

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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PEACE OF MIND FOR FAMILIES WITH FREE RSV PROTECTION

The Allan Labor Government is keeping Victorian babies safe from Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) this winter, with a long-acting immunisation available free from tomorrow for eligible families until 30 September.

Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn today opened the upgraded Tweddle Early Parenting Centre in Footscray, and announced that RSV immunisation will be free for all newborns if their mother wasn't vaccinated during pregnancy.

Free RSV immunisation

RSV is a highly infectious virus that infects up to 90 per cent of children within the first two years of life. The Labor Government is delivering a free program to protect around 40,000 Victorian babies born this RSV season.

As part of the program, the long-acting monoclonal antibody, nirsevimab, is administered in hospital as part of standard post-birth care – helping parents save and avoiding visits to the GP.

Eligible infants aged up to two years who are vulnerable to severe RSV disease will be protected thanks to a dedicated catch-up program.

The Labor Government's state-based program complements the Commonwealth maternal vaccine, Abrysvo, which commenced in February as part of the coordinated national effort to protect as many babies as possible.

Mothers are encouraged to get vaccinated during their pregnancy to help build immunity in their baby as early as possible. However, for those unable to be immunised with Abrysvo, or mums immunised less than two weeks before delivery, the Victorian-funded, nirsevimab, will now be available for babies.

In Australia, RSV is the most common cause of hospitalisation in infants because it can often progress to pneumonia or bronchiolitis in very young children.

New and upgraded Early Parenting Centres

Local mums and dads in Melbourne's inner west can make the most of Footscray's refurbished Early Parenting Centre (Tweddle), which will support more than 1,200 local families each year.

The new building includes 12 residential family units, day-stay places, playroom, dining room and multi-purpose room, admin areas and interview rooms – as well as outdoor upgrades including native landscaping and parking.

The centre provides both short and long-term programs to improve the health, wellbeing and development outcomes of children up to four years old.

Parents experiencing challenges with sleep, settling and feeding will receive expert advice while extra care is available for babies and toddlers with additional needs.

Family units are designed with flexibility in mind supporting different structures – meaning they can bring multiple children or accommodate older siblings, grandparents or other carers during their stay.

The Labor Government is investing more than \$165 million to upgrade and expand Victoria's network of Early Parenting Centres, including delivering a dedicated Aboriginal Early Parenting Centre in Frankston.

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Quote attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

“Whether it’s our new RSV immunisation program or our network of early parenting centres, we are supporting mums, dads and bubs so they can have the best start to family life together.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“No matter where you live in Victoria the mother and infant RSV protection program is now available. While pregnant women can now access an RSV vaccine, protection is administered to newborns and vulnerable infants at no cost, so no one misses out, and Victorian families can have peace of mind heading into winter.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

“We know that sleep and settling can be some of the biggest challenges with new babies, and we’re providing specialised support to families to help them navigate it.”

Quote attributable to Member for Footscray Katie Hall

“Becoming a parent is an exciting time, but it can also be stressful and difficult – that’s why we refurbished Tweddle and supporting families in Footscray.”