

Final edition | 23 November

When the VHA launched its 2018 Victorian Election Positions earlier this year, on behalf of its members, it called for an urgent reset and rethink of our public health system, which is under more strain and more pressure than ever before. The recommendations reflected the views of members from hospitals, community health services and multi-purpose services across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria.

In the lead up to the election, some of these recommendations have since become policies of the political parties, while many of the health announcements made by the parties look to confront the challenges within the health system. These responses from the political parties will allow the Victorian public health system to sustain its world-class standard and ensure that it can deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

The prominence of healthcare policy in this election has demonstrated some recognition that the health sector needs continued support in infrastructure, workforce, health promotion, community health and mental health.

This final Victorian Election Alert edition, on the eve of the state election, contains all pre-election announcements pertaining to the health policies of Labor, the Coalition and the Greens as well as further analysis on the overall health policies of the respective parties.

For more information contact the VHA on 9094 7777 or vha@vha.org.au

Labor: Review

Over the campaign, Labor unveiled a wide array of policies, with a focus on hospital infrastructure announcements. This has included, amongst other similar announcements, a new hospital in Footscray and redevelopment of hospitals in Frankston, Wangaratta and Maryborough. This focus on infrastructure is welcome, as it was one of the seven key pillars of the VHA's 2018 Victorian Election Positions, with good facilities directly tied to the quality of care provided. In particular, the VHA supports Labor's promised increased funding for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which was one of the VHA's recommended policies. However, the VHA urges any new government to develop a transparent and needs based strategy to guide investment in the state's health infrastructure.

Labor announced that, if re-elected, it would instigate a Royal Commission into Mental Health, as well as provide a new mental health program in schools. These announcements will contribute to managing ever-increasing demand, with mental health presentations to emergency departments having increased; there has been a 46 per cent growth in young people presenting for mental health disorders in emergency departments between 2008 and 2015. The VHA views a Royal Commission as a first important step towards delivering fundamental reform of the mental health system.

Workforce shortages also received attention from Labor. A key part of its election launch was the promise to recruit 1,100 new nurses and midwives, as well as support increases in nurse-patient ratios. This included funding for a \$50m Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Development Fund, while Labor also promised to establish a training and skills program for health services workers. Workforce shortages was also identified by the VHA as a key priority in its 2018 Victorian Election Positions as requiring specific focus during this election.

Coalition: Review

The Coalition made a number of welcome announcements throughout its campaign, including support for the VHA's recommendation of a state-wide workforce strategy, which would help to guarantee that Victoria's public health sector is properly staffed to meet the needs of communities. Similarly, the Coalition's announcement of a health strategy for the west of Melbourne is a positive step forward in ensuring the health system is properly aligned to deliver the right care to patients.

A key focus of the Coalition's campaign has been regional and rural healthcare, with a number of infrastructure announcements for hospitals and care facilities as well as emergency funding for bush nursing centres and improved reimbursement rates for patient transport assistance committed to, if elected.

A recurring theme in Coalition announcements has been an increased focus on care in the community. The Coalition has promised more funding for community palliative care, chronic

condition care in the community, and new community mental health hubs, if elected. This is supported by the VHA, as this demonstrates recognition that hospitals are not always the best place to be delivering care, particularly for people with multiple chronic diseases who may need help with condition management, as set out in the VHA's 2018 Victorian Election Positions.

Greens: Review

The VHA was pleased to see the Victorian Greens commitment to advocate for a \$360m investment boost in community health, which was aligned with the VHA's election position calling for increased infrastructure funding, increased public dental provision and support for hospital diversion pilots. The VHA encourages a matching of the Greens commitment by the two major parties, so that community health services can continue to not only meet the needs of growing communities but play an even greater role in supporting the broader health system.

The focus on keeping people out of hospital was the core feature of the Greens' announcements, including \$200m over four years to community mental health for those not eligible under the NDIS as part of their commitment to restore funding to mental health. The Greens also committed to advocating on a number of prevention initiatives including the banning of sugary drinks and confectionery from health services which would help to reduce the growing strain on the state's public hospitals.

