

## CHAPTER 3 Making Victorians Healthier

*“We need to set our sights on developing the most modern healthcare system in the world. A healthcare system where prevention is better than cure. One that focuses on good health rather than illness: from birth, through our lives and as we age.”*

JOHN BRUMBY, PREMIER OF VICTORIA

Labor believes in a health system with the patient at its centre, receiving the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Health care should be free and universal. We are the Party which introduced Medicare, and we are the Party most determined to defend it.

Good health care means a lot to all Victorians: from the very youngest to the very oldest. That’s why our policies are concerned with every stage of a person’s life: from good maternity care to preparing for the health demands of an ageing population.

Labor believes in an integrated and efficient health system; a system in which Victorians can be confident. It’s about access. Under Labor, all Victorians will have access to the health care they need: to a local doctor, to an ambulance when necessary, to good hospital care and surgery. We will give Victorians better access to dental health services.

We believe that prevention is better than cure. That’s why we will focus on preventing the biggest health problems Victorians face: cancer, heart disease and chronic diseases such as diabetes. Community wide programs for immunisation and early detection and prevention of disease will reduce the pressure on our hospitals and produce a healthier community.

We will make sure there is no economic, geographic, or other barrier to good quality health care. We will provide special, targeted services to migrant and Aboriginal communities, to gay, lesbian, intersex and transgender Victorians, to people in rural areas, and to those struggling with their mental health. We believe in our community health system and in community participation in health care.

We will invest in medical research and in biotechnology; because we believe that intelligent and innovative solutions can be found to some of our most pressing health problems.

Labor believes that health policy is about serving Victorians at their most vulnerable. This is one of the greatest responsibilities of any government. As our population grows and ages, innovative thinking and heavy investment will be required to keep Victorians healthy.

## **ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES**

### **A UNIVERSAL HEALTH SYSTEM**

#### **3.1 Labor supports Medicare as the heart of the national public health system and will work with the Commonwealth to deliver national health reform that delivers tangible benefits for Victorians.**

Labor has led the case for national health reform arguing genuine reform is necessary for the long-term sustainability of our public health system, to protect universal coverage through Medicare, ensure equity of access to publicly funded services and for effective use of public resources.

Labor will assess reform proposals on the basis of whether they:



- Deliver additional resources so the health system can manage the huge growth in demand that has happened in recent years and is expected to keep growing;
- Ensure effective management of public hospitals and increase capacity to deliver the best possible health care;
- Focus on evidence-based prevention and early intervention services;
- Promote close partnerships between primary care providers, hospitals, aged care and community-based health services to ensure continuity of care;
- Promote information and communication technology to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of our health system, and
- Provide for strategic planning, so services are distributed appropriately.

## THE HEALTH WORKFORCE

### **3.2 Labor recognises that the capacity of Victoria's health system is underpinned by a dedicated, professional workforce which must be expanded to accommodate growth.**

To meet our ongoing workforce needs, Labor will:

- Implement the national registration process to improve workforce mobility and protect the public;
- Support professional development, workforce flexibility and retention through scholarships, training, and educational opportunities;
- Increase support to overseas trained medical staff, particularly in rural areas, and
- Place a high priority on retaining and recruiting the best mental health workforce.

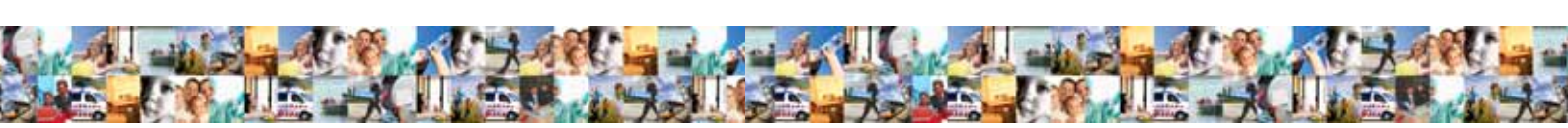
## HEALTH PROMOTION

### **3.3 Labor has led the way on health promotion programs and will build on these achievements by focussing on preventing cancer and other chronic diseases.**

Labor will be innovative in its development of preventive health reform. It will embed responsibility for public health across all levels of government under the Victorian *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and support VicHealth as the major state-wide health promotion organisation.

