

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Friday, 12 December 2025

## BETTER CONNECTED HEALTH CARE FOR VICTORIANS

Victorians living in the state's south west will soon have better access to care with Western District Health Service and Casterton Memorial Hospital coming together.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas has approved the voluntary merger of the health services – which will commence from 1 April 2026.

The health services were able to clearly demonstrate how their voluntary merger would benefit their communities – delivering increased access to specialist services and improved patient outcomes.

The voluntary merger will deliver a more streamlined referral process, which will support patients to easily navigate the health system and receive better coordinated, more accessible care.

More onsite and virtual care services at Casterton Memorial Hospital's Urgent Care Centre will be supported, improving out-of-hours and weekend pharmacy access and post-operative support – so residents don't have to travel as far for their appointments or treatment.

The voluntary merger will help attract and retain skilled clinicians and specialists through expanded career, education and training opportunities. Staff will benefit from specialist rotations, rural generalist pathways, joint allied health posts, peer networks and formal mentoring programs.

Staff will retain their existing employment conditions and all hospitals and healthcare sites will continue to deliver programs and services for their communities, keeping their names and identities.

Each community will also continue to have a strong voice in the care being delivered in their region through the new board and community advisory committee.

The voluntary merger builds on the strong existing partnership between the health services.

The Allan Labor Government is investing more than \$31 billion into Victoria's health system this year, including a \$9.3 billion boost to ensure every public hospital can continue delivering the world-class care Victorians depend on.

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

*"This will make it easier for locals to access the care they need, closer to home – without the need to travel as far or jump through as many hoops."*

*"Not only is this a great outcome for local patients – staff will also benefit from better development and training opportunities, future proofing the local health workforce for years to come."*