

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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IMPROVING EMERGENCY CARE FOR ALL VICTORIANS

The Allan Labor Government is introducing new standards into Victoria's health system – delivering faster patient care, supporting staff in busy emergency departments, and getting paramedics back on the road sooner.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced the *Standards for Safe and Timely Ambulance and Emergency Care for Victorians* will be rolled out across all emergency departments in 2025 to support the faster handover of patients arriving via ambulance.

The new standards were developed following extensive consultation with clinicians, health services, Ambulance Victoria, unions, peak bodies and Safer Care Victoria, to help improve patient flow and reduce pressure on the state's dedicated health workforce.

Many of the new standards have already been implemented at higher performing hospitals, including recommendations for preparations, processes, and broader operations at the ambulance and emergency interface.

The standards are focused on ensuring patients can get world-class care faster and closer to home, through measures including re-direction to alternative care settings, enhanced patient transfer procedures, more timely inpatient admissions and early discharges.

The standards are based on how staff work at the Austin Hospital and other high performing hospitals. As a statewide leader, the health service has successfully and consistently improved emergency department and patient handover times in recent years.

This work sees staff appoint dedicated resources – like a senior clinician – to support faster patient transfers and robust assessment guidelines to transfer suitable patients to the emergency department's waiting room.

Importantly, the hardworking doctors, nurses and paramedics take a collective objective of 'getting ambulances back into the community'.

The standards will be implemented in a phased approach, recognising the varying capacity and capability across health services, and ensuring that implementation is feasible, and the positive impacts are sustainable.

It also complements work underway at 28 hospitals and with Ambulance Victoria to improve timely access to emergency care with initiatives that improve patient flow.

The *Victorian Budget 2024/25* invested a further \$146 million into Ambulance Victoria to ensure Victorians continue to get the care they need, when they need it.

Further investments have also been made to support alternative care options and initiatives to reduce pressure in emergency departments, including through the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, Urgent Care Clinics, and Ambulance Victoria's Secondary Triage Service and Medium Acuity Transport Service.

For more information, please visit health.vic.gov.au/patient-care/standards-for-safe-and-timely-ambulance-and-emergency-care-for-victorians.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"While our ambulance and ED wait times are heading in the right direction – thanks to our hardworking healthcare workers – we know there is more to do which is why these new standards are so important."

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“Despite significant and sustained demand, our hardworking doctors, nurses and ambos are making sure patients continue to receive world-class healthcare – and these new handover standards will help deliver that care even sooner.”