

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Equality



Wednesday, 20 April 2022

## VIRTUAL SERVICE EXPANDING TO RELIEVE HOSPITAL PRESSURES

Australia's first ever virtual triage service helping ease Emergency Department pressures and free up paramedics quicker is being rolled out across the state as part of a \$21 million Andrews Labor Government investment.

Northern Hospital has been designing and developing the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED) program, which allows non-urgent patients to be virtually assessed by emergency doctors and nurses from their home or workplace.

Paramedics attending a callout conduct an initial assessment and, if suitable, link the patient with the VVED for assessment on whether a trip to hospital is needed.

The service will be expanded across the state following the success of the project at Northern Hospital – with 87 per cent of people referred to the virtual service avoiding a trip in an ambulance to the hospital ED.

Northern Hospital's VVED team will accept referrals from Ambulance Victoria crews across the state and provide virtual clinical assessments, medical advice, treatment and, where required, local referrals to appropriate services for ongoing management.

Under the program, COVID positive patients can also be referred to the service through the COVID Positive Pathways program which helps Victorians recover from the virus at home.

The Labor Government funded the expansion of VVED in February this year as part of its \$1.4 billion package to support the Victorian health system respond to the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, with our hospitals and ambulance service facing record demand.

The package included \$225 million to ease pressure on hospitals and ambulances by increasing support outside emergency departments, including through a state-wide VVED, expansion of the COVID Positive Pathways program, eight additional GP respiratory clinics and five new urgent care centres.

A further \$1.5 billion in funding was recently announced to support our health services to deliver the government's COVID Catch Up Plan to help address two years of deferred care during the pandemic.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

*"The expansion of the virtual ED across the state will help relieve some of the challenges and demand our paramedics and emergency departments are facing due to COVID-19."*

*"We're providing record investment to support initiatives like this so more Victorians get the care they need in the comfort of their own home."*

### Quote attributable to Member for Thomastown Bronwyn Halfpenny

*"The virtual ED at Northern Health has been a great success and helped patients and staff through a very challenging global pandemic and I'm pleased to see it being rolled out across the state."*

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