

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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VICTORIA'S WORLD-CLASS EMERGENCY CARE FLYING HIGH

Four new, ultra-modern air ambulances have officially taken to Victoria's skies, delivering life-saving emergency care and transport to Victorians who need it most.

Minister for Ambulance Services Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Ambulance Victoria hangar at Essendon Airport for a tour of the high-tech planes – making Victoria's air ambulance fleet the most innovative in the country.

Providing a vital link between Victoria's rural communities and metro hospitals, the two new Beechcraft King Air 260 and two King Air 360 aircraft join the fleet's five helicopters – caring for 5,355 Victorians in 2023/24 alone.

The new planes replaced the previous fleet as part of a \$345 million 12-year partnership with Toll Aviation (who acquired former operator Pel-Air), helping Ambulance Victoria make a real difference to Victorians, no matter where they live.

They are fitted with the latest technology to ensure the comfort and safety of patients, including an advanced mechanical stretcher loading system, which helps reduce transfer times by up to 20 minutes.

With a maximum range of 3,185 kilometres and top speed of 574 kilometres per hour, the planes can fly further and faster than the helicopters, as well as being able to transport multiple patients, with the fleet's operations at times extending into New South Wales and Tasmania.

Two fixed-wing aircrafts operate 24/7, with an additional aircraft flying for 16 hours a day, five days a week – the fourth acts as a support aircraft, rotating into service to ensure availability while other craft undergo maintenance.

Established in 1962, Ambulance Victoria's Air Ambulance service provides rapid response, world-class health care to rural communities, particularly for injured or critically ill patients who need specialist services, such as trauma, cardiac and intensive care.

It also provides transport for non-emergency rural patients to specialist hospitals in Melbourne for treatments including chemotherapy and radiotherapy or acute medical conditions requiring surgery.

The Allan Labor Government has invested more than \$2 billion into ambulance services –doubling the on-road workforce, delivering 46 new or upgraded ambulance stations, with another five on the way, and establishing Australia's first Paramedic Practitioners who will hit the road in 2026.

Quote attributable to Minister for Ambulance Services Mary-Anne Thomas

"Emergency care in Victoria is soaring to new heights, with our four new high-tech planes making our fleet the most innovative in Australia and helping our paramedics do what they do best – save lives."

Quote attributable to Member for Essendon Danny Pearson

"Where you live shouldn't be a barrier to getting the care you need, that's why it's fantastic to see our continued investment in our air fleet here at Essendon Airport – supporting the Victorians who need it most."

Quote attributable to Deputy Premier and Member for Niddrie Ben Carroll

"Our Essendon Airport-based Air Ambulance fleet delivers exceptional care for patients right across Victoria, with the innovative technology in these new planes making a real difference for some of our sickest Victorians."

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