

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services

Minister for Women



Friday, 27 March 2026

BOOSTING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

The Allan Labor Government is making it easier for regional Victorians to get the specialist care they need, closer to home.

Labor is supporting more consultant anaesthetists to undertake training and work in the regions.

Minister Thomas visited Ballarat Base Hospital today to meet one of the first graduates of the Victorian Regional Anaesthetic Training Network (VRATN).

The program was established in 2021 to offer trainee anaesthetists a five-year training pathway.

It encourages future specialists to consider a long-term career in regional Victoria.

Over the past years, the VRATN has accredited eight regional health services to host the trainees.

As part of their training, trainees spend three years in regional hospitals and one year in a metropolitan hospital.

Trainees must then complete a fifth year as a Provisional Fellow at their chosen hospital – honing their skills and experience in rural areas.

There are currently 18 trainees gaining hands-on experience across the eight services – these include:

- Grampians Health
- Bendigo Health
- Albury Wodonga Health
- Goulburn Valley Health
- Northeast Health Wangaratta
- Mildura Base Hospital
- Warrnambool Base Hospital
- Latrobe Regional Health

Members of the program's first cohort are now beginning to graduate as consultant anaesthetists.

Dr Shalley Robins is the first to graduate from the program and is now providing care across Western Victoria, choosing to do her Provisional Fellow year at Grampians Health.

VRATN is being backed with additional funding through the Victorian Medical Specialist Training program.

It has helped to fund an expansion to support four new trainee positions at Warrnambool Base Hospital and Latrobe Regional Health.

The funding is also helping with travel and accommodation for regional trainees undertaking their metro rotation.

Both these programs are about growing a stronger specialist workforce where it's needed most, helping to make sure more Victorians can get the care they need closer to home.

Only Labor can be trusted to deliver the health system that regional Victoria deserves.

Jess Wilson's Liberals have an \$11.5 billion budget black hole which means one thing: cuts to schools and health.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

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“We’re growing our regional health workforce, so more Victorians can access the care they need, closer to home.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eureka Michaela Settle

“It’s so important for our community to have a steady pipeline of specialists like this incredible cohort of graduates.”

Quote attributable to Member for Ripon Martha Haylett

“More anaesthetists in the region means more local surgery and less travel to Melbourne for local families.”

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

“We’re boosting regional hospitals with more specialist staff – so Victorians can access more care when they need it.”