



**IPC Health Media Release
13 February 2023**

COMMUNITY HEALTH FIRST CAMPAIGN CALLS ON ANDREWS LABOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT

IPC Health joins all 23 registered independent community health services across Victoria in calling on the Andrews Labor Government to put community health first. The **Community Health First** campaign calls on key decision makers to recognise the critical role of Victoria's community health services in addressing the overwhelming demand facing our healthcare system.

IPC Health CEO, Jayne Nelson said that community health services worked directly with their communities to keep them healthy and safe.

"We want to make sure we keep people out of hospital by providing access to quality healthcare to everyone in every community. Your first interaction with our healthcare system should be in your local community, not an emergency room, that's why we have joined the campaign to put Community Health First."

Ms Nelson: "The Community Health First campaign is calling on the Andrews Government to urgently fund community health services throughout metropolitan, rural and regional Victoria."

"We commend the Government on their commitment to building new and improved hospitals, however opportunities are being overlooked to invest in prevention, early intervention and primary care in people's own communities. Without adequate investment in community health Victorians are being robbed of the opportunity to receive quality care that is focused on keeping communities healthy and out of emergency departments, said the CEO."

"Our health system is facing sustained pressure like never before. It is critical that the Government ensures community health services are properly resourced as core partners in the health system, rather than as an afterthought, continued Ms Nelson."

The Victorian Government continually looks towards community health as partners to support Victorian communities in times of crisis – whether that be the pandemic, bushfires or floods – and the health system crisis we are currently facing should be no different.

Through our work as the lead agency for the C-19 Network pandemic response, IPC Health has enjoyed working closely with the Andrews Labor Government, but while Government seeks solutions to alleviate the current health system crisis, we hold the answers within our services. Our strong connections to local communities built across 50 years of operation and our ability to reach those who need world-class healthcare the most make us a pivotal component in addressing the sustained pressure being felt by our health system.

The Community Health First campaign asks government decision makers to acknowledge the central role registered independent community health services play in the wider Victorian health system and prevent further avoidable presentations in our overstretched emergency departments by implementing the following measures:

1. In recognition of the lack of core funding increase over the last 10 years, **increase core funding to registered independent community health services by at least 20%** to meet population growth over the past decade and help ensure ongoing delivery of critical services



- and health promotion work, with a commitment to annual indexation of funding aligned to inflation,
2. Cement registered independent community health services as the **partner of choice** for the State Government for any primary care and community-based health initiatives,
 3. Immediately **prioritise fair and sustainable investment** in community health infrastructure and workforce development, including identification of critical areas of need and inclusion in system-wide forward planning; and
 4. Work with the Federal Government to **recognise registered community health services in the National Health Agreement**, so that State Government funding for community health is matched by Federal investment as it is for hospital funding.

All 24 registered independent community health services from across Victoria look forward to working in partnership with the Andrews Labor Government to strengthen local primary healthcare services, address health issues before they worsen, and keep all Victorians safe and healthy in their local communities.

Background

Victoria's 24 registered independent community health services operate across metropolitan, rural and regional Victoria, reaching hundreds of thousands of Victorians each year and employing well over 10,000 staff living and working in their local communities across the state.

Community health services provide a range of services including health promotion activity, chronic illness and disease prevention and treatment, mental health services, oral health, allied health, general practice and community outreach.

Throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Victoria's community health services were central to vaccination efforts, community education and outreach to vulnerable cohorts.

Community health services specialise in working with communities and people who face the greatest barriers to good health and wellbeing, such as people experiencing homelessness, people living with disability and experiences of mental ill-health, First Nations people, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, refugees and asylum seeker communities, and people who use alcohol and other drugs.

In 2023, Victoria's community health services are celebrating 50 years of operation and IPC Health will also be celebrating 25 years since incorporation. In 2024, IPC Health will be celebrating 50 years since our first entity officially opened, the Deer Park Community Health Services Society on 14 December 1974.