Labor will:

- Target school aged children in new health promotion and support local initiatives;
- Support confidential health checks;
- Provide confidential healthcare checks and promote healthy living across the Victorian workforce via the *WorkHealth* program;
- Support self-management of chronic diseases through early intervention services;
- Investigate and address the factors that are contributing to a significant over-representation in type II diabetes in Melbourne's western suburbs, and
- Report health outcomes at the regional level along with treatments provided and money spent.



## PATIENT RIGHTS

### **3.4 Labor will protect the rights of patients receiving health services by promoting patient participation in their care, access to a wide range of public health services and information, and treatment based on clinical need - not the ability to pay.**

Labor will:

- Empower consumers and carers as partners in health care – promoting the right to be informed about care and participation in decision making;
- Promote treatment being delivered with respect and dignity in line with the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*;
- Build up culturally sensitive services and access to interpreters;
- Make sure inpatient facilities meet contemporary standards for physical amenity and safety, and
- Make available the full range of contemporary evidence-based social and psychological interventions in clinical mental health services and pharmaceutical interventions.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH CARE

### **3.5 Labor believes that consumers and carers need to be active partners in health care.**

Victoria's unique health service governance model promotes this. This has been endorsed by the Commonwealth, which has modelled the national health reforms around Victoria's system of case mix funding and local networks.

Labor will:

- Improve information provision to consumers and communities about the quality and availability of health care;
- Ensure strong community representation in the governance of health and aged care services;
- Support national initiatives to boost the role of consumers in health care and strengthen consumer participation performance indicators;
- Maintain the role of Community Advisory Committees in public hospitals and the Health Services Commissioner, and
- Promote patient focussed mental health services that also recognise the role of carers in treatment.

## DENTAL HEALTH

### **3.6 Labor is committed to improving the oral health of all Victorians and will prioritise dental care for children, pensioners and concession card holders.**

Victoria's public dental system has expanded through Labor's investment in treatment, dentures, capital development and fluoridated water supplies.

Labor will:

- Continue school dental programs through community health;
- Extend fluoridated water to 90 per cent of Victoria's population;
- Expand the public dental workforce, particularly in rural and regional areas;
- Increase the number of public dental chairs across Victoria, and



- Prioritise in dental funding will reflect a focus on reporting dental health outcomes as well as treatments and money spent.

## **AMBULANCE SERVICES**

### **3.7 Labor will provide the best possible access to ambulance services throughout Victoria.**

Labor has created an integrated state-wide ambulance service, Ambulance Victoria, with more paramedics, more road and air ambulance services and upgraded facilities throughout Victoria.

Labor will:

- Provide additional ambulance stations, vehicles and paramedics (including MICA);
- Promote professional development opportunities for paramedics, and
- Invest in pre-ambulance arrival community first aid education programs.

## **COMMUNITY HEALTH**

### **3.8 Labor acknowledges the key role that community health services play in providing Victorians with access to care close to where they live.**

Independent community health services, which now function as non-government organisations, will receive support from Labor as it strengthens health care provided locally.

Labor will:

- Support community health services with an emphasis on those most in need;
- Build on innovative models of care, targeting issues such as chronic disease, and
- Encourage cooperation between hospitals, GPs and community based services so patients get seamless health care.

# **MANAGING GROWTH IN HEALTH**

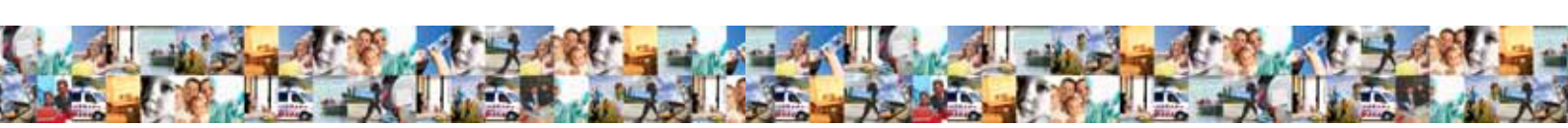
## **MANAGING DEMAND FOR ACUTE HEALTH SERVICES**

### **3.9 Labor will expand the capacity of the acute health system, including in rural areas, with a particular focus on emergency services and elective surgery.**

The last decade has seen a huge increase in the capacity and quality of Victoria's hospitals with a 36% increase in hospital admissions and a 43% increase in the number of people treated in emergency departments.

