

## Edition Three

With just over three weeks to go until the Victorian Election on Saturday 24 November, for the political parties to make health policy announcements.

Since, the last edition of the Victorian Election Alert, the plethora of hospital infrastructure announcements, while welcome, has slowed. With postal voting soon to open and the campaigns launched, there are likely to be attention-grabbing announcements from all parties as they look to lead on an essential election issue.

In this edition, further analysis is available on Labor's campaign launch, the royal commission into mental health, as well as emergency funding for Bush Nursing Centres. All health announcements, so far, are displayed in a table, and were up to date at Wednesday 31 October.

Please contact the VHA should you like further information or feedback on any of the announcements. Contact Ben Rogers, Advisor Policy & Advocacy by [email](#) or phone 9094 7714.

## Labor campaign launch

### Announcement

On Sunday 28 October, Premier Daniel Andrews launched the Labor election campaign with \$1.38bn in health funding announcements.

These announcements included promising to:

- build and upgrade 10 community hospitals across Victoria
- provide 500,000 more specialist appointments in regional communities
- recruit 90 new paramedics, buying 23 new ambulances, and build or upgrade more ambulance stations
- Fund 1,100 new nurses and midwives, to match increases in nurse-patient ratios

### Reaction

The VHA welcomes these announcements, which are significant funding promises for regional healthcare, workforce and infrastructure. More details are required on these announcements so that the real impact of these proposals can be ascertained. In terms of the additional funding for nurses, this matches the VHA's position that any increases made necessary by increased ratios must be fully funded.

### Analysis

The extra specialist appointments for regional patients is welcome, and also helps to counteract criticism of Labor's announcements to date of being too city-centric, but detail on exactly how these appointments would be provided is lacking.

There is currently limited clarity on the new community hospitals, although these could provide an opportunity for VHA members. More information on this announcement is needed to ascertain how they will work in the health ecosystem, who will run them (either single organisations or consortia), and how they will coordinate with existing services. This will be particularly critical in areas where existing services are already struggling with demand that community hospitals will be unlikely to assist with. As the VHA has repeatedly urged all parties, a transparent infrastructure strategy is required to ensure that the right investments are made.

## Royal Commission into mental health

### Announcement

On Wednesday 24 October, Premier Daniel Andrews committed to hold a Royal Commission into Mental Health should a Labor Government be re-elected.

Work on the royal commission would start within the government's first 100 days, including the appointment of commissioners and the announcement of terms of reference. The Commonwealth Government would be part of the process.

The Premier also announced that he would implement all proposals from the Royal Commission, which would report back within two years. The Royal Commission would focus on the quality and cost of care across the system, as well as addressing early intervention.

### Reaction

The VHA welcomes the promise that a re-elected Labor Government would launch a Royal Commission into Mental Health.

The Royal Commission is a positive step towards delivering the fundamental reform the mental health system needs. It is also welcome to see that nothing will be off limits for the commission, and that its proposals would be implemented in full.

### Analysis

Mental health, historically underfunded, has taken a surprising centre stage over the past few months. The Royal Commission announcement follows the government's announcement in September 2018 of a non-election contingent two years of funding for community mental health – [click here](#). The Greens have also made mental health announcements during this election campaign – [click here](#).

There are many similarities to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, a key pillar of Labor's previous election campaign.

This suggests that mental health would be the big social priority of a re-elected Labor Government; much like family violence has been the focus of this term.

Labor's Royal Commission announcement was followed by an election commitment for mental health workers to be sent into every Victorian state secondary school at a cost of \$51.2m.

## Emergency funding for Bush Nursing Centres

### Announcement

On Wednesday 17 October, Shadow Minister for Country Health Emma Kealy announced that the Coalition would provide emergency funding for Bush Nursing Centres.

It was revealed that the Coalition, if elected, would provide \$300,000 in emergency funding over two years to support 15 community-based, not-for-profit centres, which deliver essential primary health services.

The funding was announced as a ‘stopgap’ while a longer-term approach for funding is to be worked on.

### Reaction

The VHA welcomes this announcement. It is important that the role of the centres in providing community and primary care in rural and regional locations is acknowledged and supported. This emergency funding would help to ensure that people can be treated in their communities and without the need to travel. The VHA also welcomes the Coalition’s recognition that a more sustainable funding solution must be found for bush nursing centres.

### Analysis

This announcement helps to support key locations in the community, where there are unlikely to be other providers, acknowledging the holistic role that bush nursing centres play.

While this positive announcement would help to mitigate pressures on bush nursing centres in the immediate future, the most crucial element of the policy is the exploration of potential long-term funding solutions.

The VHA looks forward to engaging on sustainable support for bush nursing centres, which have been put under pressure by compliance requirements among other things.

