



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

Opening of Parliament 20 December 2022

Introduction

Honourable President and Members of the Legislative Council

Honourable Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

Following the results of the general election on 26 November, I commissioned the Leader of the Victorian Labor Party, Mr Daniel Andrews, to form a government.

Accordingly, I have called you together on this day, the first session of the 60th Parliament, to outline the policy agenda and legislative intentions of the Government in its third term.

Summary

The Government has spent the last four years building the hospitals, schools and roads that Victorians need and removing level crossings as part of the Big Build. The Government has introduced free TAFE courses, invested in renewable energy, created thousands of well-paid jobs and made wage theft and workplace manslaughter a criminal offence to ensure workers' rights are protected.

In its third term, the Government will continue to do what matters to create a stronger Victoria.

The Government will deliver on improving hospitals, building new facilities and training thousands of nurses and paramedics to make sure Victorians get the best care. Kinder will be free, saving Victorian families money and time, and bringing back the State Electricity Commission will create new jobs and secure Victoria's renewable energy future.

Over the next four years, the Government will focus on energy, health, education, transport and jobs.

Energy

Bringing back the SEC

Bringing back the State Electricity Commission will deliver government ownership of energy generation and create thousands of jobs building new renewables like wind, solar and batteries.

The Government will step up renewable electricity targets to 95 per cent by 2035, with emissions reduction targets of 75-80 per cent by 2035 and net zero emissions by 2045. One hundred neighbourhood batteries will also be installed across Victoria to create localised energy storage.

The Government will seek to own a majority of new energy generation projects built by the SEC, ensuring that profits will go back into helping to keep bills down for Victorians.

The Government will invest at least \$20 million to prepare the SEC for its new role in our energy market, including setting up an office in Morwell.

\$6 million will be invested to create a purpose-built training centre for workers in our emerging offshore, and growing onshore, wind industry.

By building a government-owned energy company, the Government will support 59,000 jobs through to 2035, at least 6,000 apprenticeships and traineeships, and will put power back in the hands of Victorians.

Health

The Government understands that there's nothing more important than getting the very best care, close to home.

Investing in our healthcare system

The Government will fund a number of large-scale hospital projects across Victoria, which represents a significant increase in the size of the current health infrastructure delivery program.

This includes delivering the biggest hospital infrastructure project in Australia's history by building new Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's Hospitals alongside Metro Tunnel's new Arden Station, to give patients across Victoria access to the very best of care.

From 2025, both the Parkville and Arden medical precincts will have brand-new train stations and be linked, making it a two-minute trip between hospital campuses, and connecting them to the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton.

Once completed, the project will deliver an increased capacity of 10,500 elective surgeries per year, 1,000 patients receiving critical care per year, 2,500 births per year and 66,000 additional emergency department presentations per year.

Additionally, other new hospitals and upgrades to existing hospitals will include a new Queen Elizabeth II hospital in Melbourne's East, a new West Gippsland Hospital and upgrades to Wonthaggi Hospital, Austin Hospital, Dandenong Hospital, Northern Hospital and a bigger and better Monash Medical Centre.

Investing in Women's Health

The Government will continue its focus on women's health by delivering its \$71 million package to create 20 new women's health clinics at public hospitals, a new state-wide service and more sexual and reproductive health hubs across Victoria. The Government will also work with Aboriginal health organisations to deliver the first ever dedicated Aboriginal-led women's health clinic.

Delivering new women's health clinics will completely change the way women's health issues are treated in Victoria and will provide comprehensive care for Victorians experiencing conditions like endometriosis, pelvic pain, polycystic ovary syndrome, and perimenopause and menopause.

In response to women feeling ignored, dismissed and often undiagnosed, the Government will invest \$64.8 million to double the number of endometriosis and associated condition surgeries, delivering an estimated extra 10,800 laparoscopies over the next four years.

With an aim to find solutions, the Government will establish an Inquiry into Women's Pain Management, chaired by a panel of experts who will hear directly from women about their experience accessing treatment.

The Government will also invest \$5 million into women's health medical research to ensure better treatment and pain management for diseases that specifically impact women.

The Government will expand its network of sexual and reproductive health hubs, providing \$6.4 million to establish an additional nine locations across the State, and ensuring that women have access to services and advice on contraception, pregnancy and sexual health.