Labor will:

- Lobby for more Commonwealth funding for 24 hour GP Clinics and wider access to bulk billing;
- Develop programs and facilities to reduce demand for acute services, including providing health care services in the community to help people manage their chronic disease;
- Develop new systems for improving patient flow between parts of the health system;
- Adopt models of care for patients who do not require an acute care bed, including day units and medi-hotels, and
- Promote preventative health measures to reduce the growth in chronic diseases.



## EXPANDING SERVICES IN MELBOURNE'S GROWTH CORRIDORS

### **3.10 Labor will build on its strategy to expand and decentralise Melbourne's hospital network into major activity centres that are well served by public transport so people have quality facilities closer to where they live.**

During the last decade Labor has invested heavily in the "outer ring" hospitals at Werribee, Melton, Sunshine, Northern, Maroondah, The Angliss, Casey, Dandenong and Frankston to increase the capacity and high-level services available in the growth corridors. In addition, Superclinics have been established at Sunbury, Plenty and Lilydale, which provide outpatient services.

Melbourne's teaching hospitals have been decentralised, with new hospitals at the Austin, Monash and, next, Box Hill. Teaching programs have been established at major regional hospitals. The specialist hospitals (Royal Children's, Royal Women's, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the Eye and Ear Hospital) and the two major trauma hospitals - the Royal Melbourne and Alfred - remain in central Melbourne with helicopter access providing services to the whole state.

Labor will expand this network of facilities to keep pace with Melbourne's growth.

## **RURAL PROOFING HEALTH POLICIES**

### **ENSURING ALL VICTORIANS CAN ACCESS HEALTH SERVICES**

#### **3.11 Labor believes that different programs and support are needed for rural health services so patients get the right care close to home and can access specialist care in major hospitals.**

Labor will:

- Work with communities to plan health care priorities across rural and regional areas;
- Coordinate services between large regional hospitals and smaller local health services and invest in innovative models of service delivery in isolated areas;
- Improve access to emergency facilities in regional Victoria through support for Community Emergency Response Teams and comprehensive air and road ambulance services to meet all categories of emergency and non-emergency transport need;
- Increase access to specialist services for women in rural areas, and
- Improve access to the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme.

## **RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE**

#### **3.12 Labor recognises the health workforce shortage as one of the major constraints in delivering health services to rural towns and will invest in the recruitment of health workers to rural and regional areas.**

Labor will:

- Encourage health workers to specialise and practise in rural communities;
- Fund new technologies to link rural and regional health professionals with counterparts in specialised treatment centres who can provide support and advice;
- Encourage exchanges between metropolitan and rural health services so health professionals can update their skills;
- Develop effective incentives for students to remain working in rural areas after they have completed their training;
- Fund rural health professional recruitment efforts and research opportunities, and
- Improve recruitment and retention of clinical staff in rural mental health services.



## PLANNING FOR AN AGEING POPULATION

### **3.13 Labor will develop long term plans for Victoria's health services so appropriate services are available when they are needed by our ageing population.**

Demographic projections consistently point to strong population growth in the coming decades. This includes rapid growth in the “active aged” and a larger group of “over 80's” who will need significant health services.

There are positive and negative trends in how the general health of the population is changing over time but it is likely that people will remain active for longer and want to live in their own homes for longer than in the past. Labor will research these trends and develop the right mix of services to meet future needs.

## RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

### **3.14 Labor will ensure the full range of residential aged care and services for “ageing in place” are available to older Victorians as they need them.**

The Commonwealth has prime responsibility for funding aged care but many aged care services are delivered by State and Local Government.

Labor will:

- Ensure all health networks meet the Commonwealth standards for aged care services provided in State owned residential aged care facilities;
- Improve coordination between hospitals, nursing homes and General Practitioners so that older people get better care which is well coordinated;
- Provide opportunities through the Aged Care Land Bank for non-government providers to establish new residential facilities, and
- Push for substantial increased Commonwealth funding to enable more senior Victorians to remain in their home and access a residential care place when they need it.