Party	Announcement	Funding	Members Impacted	Notes	Source
Greens	Restore funding to mental health. This includes \$200m over 4 years for community mental health for those not NDIS eligible	\$270m	This will benefit providers of community mental health, as well as the state's hospitals if it can reduce emergency mental health admissions.	Labor recently announced \$70m over 2 years for community mental health as well as a Royal Commission into mental health.	<a href="#">Green Party</a>
Greens	Replace the ambulance membership system and fees, with the Greens Government making up the shortfall to Ambulance Victoria	\$668m	This will impact hospital members.		<a href="#">Green Party</a>

Labor	National Centre for Farmer Health	\$4m	Local services as well as wider regional members will be impacted.	This is similar to an election announcement made in 2014 and delivered in the first Andrews government's budget	<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	\$50M Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Development Fund	\$50m	All services that employ nurses will be impacted.	400 new postgraduate scholarships for nurses and midwives.	<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Re-development of Frankston Hospital	\$562m	Local services will be impacted.		<a href="#">Labor</a>
Labor	Help implement Victorian Carer Strategy 2018-22	\$53.5m	Community health services may be impacted.		<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Expansion of the Latrobe Regional Hospital at Traralgon	\$217m	Latrobe Regional Hospital and local services will benefit.	A \$79m expansion was only opened this year, which improved emergency service provision.	<a href="#">Premier</a>

Labor	Expansion of the Angliss Hospital at Ferntree Gully	\$170m	This will benefit Eastern Health mainly, but the healthcare hub for older people could help wider older person healthcare providers, and maybe a signal for a future approach.		<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Build new Footscray Hospital	\$1.5bn	Western Health and its other sites will mainly benefit, but this could also benefit other Melbourne hospitals.		<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Planning for a new Melton Hospital	\$2.3m	This may affect local services in the future, with planning to look at how it would link to other public hospitals.		<a href="#">Premier</a>

Labor	New rehabilitation centre for Bendigo Hospital	\$60m	This will impact Bendigo Health and local services.	The new Bendigo Hospital opened this year.	<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Royal Commission into mental health	\$13.2m	This will impact all members.		<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Establish a training and skills program for health services workers	Unknown	This will impact all members.	Will include 100 scholarships for new opportunities, and targeted training for occupational violence.	<a href="#">Jill Hennessy</a>
Labor	New 'Mental Health in Schools' program	\$51.2m	This should impact members who provide mental health services	Will allow schools across Victoria to employ over 190 qualified mental health professionals.	<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Build and upgrade 10 community hospitals across Victoria	\$675m	This will impact the funded services and their surrounding services.	New community hospitals at Whittlesea, Eltham, Point Cook and Fishermans Bend. Services in Craigieburn, Cranbourne, Pakenham, Philip Island, Sunbury and Torquay will become community hospitals.	<a href="#">Premier</a>



Labor	500,000 more specialist appointments in regional communities	\$136.3m	This will impact all hospital members.	It will also establish an easy-to-access registry for GPs, with up-to-date information about individual hospital wait lists.	<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	90 new paramedics, 23 new ambulances, and more ambulance stations built and upgraded	\$109m	This will impact all hospital members.		<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Recruit 1,100 new nurses and midwives, with increases in nurse-patient ratios	\$460m	This will impact all members.	It is believed this funding includes the \$50m Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Development Fund mentioned above.	<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Redevelopment of Wangaratta Hospital	\$10m	This will benefit Northeast Health Wangaratta and local services.		<a href="#">Premier</a>
Labor	Redevelopment of Maryborough Hospital	\$100m	This will impact Maryborough District Health Service and surrounding services.	This will include a new building on the Maryborough District Health Service's Maryborough campus, and an additional	<a href="#">Premier</a>

				building to replace the hospital's ageing urgent care centre.	
Coalition	National Centre for Farmer Health	\$4m	Local services as well as wider regional members will be impacted.	The policy was originally announced by Labor before being announced by the Liberal Party. It is welcome to see both supporting the same policy, so could happen in other healthcare areas	<a href="#">Mary Wooldridge</a>
Coalition	Fund the Bowel Cancer Action Plan	\$2m	Health services that provide colonoscopy services will be impacted.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Supplying free flu vaccines for all Victorian children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years	\$7m	Health services that provide primary health services such as immunisation will be impacted.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>

Coalition	Mandatory drug and alcohol treatment for young people whose offending or risky behaviour is a result of severe substance abuse	\$30m to create new facilities, \$20m annually thereafter to run the facilities.	There has been no information supplied about who will run the facility.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Brighter Futures fund to establish integrated children's centres in Victoria's most disadvantaged rural and regional areas	\$80m	Rural and regional health services, particularly community health services if they can tender, will be impacted.		<a href="#">Nationals</a>
Coalition	Community based palliative care in Victoria	\$140m	Services that provide community palliative care will be impacted.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Upgrade the Sandringham Hospital through investing in new outpatient facilities	\$2.5m	This will impact Alfred Health and their services, as well as local services.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>

