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HELPING FAMILIES WITH GREAT HEALTHCARE, CLOSE TO HOME

The Allan Labor Government is investing record funding into Victoria's world-class public health system, making sure Victorian families can continue getting the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

The *Victorian Budget 2024/25* will see a massive \$13 billion boost to support the delivery of world class healthcare, better facilities and the latest equipment for all Victorians – building on \$59.3 billion in additional investments since coming to government in 2014.

Since the pandemic, we've seen costs in our healthcare system continue to climb.

It's why this Budget includes the single biggest multi-year investment in Victoria's healthcare system in our history, giving hospitals funding certainty as we move away from the pandemic response to face the current and future health challenges that come with a growing and ageing population.

An investment of \$8.8 billion will kickstart a profound change in the way our hospitals are funded, so they can more effectively and efficiently deliver world-class care – and plan for the future.

This Budget will also support our ambulance service to deliver timely care closer to home, with a \$146.3 million investment to provide the level of care people need, when they need it – by relieving pressure on our paramedic workforce, backing Ambulance Victoria's Secondary Triage service and the Medium Acuity Transport Service.

We'll also continue to support our 29 Priority Primary Care Centres, delivered in partnership with the Commonwealth, to continue looking after Victorians who need urgent care, but not an emergency response.

To deliver world-class healthcare, we need world-class facilities. This Budget delivers \$1.7 billion to build and upgrade hospitals and health facilities across our state, including three of our busiest hospitals – Austin Hospital, Northern Hospital and Monash Medical Centre.

The \$535 million Monash Medical Centre expansion includes a new seven-storey tower above the newly expanded emergency department, with new operating suites, birthing suites, and pre and post-op beds. With work to start next year and create 1,500 local construction jobs, the upgrade will allow for an extra 7,500 surgeries every year.

Delivering on the *Hospital Plan for the North*, we're expanding the Austin Hospital's emergency department and building a new emergency department and extra beds at the Northern Hospital, creating around 3,000 construction jobs.

To keep pace with our growing northern suburbs, the \$275 million investment at the Austin will see 29 extra emergency treatment spaces, supporting an extra 30,000 emergency patients every year.

At the Northern Hospital, \$813 million will deliver up to 70 extra treatment spaces, alongside the new emergency department with a dedicated paediatric zone.

The Alfred Hospital is one of the busiest and best trauma centres in the country – that’s why we’re investing more than \$118 million to deliver a program of works to help maintain the operating theatres, intensive care and inpatient units, so our healthcare workers can continue their life-saving work.

We’ll boost our Engineering Infrastructure Replacement Program by \$40 million, as well as an extra \$35 million for Victoria’s Medical Equipment Replacement Program, making sure our hospitals always have the best equipment.

We’re also delivering operational and establishment funding for our hospitals to continue delivering high-quality care for our growing communities, including Northern Health, Latrobe Regional Hospital and to the Labor Government’s world-class Footscray Hospital, with a total investment of nearly \$755 million.

You can’t deliver great hospitals without the fantastic, dedicated staff to work in them – and Victoria’s healthcare workers are amongst the best in the world.

We’ll invest an extra \$28 million to support our health services and boost our nursing workforce capacity, including continuing our successful Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing or Midwifery positions.

Victoria remains a national leader when it comes to transforming the delivery of women’s health with an \$18.3 million boost to help us continue unlocking the gender gaps in our health system.

The investment will help raise awareness and improve women’s health, supporting 12 women’s health organisations to deliver preventative health promotion and education to Victorian women, with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health, chronic illness and family violence initiatives.

This builds on our previous investment of more than \$153 million for 20 new comprehensive women’s health clinics, nine new women’s sexual and reproductive health hubs, and scholarships to expand the women’s health workforce.

We will continue delivering our nation-leading changes to fertility care with public services helping more Victorians realise their dream of starting a family, investing nearly \$2 million to support the vital work of our Public Fertility Care egg and sperm bank – an Australian-first in a public health system.

We know that being a mum can be both rewarding and challenging, and for those mums who need some extra support, we are investing \$5.7 million into our Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies initiative.

This program is supporting regional mums who are also juggling other factors such as poor mental health, language barriers or socioeconomic factors, who may need extra help through pregnancy and early parenting.

Victoria’s population is growing fast and to make sure every family has the best possible start with their new bub, we’re investing \$28.8 million into our statewide Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services – giving children and their families from birth to school age the support they need to grow, learn and thrive as they navigate the early years of life.

This includes funding for Universal MCH services available to all Victorian families, enhanced MCH for families facing challenges like disability, mental health, family violence or housing instability – and dedicated Aboriginal services, giving parents the choice to access MCH care at their local Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation.

Parents will also be able to continue accessing the 24/7 MCH line to discuss any concerns about their child’s health and nutrition, breastfeeding or parenting issues with a qualified MCH nurse – supporting the more than 100,000 calls it receives every year.

Families who need extra support navigating the system will continue to benefit from additional MCH Interpreter Services, and we'll continue to provide safe cots and car seats for vulnerable families through our Nursery Equipment Program.