*See also: section 3.29 Health needs of senior Victorians*

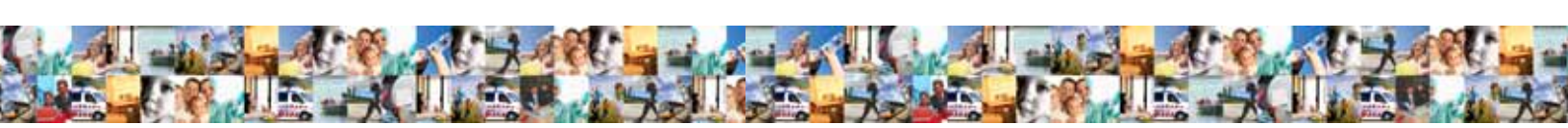
## INNOVATION IN HEALTH CARE

### **3.15 Labor acknowledges that for Victoria to meet its future health care challenges we must find new ways to provide health care successfully.**

Labor will:

- Promote the development of new models of care to respond to demands such as an ageing and growing population, an increase in complex medical conditions, and new global health threats;
- Explore opportunities to improve health outcomes through consultation with health professionals and fund new medical technologies, and
- Work collaboratively beyond the health portfolio to establish health promotion initiatives that target the ‘upstream’ causes of ill health.

*See also 3.3 – Health Promotion.*



# COMBATTING DISEASE

## CANCER CARE

### **3.16 Labor aims to save 2,000 Victorian lives by 2015 by implementing the Victorian Cancer Action Plan.**

Under this Plan Labor will build on its record investment in cancer treatment & prevention to:

- Reduce smoking rates (see below);
- Promote awareness of known cancer risks, including smoking, sun exposure and diet;
- Increase breast, cervical and bowel screening participation rates and use new genetic and predictive tests;
- Increase immunisation rates against HPV for cervical cancer;
- Increase patient participation in clinical trials and fund research projects to support improved cancer services in regional centres;
- Increase the number of newly diagnosed cancer patients who receive a documented multidisciplinary care plan, and
- Increase the number of survivors of childhood cancer with long-term follow-up plans.

## CANCER RESEARCH, PREVENTION & TREATMENT

### **3.17 To underpin its cancer plan, Labor will make Victoria a world-class centre for cancer research, prevention, detection and treatment.**

Labor will deliver, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, the Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre and the Olivia Newton John Cancer and Wellness Centre.

Labor will support collaborative efforts across hospitals, primary care providers, private facilities, palliative care services, research institutes, universities and cancer control organisations to increase the level and skill of the cancer research workforce.

## TOBACCO CONTROL

### **3.18 Labor will build on its strong record in tobacco control with measurable targets to further reduce smoking.**

By 2013 Labor will:

- Reduce smoking among adults by 20 per cent,
- Reduce smoking among pregnant women by 50 per cent; and
- Reduce smoking among high prevalence groups by at least 20 per cent.

Labor has a longstanding commitment to tobacco control, banning smoking in pubs and clubs and cars carrying children.

As part of its Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy Labor will:

- Ban tobacco displays at the point of sale;
- Help pregnant smokers to quit, and
- Ensure bans on youth-oriented tobacco products and packagings are enforced.

Labor will also invest in anti-smoking social marketing campaigns and other programs to help Aboriginal people and people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds quit.



## **IMMUNISATION**

### **3.19 Under its Victorian Immunisation Strategy Labor will work to further increase levels of immunisation among children and adults.**

Immunisation makes it possible for Victorians to live free from illness and disability caused by many infectious diseases.

Labor will:

- Work to achieve the lowest levels of vaccine-preventable disease through high levels of immunisation across the community and in vulnerable groups;
- Support immunisation for health care workers, and
- Invest in community education programs and targeted follow-up programs.

## **INFECTION CONTROL**

### **3.20 Labor will implement further measures to improve infection control in public hospitals.**

Priorities will include strategies to control multi-resistant bacteria, including monitoring and public reporting of hospital acquired infections in all Victorian public hospitals.

## **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**

### **3.21 Labor will build on its strong partnership with the community, treatment and scientific sectors to combat the spread of sexually transmissible diseases.**

Labor will:

- Coordinate responses to the spread of sexually transmissible diseases through taskforces on HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and viral hepatitis;
- Invest in prevention programs in communities with significant infection rates particularly amongst young people, and
- Maintain excellent standards in testing, counselling and treatment services and improve surveillance and research programs.

