

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Wednesday, 19 March 2025

LIVES OF 250 KIDS TRANSFORMED BY LIVER TRANSPLANTS

Victoria's world-renowned Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) and Austin Health are celebrating the 250th paediatric liver transplant – a partnership that has helped transform the lives of Victorian kids over the past three decades.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited RCH to meet some of the transplant recipients– now leading happy and healthy lives – and some of the dedicated surgeons performing these life-saving operations.

The first paediatric liver transplant was performed in 1988 and was the third organ transplant ever performed in Victoria – with the paediatric operations undertaken at Austin Health until 1995, before moving to RCH.

Today, the 30-year partnership continues for children with end-stage liver and other diseases, while also providing care to children in Tasmania and South Australia.

While transplants are performed at RCH by highly specialised surgeons from Austin Health, the RCH provides other aspects of care for these patients, many of whom are seen from birth – including in the lead-up to surgery, as well as post-operation, which can continue for years after treatment.

Highly skilled transplant coordinators and specialised team members, including several medical and allied health professionals, also deliver services to ensure children are receiving the highest quality of care.

During the three decades of collaboration, both RCH and Austin Health have continued to innovate and improve the service, including monitoring of children before surgery and the use of microsurgery – allowing clinicians to perform transplants on much smaller babies.

A child might require a liver transplant for several reasons including acute liver failure, certain metabolic diseases and some liver cancers – around half of cases, however, are due to biliary atresia, a progressive liver condition that starts from birth and causes end-stage liver disease.

Post-transplant outcomes have also been enhanced as access to new medicine emerges, as well as a greater understanding of, and ability to, treat post-transplant complications.

The Labor Government has grown annual funding to RCH year on year, with additional investments supporting a number of initiatives, including the Victorian Basic Paediatric Training Consortium – supporting 30 basic paediatric training posts across 16 health services for more care closer to home.

A \$74 million investment is also expanding the RCH emergency department and delivering a new 30-bed inpatient unit to help meet increasing demand. The first stage was completed in 2022, with further works now underway.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“For three decades, the dedicated and talented surgical teams at both RCH and the Austin have transformed the lives of 250 children and their families – this a significant milestone worth celebrating.”

“It's not only the surgeons who are delivering world-class care, but also the highly skilled transplant coordinators and specialist team members who provide much-needed support to families through the transplant journey.”

Media contact: Flynn Schulz 0414 672 580 | flynn.schulz@minstaff.vic.gov.au