The Government will establish a mobile Women's Health Clinic to visit remote parts of the State to ensure all Victorian women have access to the care they need and will provide \$20,000 scholarships for 100 additional women's healthcare specialists to increase the State's network of specialist healthcare workers.

To ensure that lessons learned at the new Women's Health Clinics can inform the Inquiry and be used to improve patient care, \$4 million will be put into research support services, and \$2 million will be invested to establish support groups and mental health programs for women tackling challenging health issues like endometriosis.

Improving access to fertility services

The Government will continue to ensure that IVF is accessible to all and will invest an additional \$13.6 million into Australia's first public IVF service, to help further expand access for women and families. The Government will also ensure more availability and access to fertility services for Victorians living in regional areas, by establishing satellite services in Bendigo, Mildura, Shepparton, Geelong, Ballarat and Warrnambool. Satellite services will also be established in Epping, Sunshine and Heidelberg.

Once fully operational, this investment in free IVF will mean up to 5,000 people each year will have access to the services, saving up to \$10,000 for eligible Victorians.

Creating more paramedic positions

To ensure that sick and injured Victorians can receive the treatment they need when they need it, the Government, in an Australian-first, will create the new position of Paramedic Practitioner.

Paramedic Practitioners will receive advanced clinical training to ensure they are able to assess, diagnose and provide urgent care to patients in the field and make clinical decisions, taking pressure off our busy emergency departments by eliminating the need for a trip to the hospital.

The Government will invest \$20 million to establish the role of Paramedic Practitioner, with an agreed model of care that can strengthen the ambulance service while reducing pressure on the hospital system. Paramedic Practitioners will be rolled out in rural and regional areas first, and there will be at least 25 Paramedic Practitioners trained for free through government-provided scholarships and on the road by 2026.

The Government will also fund an additional 40 MICA paramedics. Having more of these highly skilled crews on the road will ensure patients are getting the best care in the most urgent circumstances.

The Government will also establish an Australian-first Centre for Paramedicine in partnership with Victoria University. The centre will focus on training the next generation of ambulance paramedics, providing advanced teaching methods – with the capacity to train around 1,500 paramedic students each year.

And to assess whether outsourcing remains the most effective model to deliver non-urgent transport, the Government will review the existing procurement arrangements for patient transport ambulances.

Education

The Government knows that education changes lives.

In its third term, the Government will continue its investment in kindergartens, local schools and specialist schools to ensure that all Victorians have access to quality education.

Free kinder and more childcare centres

To deliver greater access to kindergartens and give kids the best start in life, the Government will make three and four-year-old kinder free, saving families up to \$2,500 per child, per year.

The Government will build and expand around 180 government-owned kinders so it's easier to find a place, ensuring that families will have more choice in finding a kinder closer to home.

The Government will continue to support working families by opening 50 new government-owned and run childcare centres in the communities that need them most, building them near schools where possible to avoid the double drop-off for busy parents.

Upgrading local schools

The Government knows the importance of access to great local schools, which is why they will build and upgrade schools right across the State.

The Government will continue its delivery of good-quality schools by building and opening 100 brand-new schools to ensure that all families have access to a great school in their area.

Improving specialist schools

To support families of kids with disability, the Government will deliver a \$207 million package to transform specialist schools through upgrades and more support for students in the classroom.

The Government will also extend outside-hours care to every specialist school in the State with the next 25 rolling out from 2024 and will create onsite space for allied health appointments to better support families.

NDIS Navigators will be introduced in all 89 Victorian specialist schools, employed by the Government but working for families to help them navigate the NDIS system.

The Government's expansive package will also include:

- \$8.1 million for more extracurricular activities for specialist schools
- \$11.3 million to deliver scholarships to attract more speech pathologists and occupational therapists to regional areas
- \$2 million for professional development for health care workers, including how to communicate with people with autism
- \$8.2 million for TAFE transition officers to support students with a disability
- \$25 million to build aqua-therapy pools at specialist schools
- Establishing a Premier's Advisory Committee
- \$100,000 for specialist schools to apply for access to Proloquo2Go, an app for those who are non-verbal
- \$5 million to train more therapy animals.