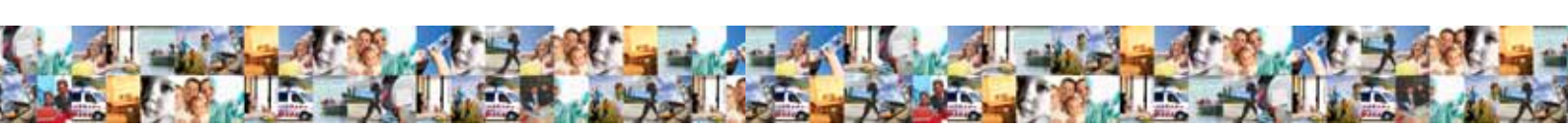
## **DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE**

### **3.22 Labor will work to reduce alcohol and drug abuse which causes serious adverse health and social outcomes for users, their families, workplaces and communities.**

Labor will always be tough on drugs and trafficking but will treat addiction as a health issue and support people that need and want assistance to break their addiction.

In particular Labor will promote additional capability and capacity of drug and alcohol services through the implementation of the Drugs Blueprint which will:

- Guide future investment in a more contemporary treatment system;
- Prioritise evidence-based responses to young people and families;
- Build stronger partnerships between drug treatment and other service systems, and ways to intervene earlier to help people cease or reduce their harmful drug use;
- Respond to and educate the community on newly emerging drugs of concern, and
- Improve workforce development to include Aboriginal specific services through the development and implementation of the Koori Alcohol Action Plan.



## DUAL DIAGNOSIS OF MENTAL HEALTH & DRUG ABUSE

### 3.23 Labor will improve mental health services for consumers with complex service needs and a dual diagnosis of mental health and drug abuse.

Labor will:

- Expand dual diagnosis programs, ensuring people receive both mental health and drug and alcohol interventions regardless of which service they present to;
- Ensure priority is given to homeless people with complex needs, encouraging collaboration between homeless, mental health and drug and alcohol services;
- Establish community-based residential care for consumers with high support needs;
- Improve exit pathways from clinical services by building on 24 hour psychiatric disability rehabilitation support services, and
- Improve access to mental health services for people in public housing and those with an intellectual disability experiencing a mental illness.

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

### 3.24 Labor is reforming mental health services through its landmark strategy – *Because Mental Health Matters* delivering more beds, more workers, and more services.

Under Labor, Victoria has been recognised nationally and internationally for its progressive and innovative community mental health programs. Labor will build on this record to deliver more mental health services close to where people live.

Labor will also ensure mental health services are delivered as early as possible, to promote recovery and participation in the community.

Labor will:

- Enhance mental health treatment in the community by supporting and expanding capacity for Crisis Assessment and Treatment Teams (CATT);
- Ensure services deliver models of care that maximise early intervention and prevention for all age groups with an emphasis in regard to children and young people;
- Report on performance indicators in an annual public mental health report including: access, waiting times, admissions, discharges, length of stay, community follow-up and unplanned admissions;
- Boost community mental health staff numbers and entry level training opportunities to assist in meeting demand for services;
- Support and resource the delivery of the Mental Health Major Undergraduate Training Program in universities and assist undergraduates to gain priority access to employment via mental health graduate nursing programs;
- Ensure that Victoria's mental health workforce is supported and kept at full strength through recruitment and retention strategies;
- Increase training for, and collaboration between, health workers and services including inpatient facilities, emergency services and General Practice;
- Improve mental health services in correctional facilities and the juvenile justice system;
- Expand the number of acute mental health beds, build more Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) services and Secure Extended Care Unit Beds as well as increase counselling services in community health settings;
- Provide housing and support initiatives in line with the *Because Mental Health Matters* to increase community based recovery and integration;



- Build capacity of intensive clinical case management services to work with consumers who have not been able to achieve recovery with mainstream community teams, allowing for more care to be delivered;
- Build the second level community health workforce so to allow more time for community case managers to deliver care;
- Boost community and inpatient mental health services for young people by increasing capacity in Melbourne's growing suburbs and within existing services;
- Expand community aged mental health treatment teams to provide holistic care, manage demand and create better linkages with General Practitioners and nursing homes;
- Expand services for people with complex needs, including to people who require intensive 24 hour care and long term rehabilitation;
- Support a public health system and will ensure that no privatisation or contracting out of mental health clinical treatment or disability services occurs;
- Support carers by ensuring all mental health services when providing care to consumers are required to include carer needs;
- Explore ways to streamline clinical and administrative information systems to allow psychiatric nurses, health professionals and doctors to spend more time with patients and less time completing clinical and administrative documentation, and
- Enhance timely access to acute inpatient beds via improved service coordination across health services.

