

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

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VICTORIA'S FIRST VIRTUAL HOSPITAL WELCOMES FIRST PATIENTS

Victorians are now receiving hospital-level care from the comfort of their own homes, with the Allan Labor Government's Virtual Hospital now receiving patients.

The Virtual Hospital's first patient - an 89-year-old grandfather, received specialist care for heart failure, in the comfort of his own home through virtual consultations.

Funded by the Labor Government and jointly led by Austin Health and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the six month pilot began on 1 December and will support more than 250 patients who would otherwise be admitted as an inpatient to a hospital ward.

The pilot is helping people recover at home while freeing up hospital beds for those who need them most.

Patients will be cared for at home through virtual consultations, supported by wearable devices to monitor vital signs with a multi-disciplinary team of doctors, nurses and pharmacists providing hospital-level care remotely.

Patients will also have access to medications at home and follow-up care through specialist appointments or community services, reducing the risk of readmission.

The pilot is initially focused on heart failure and post-cardiac care, enabling faster recovery at home through remote monitoring. In the coming months, the Virtual Hospital pilot will expand to deliver more services.

Regional mums-to-be will soon be able to avoid trips to Melbourne for hospital-based care with a virtual foetal medicine service. This will enable scans to be completed in their local area by transferring imaging to specialists at the Royal Women's Hospital in real time for virtual consultations.

As part of the pilot, the Royal Melbourne Hospital's Digital Coordination Centre will be expanded to use real-time data to support improved ambulance coordination.

This change will help paramedics identify hospitals with greater capacity, reducing delays and getting ambulances back on the road faster.

The Labor Government continues to back innovative ways for Victorians to receive care at home - this year's budget invested \$437 million to nearly triple the size of the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department – and make it permanent.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"This is about delivering the very best care for Victorians, no matter where they live. Our Virtual Hospital pilot means patients can recover at home, surrounded by family, while still receiving expert hospital-level care."

"We're freeing up hospital beds for those who need them most, reducing waiting times, and making sure regional Victorians can access specialist care closer to home."