Coalition	Expansion of home and community care and support for Victorians with chronic disease and other conditions	\$175m	All services who provide hospital in the home services.	There is insufficient detail in the chronic health announcement to understand if community health services may be able to provide some services.	<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Build a new West Gippsland Hospital, and new theatres and emergency department at Warrnambool Base Hospital	\$300m	West Gippsland Healthcare Group and South West Healthcare will directly benefit. Local services will be impacted.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>  <a href="#">Mary Wooldridge</a>
Coalition	Build a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for Mildura	\$7m	This will benefit local services.		<a href="#">Nationals</a>
Coalition	Develop a comprehensive state-wide health workforce strategy	\$1m	All members will be impacted.	A policy from the VHA's 2018 Victorian Election Positions.	<a href="#">Liberal</a>

Coalition	Expanded mental health support for members of Victoria Police, emergency services and ambulance workers	\$6m	Members with ambulance services will be impacted.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Support for children with autism	\$50m	Members who provide childhood disability services will be impacted.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Purchase four new public robots located at Austin and Mercy Health, Monash Health, Western Health and Bendigo Health	\$20m	Local services will be definitely impacted. But, any hospital member could benefit if they choose to try and be involved.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Rebuild Swan Hill Hospital	\$44m	Swan Hill District Health will benefit, local services will be impacted.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>

Coalition	Stroke Ambulance to be based at Monash Medical Centre	\$6m	Local services will be impacted. It will also alleviate pressure on the current Stroke Ambulance based at The Royal Melbourne Hospital.		<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	New 32 bed ward expansion at Mildura Base Hospital	\$20m	This will benefit Mildura Base Hospital and local services, including Sunraysia Community Health Service.	Mildura Base Hospital is the only publicly-owned, privately-operated hospital in Victoria. Labor has launched a consultation on whether it should be returned to public operation.	<a href="#">Peter Crisp</a>
Coalition	Yarrawonga Health hospital upgrade	\$11m	This will benefit Yarrawonga health and surrounding services.		<a href="#">Tim McCurdy</a>
Coalition	Public access to care at Euroa Health	\$2.4m	This will benefit surrounding services, who previously had to care for Euroa locals.	The funding will be spread across 4 years. Strathbogie Shire has been the only shire in the state without any access to public health care.	<a href="#">Steph Ryan</a>

Coalition	New innovation voucher program for Victorian Start-Ups, Small and Medium Enterprises	\$9m	This may impact members involved in medical research.	The investment is expected to facilitate up to \$18m in commercial investment.	<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	Encourage increased organ donation through driver's licence applications and renewals and funding for organ registration campaign	\$2m	May increase members ability to offer transplants to clients.	Labor recently announced a new automatic assessment approach to determine whether a patient is suitable for organ donation.	<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	New CFA and ambulance station in Armstrong Creek	\$7.1m	This will benefit local services with increased ambulatory capacity.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Establish an annual 'Health Volunteering' roundtable to acknowledge hospital and aged care volunteers, and research how to support them.	\$0.055m	This will impact hospital and aged care facility members across Victoria.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Funding for a new headspace outreach program	\$1.14m	This will impact community health members if the outreach projects	Funding over 4 years, and will especially focus on regional areas	<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>

			occur in their areas.		
Coalition	Life. Be in it. 2.0	\$0	The return of the health promotion campaign may encourage the public to use members' preventative services.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Emergency funding for Bush Nursing Centres	\$0.3m	This will impact Bush Nursing Centre members.	Funding is over 2 years, with an extra \$10,000 for each centre each year. A future Coalition Government would look into longer term funding.	<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Increase in reimbursement rates for Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme	\$35.1m	This will impact specialist hospital members.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Improve education and awareness of rare diseases to lead to earlier	\$1m	This may impact hospital members.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>



	diagnosis				
Coalition	Contraceptive pills available over counter after initial GP visit	\$0	This may impact members involved in women's health.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	World first Oral Immunotherapy Allergy Trials Program at Melbourne University	\$1.5m	This may impact members involved in medical research.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Commit to the 2030 95-95-95 United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) target by 2025, and invest in rapid HIV testing	\$3.6m	It is not certain what impact this will have on members.	The target is to have 95% of people living with HIV diagnosed, 95% of those diagnosed accessing treatment and 95% of those having treatment with an undetectable viral load.	<a href="#">Liberal</a>
Coalition	New hydrotherapy pool for Connect Health and Community	\$2m	This will benefit Connect Health and Community.		<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>

Coalition	Build a 18-20 bed residential rehabilitation centre for the Latrobe Valley	\$7m	This will benefit local services.		<a href="#">Latrobe Valley Express</a>
Coalition	Subsidisation of cost of parking at hospitals	\$40m (across 4 years)	This will impact hospital members.	This will provide for around an extra 125,000 subsidised car parks each year. There will also be a concession eligibility policy and promotion of concessional rates. The maximum daily rate will be frozen for two years.	<a href="#">Matthew Guy</a>
Coalition	Redevelopment of Maryborough Hospital	\$100m	This will impact Maryborough District Health Service and surrounding services.	This announcement was made on the same day as the Labor announcement, and is their second joint health policy commitment.	<a href="#">Bendigo Advertiser</a>