## **CLIMATE ACTION & HEALTH**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON HEALTH**

#### **3.25 Labor will work with all levels of government and research institutes, nationally and internationally, to identify priorities in adaptive health responses to climate change.**

Labor is concerned about the potential impact of climate change on the health of Victorians, particularly through intense heatwaves, prolonged drought, more frequent disasters, such as bushfire, and the increased frequency of sub-tropical disease currently uncommon in Victoria.

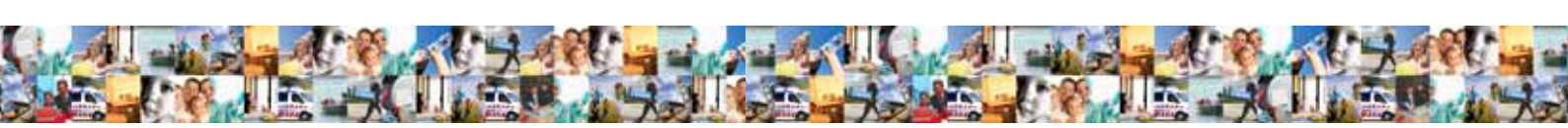
Labor will:

- Promote the use and development of advanced emergency management arrangements and response plans;
- Introduce new measures to care in heatwaves for the elderly, people with disabilities, people on lower incomes and the sick, and
- Adapt health care to the impacts of climate change through maintaining strong public health infrastructure, increasing knowledge of risk factors, and by incorporating climate change responses in existing health policies.

## **RESPONDING TO HEALTH EMERGENCIES**

#### **3.26 Labor will invest in improved management of health crises during pandemics and natural disasters to ensure the health system can cope with these events.**

Victoria's health system responded quickly and effectively to the 2009 bushfires and the outbreak of swine flu. However, more needs to be done so all sectors of Victoria's emergency services work together seamlessly and rapidly during such crises.



## **BIRTHING SERVICES**

### **3.27 Labor will provide high quality birthing services across the State based on the guiding principle that the safety and wellbeing of mothers and babies is paramount.**

Labor will:

- Provide women with increased choice and informed involvement in decisions about their care during pregnancy and birth;
- Encourage families to attend ante-natal classes and expand support programs for women with complex needs through community health centres and other settings;
- Improve the sustainability of rural maternity services through the *Rural Maternity Initiative* by tackling workforce issues;
- Adopt midwifery models of care across the health system, including the trial of publicly funded, hospital supported, home birth services, and
- Ensure all hospitals have appropriate models of care in place to care for women at risk of complications and, where necessary, refer women for care at tertiary hospitals.

## **MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH SERVICES**

### **3.28 Labor will work with local government to improve MCH services and expand the free Maternal and Child Health telephone advisory service to provide high quality maternity and family support services to new parents across the State.**

Labor will:

- Provide breastfeeding support through health services and encourage employers and unions to provide workplace based arrangements that allow mothers to express and breastfeed their babies;
- Expand post-natal domiciliary care, boost family mentor programs and make sure women receive adequate post-natal visits in their home, and
- Where a baby is born with a disability, ensure the hospital offers referrals to appropriate support services before discharge.

## **WOMEN'S HEALTH**

### **3.30 Labor will actively promote women's health - including by funding for women's health services and measuring and reporting women-specific health indicators.**

Labor will:

- Consult with women from diverse backgrounds and their families about the provision of culturally appropriate health services and resource and promote these services;
- Address the burden of disease associated with violence against women;
- Focus on the source of mental ill-health specific to women as well as treating the symptoms, and
- Encourage and support access to women doctors at emergency departments, in outpatient care out-of-hours GP services and community health centres.



## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

### 3.31 Labor believes that women should be supported in their reproductive health choices.

Labor will:

- Ensure that women are provided with real and informed sexual and reproductive health choices, including equity of access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies;
- Work with women's health and family planning services to identify and reduce the factors contributing to unwanted pregnancies;
- Provide impartial education and counselling services on pregnancy options;
- Ensure pregnancy support counselling and pregnancy loss counselling is publicly funded and freely available;
- Support women's reproductive choice and access to contraception services;
- Stop the involuntary sterilisation of women and seek alternatives to the sterilisation of women with disabilities, and
- Support women's reproductive choice through access to safe and affordable termination procedures.

## MEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

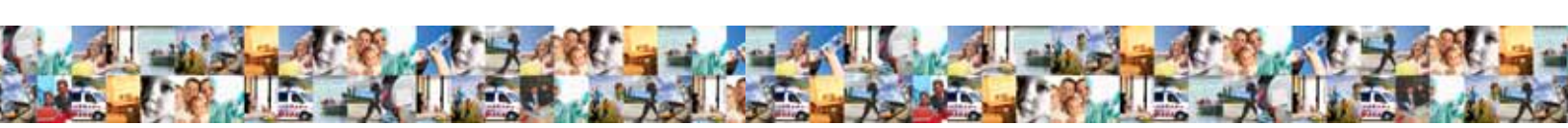
### 3.32 Labor supports a holistic, coordinated approach to improving Victorian men's health throughout their lives.

Under Labor, Victoria has been recognised nationally and internationally for its progressive and innovative community mental health programs. Labor will build on this record to deliver more mental health services close to where people live.

Labor will also ensure mental health services are delivered as early as possible, to promote recovery and participation in the community.

Labor will:

- Encourage health promotion programs on nutrition and exercise, delivered through the workplace, schools and community health services, with a particular emphasis on groups at highest risk;
- Address prostate and bowel cancer as priority areas for treatment, research and social support;
- Provide help with family, relationship and mental health issues specific to men;
- Promote healthy body image awareness among young men to address increasing use of steroids and eating disorders, and
- Develop programs designed to address accidents and suicide, and
- Support men to alter violent behaviour, and manage anger.



## HEALTH NEEDS OF SENIOR VICTORIANS

### **3.33 Labor recognises the need to plan ahead and invest in the health needs of the growing and ageing population in order that people can stay in their own home for as long as they want, with the home care support that they need.**

Labor supports the “Victorian model” where home and community care services are delivered through a partnership with Local Government.

To meet the needs of an ageing population, Labor will:

- Work with Councils and the Commonwealth to grow the Home and Community Care Program to provide more services where people live;
- Provide greater flexibility in choices of where to live and options for higher levels of care at times of poor health without going into hospital;
- Expand the Community Registers Program so older people at home can be supported – particularly at times of heatwaves, bushfires or blackouts;
- Supply Personal Alerts to provide greater security and peace of mind for seniors and members of the community living alone;
- Support the work of Men’s Sheds across Victoria, and
- Report on the well-being of Victoria’s Seniors every two years.

Labor recognises the special needs of the Aboriginal elder community and the need for culturally appropriate health care including specialised counselling services, dementia education and training.

## RURAL PROOFING HEALTH PRIORITIES

### TACKLING HEALTH ISSUES THAT ARE MORE PREVALENT IN RURAL VICTORIA

### **3.34 Labor recognises that some health issues are more prevalent in rural areas, and that rural communities should benefit from targeted health promotion programs.**

Labor will:

- Implement the strategy *Rural Directions – for a stronger healthier Victoria* to deliver high-quality and sustainable rural health care;
- Deliver health promotion strategies to address the inequity of health status among Victorians in rural and regional areas particularly relating to asthma, cardio-vascular disease, farm accidents, road trauma, suicide, depression and other mental illnesses;
- Expand drug and alcohol services in rural and regional areas to ensure access to the full range of harm minimisation, treatment and rehabilitation services, and
- Support communities affected by disasters, such as the 2009 bushfires with psychological and emotional support services.



## **HEALTH IN CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) COMMUNITIES**

### **3.35 Labor will improve access for Victoria's CALD communities to culturally appropriate and sensitive health and community services.**

Labor will:

- Encourage hospitals to incorporate cultural competency training and for all health workers to undertake this training;
- Promote the employment of bilingual staff in public health services;
- Provide fair and equitable access to community services for CALD communities, and
- Provide CALD communities with access to culturally appropriate mental health services and female specific services for sexual assault and family violence.

## **MENTAL HEALTH & NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS**

### **3.36 Labor will address the emerging mental health issues faced by newly arrived CALD communities – particularly those arriving as refugees and students without family support.**

Labor will:

- Ensure relevant mental health services address depression, loneliness and isolation of CALD people;
- Provide trauma counselling services for survivors of torture, war and civil unrest, and
- Identify what else needs to be done to address mental health issues facing newly arrived CALD communities.