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.		Greens
Greens	Replace the ambulance membership system and fees, with the government making up the shortfall to Ambulance Victoria	\$668m	This will impact hospital members.		Greens
Greens	Aboriginal Health Commissioner	\$20m	This will impact all members		Greens
Greens	Funding for community health services	\$364m	This will impact community health services and their connected services.	The VHA and Victoria's 29 registered community health services have been running the 'Stand with Community	Greens

				Health' campaign during this election. The Greens Party have pledged their support the campaign and its 'asks'. Go to standwithcommunityhealth.org.au to find out more.	
Greens	Health prevention program support	\$15m (annually)	The public education campaigns may encourage the public to use members' preventative services.	Includes proposals to restrict advertising of sugary drinks and junk food targeted at children. The funding would go towards public information and education to reduce preventable diseases	Greens
Greens	Establish two new sexual health centres in Victoria.	\$5m	This will impact services who offer sexual and reproductive services.		Greens

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	Premier
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.	Premier
Labor	Re-development of Frankston Hospital	\$562m	Local services will be impacted.		Labor
Labor	Help implement Victorian Carer Strategy 2018-22	\$53.5m	Community health services may be impacted.		Premier
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.	Premier

Labor	Expansion of the Angliss Hospital at Ferntree Gully	\$170m	This will benefit Eastern Health, but the healthcare hub for older people could help wider older person healthcare providers, and maybe a signal for a future approach.		Premier
Labor	Build new Footscray Hospital	\$1.5bn	Western Health and its other sites will mainly benefit, but this could also benefit other Melbourne hospitals.		Premier
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.		Premier
Labor	New rehabilitation centre for Bendigo Hospital	\$60m	This will impact Bendigo Health and local services.	The new Bendigo Hospital opened this year.	Premier
Labor	Royal Commission into Mental Health	\$13.2m	This will impact all members.		Premier

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.	Jill Hennessy
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.	Premier
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.	Premier
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.	Premier

Labor	90 new paramedics, 23 new ambulances, and more ambulance stations built and upgraded	\$109m	This will impact all hospital members.		Premier
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.	Premier
Labor	Redevelopment of Wangaratta Hospital	\$10m	This will benefit Northeast Health Wangaratta and local services.		Premier
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 building to replace the hospital's ageing urgent care centre.	Premier

Labor	Establish public IVF services	\$32m	This will impact services that provide IVF and maternity services.	This announcement followed the publication of the interim report of the review into assisted reproductive treatment. The report highlighted issues of affordability and access to IVF.	Premier
Labor	5 new paediatric emergency departments	\$62.4m	This will impact all services with emergency departments.		Premier
Labor	Increased funding for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund (RHIF)	100m	This will impact all regional services.	An increase in funding for the RHIF was a policy in the VHA's 2018 Victorian Election Positions.	Premier
Labor	Stage 1 of the new public Geelong Women's and Children's Hospital	100m	This will impact all surrounding services.	This is a redevelopment of the Geelong Private Hospital which closed earlier in 2018.	Premier

Labor	Free dental care at all public primary and secondary schools through dental vans	395.8m	This will impact all dental services as well as acute services.	Expected to free up more than 100,000 places in the public dental care system each year.	Premier
Labor	Baby care package, including 7 new parenting centres and more maternal child health nurses	\$232m	This will impact all surrounding services and all services that provide maternal care.	The 7 new Early Parenting Centres will be in Geelong, Frankston, Casey, Whittlesea, Ballarat, Bendigo and Wyndham. They will provide day stays, longer residential stays and more care at home. There is no information on how many more maternal child health nurses will be recruited.	Premier
Labor	Surfers Rescue 24/7 program	\$800,000	This may impact coastal members.	The course will teach critical CPR skills, how to perform board rescues and how to apply basic first aid on the water.	Premier

Labor	Expansion of Royal Children's Hospital	\$31m	This will impact Royal Children's Hospital	This will provide a new 30-bed flexi-ward and add 20 cubicles to the emergency department.	Premier
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	Mary Wooldridge
Coalition	Fund the Bowel Cancer Action Plan	\$2m	Health services that provide colonoscopy services will be impacted.		Liberal
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.		Liberal

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.		Liberal
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.		Nationals
Coalition	Community based palliative care in Victoria	\$140m	Services that provide community palliative care will be impacted.		Liberal
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.		Matthew Guy

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.	Liberal
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.		Liberal Mary Wooldridge
Coalition	Build a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for Mildura	\$7m	This will benefit local services.		Nationals
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.	Liberal

Coalition	Expanded mental health support for members of Victoria Police, emergency services and ambulance workers	\$6m	Members with ambulance services will be impacted.		Liberal
Coalition	Support for children with autism	\$50m	Members who provide childhood disability services will be impacted.		Liberal
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.		Liberal
Coalition	Rebuild Swan Hill Hospital	\$44m	Swan Hill District Health will benefit, local services will be impacted.		Matthew Guy
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		Liberal