Every new baby in Victoria will continue to receive the My Health Learning and Development Book alongside the Labor Government's Baby Bundle of newborn essentials – more than 35,000 bundles are provided each year to guide all first-time families through those first weeks of life with the basics for their baby.

We'll continue investing towards a future that is cancer-free – with a boost of \$7.5 million to help improve cancer outcomes through our Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Alliance, including better responding to the complex cancer care needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and culturally diverse people.

We'll also invest \$1.2 million to help SunSmart continue its critical program in early childhood and primary school settings, aimed at preventing skin cancer.

Patients at the new Paula Fox Melanoma and Cancer Centre will also benefit from a \$12 million investment from the Allan Labor Government and the Alfred Foundation to deliver the latest scanning technology and double the centre's initial capacity.

We're also making sure Victorians at the end of their life get the care and comfort they deserve, with a \$38 million investment for palliative care services in aged care facilities, hospitals and patients' homes.

In Victoria, equality is not negotiable – that's why we're continuing our nation-leading support for our LGBTIQ+ communities, with \$2.1 million to make sure trans and gender diverse Victorians have the healthcare they deserve.

We'll also make sure refugees and asylum seekers coming to Victoria feel safe and supported in their new home, with \$4.4 million to make sure they can access the care they need.

We will also deliver \$1 million to continue our peer-led sexual health program for sex workers to ensure they have access to high-quality health services.

We know that when we listen to Aboriginal Victorians, we get better health outcomes – we'll continue our work to close the health gap with \$4 million for the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to provide better access to specialist paediatric medical and allied health services for Aboriginal children.

We'll also invest \$10.8 million to continue delivering the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Agreement – with a Culture and Kinship program in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across Victoria and a boost to cultural safety in public hospitals, so Aboriginal Victorians feel safe to seek the care they need.

Our work to rebuild our mental health system from the ground up is moving at pace, with work underway on more than 90 per cent of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System – and an investment of more than \$6 billion already delivering better mental healthcare right across the state.

But achieving our reforms will require an even bigger workforce. It's why this Budget invests \$15.8 million to continue expanding the workforce with a graduate program helping to establish a pipeline of future skilled workers for our Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals.

We'll also strengthen our suicide prevention programs while supporting groups disproportionately impacted by suicide, with \$3.8 million to continue LGBTIQ+ aftercare support and Youth Life4Life programs, as well as Strong Brother Strong Sister and Yarning Safe N Strong for Aboriginal Victorians, and the Peer CARE Companion Warmline.

We will also provide \$6.4 million to continue Orygen’s Moderated Online Social Therapy program, which supports young Victorians aged 12–25 with self-directed therapeutic content to support face-to-face treatment, and a further \$2.8 million to continue programs that support cohorts including LGBTIQ+ people, new parents and emergency service workers.

In the midst of unprecedented global events and the pervasive impact of social media, eating disorders are on the rise globally – and sadly, Victorians are not immune.

An investment of \$31 million will make sure people with an eating disorder get the care they need – whether it’s in-home, as a hospital inpatient or through day programs. This includes the establishment of a day program in regional Victoria.

Our Mental Health Capital Renewal Fund will also deliver \$10 million in priority infrastructure upgrades for mental health services to ensure Victorians get the mental health care they deserve.

For Victorians struggling with chronic addiction, we want them to have the best chance at recovery, no matter where they live. Our \$95 million Statewide Action Plan will save lives, reduce drug harm and give more people the care they need – in the CBD and across Victoria.

In response to the Ken Lay Report, we’ll deliver a health-led approach to reduce drug harm, including boosting access to pharmacotherapy and naloxone, trialling a ‘Never Use Alone’ helpline, expanding outreach services and appointing a Chief Addiction Adviser.

Made possible through \$36.4 million in this year’s Budget, we will partner with cohealth to establish the new Community Health Hub at 244 Flinders Street – staffed by dedicated teams who will offer help via social support services, comprehensive case management and medical care to anyone who walks through its doors.

When it opens in 2026, it will also be host to Victoria’s first hydromorphone treatment trial for select participants to help divert them from the illicit drug market – giving hope and care to those struggling with long-term drug use.

For older Victorians, we’ll continue to strengthen Public Sector Residential Aged Care – the largest in Australia – with \$31.2 million to provide high-quality care and maintain nurse to resident ratios.

This is a Budget that invests in our hospitals and the health of every Victorian – because this is a Budget that’s helping families.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health, Health Infrastructure and Ambulance Services Mary-Anne Thomas

“We are transforming Victoria’s world-class healthcare system – delivering better facilities, more healthcare workers and a record investment to make sure every Victorian gets the best care, no matter their address.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health and Ageing Ingrid Stitt

“Since the Royal Commission, we’ve made the largest investment into mental health in Australia’s history, but there’s still more to do. That’s why this Budget will build on our record investment for those who need it most. For older Victorians, we’ll continue our investment so they can age in place with dignity and receive world-class care.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

“New Victorian parents and their babies deserve the very best start in life – in this year’s Budget, we’re giving them ongoing support to learn, grow and thrive as a family.”