with health services, Victorians and experts – looking at models of care that support women to have choice in their pregnancy and birth.

While the Government considers the report's recommendations, a number of recommendations are being immediately accepted.

This includes the appointment of a Chief Midwife – a role that will bring dedicated, statewide clinical leadership to maternity and newborn services for the first time in Victoria.

The Chief Midwife will lead the implementation of the taskforce recommendations relating to maternity services, as well as provide expert clinical and professional advice to government.

A new online guide – My Maternity Journey – will be established to better support women throughout pregnancy and birthing. Based on the highly successful My Surgical Journey resource, My Maternity Journey will provide a central platform of resources and supports to better inform and empower pregnant women.

The Labor Government will also release a Respectful Maternity and Newborn Care Framework by the end of the year – designed in consultation with consumers, it will provide practical tools and training to equip clinicians with trauma-informed skills and communication strategies.

Victoria's maternity system includes 52 health service providers, 33 of them in regional areas, offering different levels of care depending on local capability.

To improve access, the report outlines the need for consistency and coordination across these services – with Victoria's newly established Local Health Service Networks to play a key role in connecting women and families to the right services across the region.

Each network is currently developing a clinical service plan for its region, that will set out roles and responsibilities for every hospital in maternity and newborn care and how they will work together to strengthen care, improve equity, and support better outcomes for women and babies.

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

*"We've listened to women, families, midwives and clinicians and this report shows us how we can make our maternity services even better – it's about building a system that supports choice, equity and continuity of care, no matter where you live."*

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*“The appointment of a Chief Midwife sends a clear message – maternity care matters and we’re committed to strengthening the system for the people who rely on it and the professionals who deliver it.”*

**Quotes attributable to ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Maddy Harradence**

*“ANMF (Vic Branch), representing more than 7000 midwifery members, look forward to working closely with the Chief Midwife who will need to have the authority to drive reform and implement the taskforce’s recommendations.*

*“Victorian midwives, and nurses who work in maternity services, want to work in a system that provides access, choice and flexibility to them and to women in their choice of maternity care. “*