			Royal Melbourne Hospital.		
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.	Peter Crisp
Coalition	Yarrawonga Health hospital upgrade	\$11m	This will benefit Yarrawonga health and surrounding services.		Tim McCurdy
Coalition	Public access to care at Euroa Health	\$2.4m	This will benefit surrounding services, which 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.	Steph Ryan

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.	Liberal
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.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	New CFA and ambulance station in Armstrong Creek	\$7.1m	This will benefit local services with increased ambulatory capacity.		Matthew Guy
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.		Matthew Guy
Coalition	Funding for a new headspace outreach program	\$1.14m	This will impact community health members if the outreach projects occur	Funding over 4 years, and will especially focus on regional areas	Matthew Guy

			in their areas.		
Coalition	Life. Be in it. 2.0	\$60m	The return of the health promotion campaign may encourage the public to use members' preventative services.		Matthew Guy
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.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	Increase in reimbursement rates for Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme	\$35.1m	This will impact specialist hospital members.		Matthew Guy
Coalition	Improve education and awareness of rare diseases to lead to earlier diagnosis	\$1m	This may impact hospital members.		Matthew Guy
Coalition	Contraceptive pills available over counter after initial GP visit	\$0	This may impact members involved in women's health.		Matthew Guy

Coalition	World first Oral Immunotherapy Allergy Trials Program at Melbourne University	\$1.5m	This may impact members involved in medical research.		Matthew Guy
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.	Liberal
Coalition	New hydrotherapy pool for Connect Health and Community	\$2m	This will benefit Connect Health and Community.		Matthew Guy
Coalition	Build a 18-20 bed residential rehabilitation centre for the Latrobe Valley	\$7m	This will benefit local services.		Latrobe Valley Express
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	Matthew Guy

				eligibility policy and promotion of concessional rates. The maximum daily rate will be frozen for two years.	
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.	Bendigo Advertiser
Coalition	24 hour medical centre for Phillip Island	\$1.8m	This will impact Bass Coast Health and local services.	The two-year trial will see the opening hours of the current medical centre extended to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	New Drouin ambulance station	\$2m	This will impact local services.		Matthew Guy
Coalition	Redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health	\$21m	This will impact Goulburn Valley Health and surrounding services.	This funding will complete the GV Health Masterplan, deliver a Residential Mother and Baby Unit and progress early works and planning of Stage 2 of the hospital	Matthew Guy

				redevelopment. Labor has committed to publishing the masterplan for stage 2 of the development as well.	
Coalition	Operational funding 'The Lookout' Residential Rehabilitation centre in Warrnambool	Unknown	This will impact surrounding services.	Western Region Alcohol and Drug Centre (WRAD) to run the 18 to 20-bed facility.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	Development of 'The Western Melbourne Health and Hospitals Plan'	Unknown	This will impact all services in the west of Melbourne as well as connected services.	It is a health service and infrastructure plan for Melbourne's west.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	New Community Mental Health Hubs	\$24m	This will impact surrounding services.	This will fund trials for three new Hubs at Primary Health Networks in Frankston, Albert Park and Regional Victoria.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	Healthcare transparency measures, including performance measurements wait times, patient opinion and publishing a staff survey.	Unknown	This will impact all hospital members.		Matthew Guy

Coalition	Partner with the Lions Clubs Districts of Victoria to provide mobile skin cancer checks	\$1m	This may impact services that provide cancer services.		Matthew Guy
Coalition	Increased diabetes assistance for pregnant women	\$5.9m	This will impact all services, particularly those with maternal services.	Continuous Glucose Monitors for diabetic pregnant women, and age increase for young people eligible for funded insulin pumps from 18 to 21.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	Funding boost for chronic condition Pain Clinics	440m	This will impact services that provide Pain Clinics.	The proposal includes developing a state-wide pain management plan and establishing a musculoskeletal /pain network. The proposal will also look to support the upcoming rollout of SafeScript, including data collection and targeted training.	Matthew Guy
Coalition	Redeveloped Ballarat Base Hospital	\$461m	This will impact Ballarat Health Services and	This redevelopment was already funded by the	Samantha Hutchinson

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			surrounding services	<p>Labor government in the 2018/19 budget. However, the Coalition have promised, as part of the overall funding, \$1.6m for an expanded Mother and Baby Mental Health unit and \$1.8m to expand the Pain Clinic. The Pain Clinic funding is from the promised Pain Clinic funding boost.</p>	
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