The Government will abolish the age threshold for a "proof of age" card so that parents of non-verbal children, or children with an intellectual disability who wish for them to carry ID, can do so.

The Government will also undertake a review of current eligibility processes for specialist schools, including current cognitive thresholds, so that more families can choose the school that best suits their needs.

Transport

The Government is continuing the infrastructure Big Build, including removing level crossings, completing the Metro Tunnel, building the Suburban Rail Loop and capping V/Line fares at metro prices so that Victorians can get home sooner and safer.

Removal of more level crossings

Reducing congestion and improving travel for all Victorians, whilst creating thousands of jobs, is critical, which is why the Government will have removed 110 level crossings by 2030.

Completing the Metro Tunnel

The Government continues work on the Metro Tunnel, which will enable more trains to run, more often. Tunnelling is now finished, and five underground stations are taking shape beneath our city. These new stations will change the face of travel in Melbourne, and when Airport Rail is complete, trains in the Metro Tunnel will take Victorians to the airport in just 30 minutes.

Building the Suburban Rail Loop

The Suburban Rail Loop will change transport within Victoria. The loop will connect rail lines and make it easier for many Victorians to get to work, university, TAFE, hospitals and the airport. Regional Victorians will also benefit by no longer having to change at Southern Cross Station, so they'll get to where they're going faster.

This is a big project that will create thousands of jobs.

More V/Line services, more often

In response to increasing financial pressures on Victorians, the Government will cap regional public transport fares, making it easier for families and commuters in regional Victoria to get around by train and bus.

Capping regional prices will deliver savings to passengers, with daily peak fares from Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat all reduced to the daily metro rate.

The Government will also add almost 200 weekend services on regional lines around Victoria and will build another 23 VLocity 3 car sets to replace older trains so that there are enough trains to run these additional services.

Jobs

The Government believes that every Victorian deserves a good, stable job with a decent wage. To help put Victorian workers and Victorian jobs first, the Government is extending Free TAFE, making studying nursing and midwifery free and delivering the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Extending Free TAFE

To support the further education of Victorian workers, the Government will expand eligibility for Free TAFE, so that all Victorians can study for in-demand jobs like healthcare, mental health, construction, early childhood and hospitality.

The Government will change the once-in-a-lifetime limit so Victorians can take multiple Free TAFE courses when they are continuing select training pathways and will build and upgrade TAFE campuses across the State so that Victorians can continue to study in quality facilities. Investment from the Clean Energy TAFE Fund will support a number of TAFEs with a range of initiatives focused on renewable energy jobs.

And the Government will legislate to ensure that TAFE funding is protected. Free TAFE is helping Victorians train for their future.

Making nursing free

To help train the next generation of healthcare workers, the Government will make studying nursing and midwifery free.

More than 10,000 students will have the cost of their nursing or midwifery undergraduate studies paid for, while scholarships will be available for thousands more who complete postgraduate studies in areas of need including intensive care, cancer care, paediatrics and nurse practitioner specialities.

The Government will provide \$20 million to support the growing number of graduate and postgraduates as they transition to working in our hospitals, ensuring they have access to the clinical educators, preceptors and study time they need.

The Government will also provide a \$5,000 sign-on bonus for nurses who graduate in the next three years - rewarding those who choose to take up careers in Victoria's public health system.

Commonwealth Games

Victoria will host the Commonwealth Games across regional Victoria in March 2026.

The Games will bring together athletes, communities, cultures and businesses in an exciting program of events expected to support more than 7,500 Victorian jobs, with the majority in regional Victoria.

As part of delivering the games, the state will invest in new and upgraded infrastructure that will provide both a first-class games experience and improved facilities for Victorians into the future.

More social and affordable housing will also be created as part of the athletes' villages that will be constructed as part of the games, supporting more Victorians to have a place to call home.

Closing

Honourable Members, I have outlined for you the Government's program for this Parliament. It is a positive plan that demonstrates the Government's commitment to creating a stronger Victoria.

This Parliament is diverse and offers a range of different perspectives, which is critical for the functioning of democracy.

I trust that you will work together and serve the people of Victoria with integrity and conviction.

It is now my pleasure to wish you well and declare open the 60th of Parliament of Victoria.