## **ABORIGINAL HEALTH - CLOSING THE GAP**

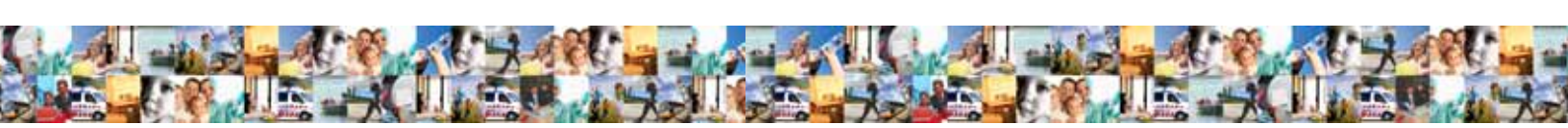
### **3.37 Labor is committed to Closing the Gap by providing better health outcomes for Aboriginal people.**

The poor health outcomes for Aboriginal people compared to non-Aboriginal is unacceptable.

Labor will:

- Increase Aboriginal community participation in the development of health policy and service delivery and build the capacity of Aboriginal communities to manage and drive change;
- Develop cultural protocols in consultation with Aboriginal communities to make the health system more accessible and responsive to the needs to Aboriginal Victorians;
- Support training and recruitment schemes for Aboriginal health workers;
- Improve access to maternal child health services to promote the health of Aboriginal mothers and their children;
- Work with Aboriginal organisations and mainstream providers to improve access to mental health and drug and alcohol services, and
- Recognise Aboriginal medicinal methods in medical centres in local regions.

*See also other policies on Aboriginal Victorians in Chapter 6*



## **LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER HEALTH**

### **3.38 Labor will promote equitable access and implement programs recognising the specific health needs of Victoria's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.**

Labor will:

- Provide training for health care workers and promote awareness about issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and research about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues;
- Support programs aimed at combating homophobia, preventing youth suicide and drug use, improving mental health, promoting positive ageing and supporting parents and families of gay and lesbian people;
- Include in aged care planning issues relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex and transgender communities;
- Provide a voice in policy development through the GLBTI Ministerial Advisory Committee, and
- Provide for the needs of young gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex or transgender Victorians, particularly in rural areas.

## **ACCESS TO THE LATEST TREATMENTS**

### **APPLICATION OF MEDICAL RESEARCH**

### **3.39 Labor will support the collaboration of public hospitals, research institutes, health services and universities to translate medical research into new treatments and improved clinical outcomes.**

Labor will:

- Increase investment in medical research through new infrastructure and by creating opportunities for scientists and the medical workforce to take part in leading research;
- Support the Victorian Cancer Agency and its efforts to coordinate cancer research and translate this into clinical care, and
- Invest in coordinated national and international research efforts.

### **BIOTECHNOLOGY**

### **3.40 Labor strongly supports medical and biotechnology research and will build our capacity to commercialise research outcomes.**

Biotechnology has the potential to provide major advances in treatment for chronic diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes, and to develop vaccines for malaria and AIDS. Labor will ensure that all research is conducted in line with the Statement of Ethical Principles for Biotechnology in Victoria.

While embracing the benefits of biotechnology, particularly in the medical field, Labor is mindful of the need to proceed cautiously. As with any new technology, the potential social, environmental and economic impacts must be carefully assessed. Labor expects that these new technologies are used appropriately, carefully and subject to comprehensive regulatory arrangements.



## MEDICAL TREATMENT

### 3.41 Labor will support a person's choice and method of treatment for themselves.

In an extension of the existing operation of the *Medical Treatment Act*, Labor supports introducing statutory recognition so competent Victorians can use an Advance Healthcare Directive to refuse or request treatment for a future condition. These arrangements should be subject to appropriate checks and balances, including regular reviews and validation every twelve months.

To provide assistance to those approaching death, Labor will:

- Support campaigns to improve knowledge of the operation of the Medical Treatment Act;
- Expand palliative care services across the State, including access to palliative care in rural communities, for children with life threatening conditions and culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal people, and
- Ensure that Victorians have the right to a say, directly or indirectly, in every decision that affects their lives.

Labor will promote the *Respecting Patient Choices* program, to help people understand their treatment options and help them, their families, doctors and other health professionals discuss their preferences about future health care, which may include end of life care.

(\* Note: this matter will remain the subject of a conscience vote for all Members of Parliament.)