

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Leader of the House
Minister for Health
Minister for Health Infrastructure
Minister for Ambulance Services



Thursday, 30 May 2024

MORE PATIENTS GETTING BETTER FROM THE COMFORT OF HOME

The Allan Labor Government's *Better at Home* program has reached a major milestone – giving thousands of Victorians the care they need, while freeing up hospital beds.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced the program has delivered more than one million admitted bed days from the comfort of Victorians' homes since the program launched in July 2020 – with the successful pilot now a permanent treatment offering.

Made possible through a \$10.5 million investment, Austin Health's *Hospital in the Home and Virtual Care* (HITH-VC) service is delivering a safe, high-quality model of care.

Clinicians can monitor up to 10 patients with serious conditions at any time, delivering more than 20,100 admitted bed days at home in this financial year alone.

The program has been a gamechanger for Victorians like Desi Illiopoulos – diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in January – who were previously required to spend days or weeks in hospital.

Following her diagnosis, Desi underwent multiple rounds of chemotherapy, spending significant periods of time in and out of hospital, living a life of limbo, unsure of where she would be the following week.

However, prior to her last treatment, she was admitted to Austin Health's Virtual Care Ward and provided a bio beat device, a small watch that measures blood pressure and temperature, allowing her to recover at home with familiar surroundings and the support of loved ones.

This model of care has been linked to improved health outcomes for patients who benefit from not only the greater comfort, but the convenience and easier transition back to community care.

Patients who live in rural and remote locations also benefit from this successful initiative – getting them home sooner, while ensuring constant access to the skills of clinicians through ongoing monitoring.

The Labor Government has invested \$819 million to establish and expand the *Better at Home* initiative across the state – with more than 45 health services delivering in-home and virtual care programs, covering a wide range of specialities and treatments that meet the specific needs of their communities.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Giving Victorians the option of in-home treatment allows them to get better in the comfort of their own home surrounded by their loved ones, while also freeing up beds in our hospitals to meet sustained demand."

Quote attributable to Member for Ivanhoe Anthony Carbines

"It's fantastic to see Better at Home become a permanent treatment offering for Austin Health patients."

Quote attributable to HITH-VC Director Mark Horrigan

"We look for patients with a realistic expectation of steady recovery who will thrive at home, and who have supportive relatives to participate in their care."

Quote attributable to HITH-VC Nurse Unit Manager Angela Sullivan

"We have progressed so far with our Virtual Ward; we are now receiving national and international interest in our work. There's a huge opportunity as we go forward to provide a better and safer experience for patients and clinicians, who will have the information they need at their fingertips to provide the best possible care."