

PAEC Inquiry into the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Financial and Performance Outcomes

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Financial and Performance Outcomes

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Department of Health**

**Friday 24 November 2023**

**Witnesses**

Professor Euan Wallace

Professor Zoe Wainer

Ms Katherine Whetton

Ms Jodie Geissler

Mr Chris Hotham

Mr Daen Dorazio

Ms Jane Miller (additional witness)

**Legend**

All questions are in **red text**.

The context, as per the Unverified Transcript, is in **black text**.

All questions that were addressed later in the course of the hearing are identified in **blue text**.

## PAEC Inquiry into the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Financial and Performance Outcomes

### QUESTION 1

- 1a. Do you have data on how many nurses left the Victorian public health system and retired in 2022? Response provided during the hearing (p. 9) – see below
- 1b. Likewise, I am interested – and it goes to the Secretary's point – in how many nurses have reduced their hours from full time to part time. (data not available – please confirm)
- 1c. For that total FTE and the data that Ms Geissler is getting, could we provide a breakdown for metro and rural and regional areas if that is possible? Response provided during the hearing (p. 24) – see below

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 5

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Danny O'Brien

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Indeed. Moving on, these are broad questions, not just about the recruitment from overseas. Do you have data on how many nurses left the Victorian public health system and retired in 2022?

**Euan WALLACE:** We have got overall rates. Pre pandemic we had recruitment rates – exit and replacement rates – of about 7 to 8 per cent across the industry. Post pandemic, if there is such a thing as post pandemic – so in the year 2022, let us call that peri pandemic – that increased to about 12 to 13 per cent.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Of retirements?

**Euan WALLACE:** Over that calendar year. We have about 40,000, 50,000 nurses in the public system, so that gives you a sense. There are about 5000, 5500 needing to be recruited over a calendar year whereas historically it had been in the region of 3000, 3500. Again, one of the focuses I commented on in my introductory comments – one of the focuses of our workforce strategy – is about improving retention. We are already seeing some innovative models of that. If I look to, for example, the virtual ED run out of Northern Hospital in Epping, the retention of their ED nursing staff at Northern is better than average for the state. There are complex reasons for that, but I think one of the contributors will be that they have been able to offer their ED staff a day or a couple of days in the virtual environment as well as three days in the physical environment.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Sorry, Secretary, I am conscious of my time. Did you have an actual figure, Ms Geissler?

**Jodie GEISLER:** They are coming through.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** They are coming through. Likewise, I am interested – and it goes to the Secretary's point – in how many nurses have reduced their hours from full time to part time. Do you have that sort of data?

**Euan WALLACE:** We do not hold that data. Obviously those data are held – remember that the employers are the individual health services. Data of fractional appointments and changes in fractional appointments are not held centrally by the department. We do hold total FTE data.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. For that total FTE and the data that Ms Geissler is getting, could we provide a breakdown for metro and rural and regional areas if that is possible? That would be great.

Response provided during the hearing (p. 24)

**Euan WALLACE:** Thanks, Chair. We do have answers to the questions that Mr O'Brien asked us earlier. If it pleases the committee, we can share those.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Jodie GEISLER:** So you asked how many nurses retired in financial year 2022–23 and for a breakdown of how many were rural and regional. Whilst we do not have oversight of the reasons behind staff movements, in the 2022 calendar year 9,520 nurses left the profession –

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Sorry, 9,000 –

**Jodie GEISLER:** 9,520, of which 1174 were aged 65 or over and were likely retiring.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Yes.

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**Jodie GEISSLER:** In 2021, 7,067 nurses left, including 1,084 aged 65 and over. In terms of rural and regional breakdown, in 2022 the total, as I said, was 9,520 and 3,115 of those were regional. In 2021 – of the total 7067 – 2357 were regional.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** 2357.

**Jodie GEISSLER:** That is correct.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Thank you very much.

### RESPONSE

No further response required.

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### QUESTION 2

2a. Are you able to provide how many undergraduate nursing students there were in Victoria for the two years in question and what is expected for this year, if you have got it? Response provided during the hearing (p. 24) – see below

2b. Do you also have attrition rates of student nurses for the two years? (data not available)

2c. Can I ask how many compliance checks there are for undergraduate nurses – how many they are required to undertake as part of their training? Response provided during the hearing (p. 25) – see below

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 6

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Danny O'Brien

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. Some more data questions: are you able to provide how many undergraduate nursing students there were in Victoria for the two years in question and what is expected for this year, if you have got it?

**Euan WALLACE:** Again I do not have those to hand. Obviously they are held by our tertiary providers, but we will provide what we can.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. Do you also have attrition rates of student nurses for the two years?

**Euan WALLACE:** During their undergraduate training?

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Yes.

**Euan WALLACE:** I am not sure we will have those data actually.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. If you can check, that would be good.

**Euan WALLACE:** So obviously we have graduation data from our nursing and midwifery schools.

Response provided during the hearing (p. 24)

**Jodie GEISLER:** The second question you asked was: how many undergrad nursing students did we have in financial year 2022 and financial year 2023? In 2021 Victoria had 16,675 undergraduate student nurses. While we do not receive, as the department, student outcome data, based on historical student numbers and AHPRA registration rates it is projected that on average approximately 17 per cent of nursing students withdraw from their course. In terms of a breakdown of the nursing workforce across metropolitan and regional locations, let us start with metropolitan in 2021 – 75,352. 30,664 of those were regional, rural. In 2022 there were 76,617 metropolitan in total, and rural was 31,299.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Can I ask how many compliance checks there are for undergraduate nurses – how many they are required to undertake as part of their training?

**Euan WALLACE:** What do you mean by compliance checks?

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Well, things like working with children checks and that sort of stuff that forms a compliance check.

Response provided during the hearing (p. 25)

**Jodie GEISLER:** Yes. In terms of compliance checks, we do not subsidise checks, but we are funding the 'making it free' initiative, which provides scholarships for undergraduate nurses and midwives, which reduces financial disincentives. Safer Care Victoria is working on a central portal over the next two years to improve the efficiencies and minimise the financial burden on individual nurses and midwives who need to provide that sort of information.

**RESPONSE:** No further response is required.

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**QUESTION 3**

How many people were removed from the waiting list because they died?

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 16

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Danny O'Brien

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Ideally for the reporting period, the last two financial years – how many people were removed from the waiting list because they died?

**Jodie GEISLER:** I guess the first thing we have got to say about that is that figures cannot be taken as an indication that a patient's wait for planned surgery resulted in their death.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** No, no. I am not suggesting it was.

**Jodie GEISLER:** That is right.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Naturally people who are sick are going to die from time to time.

**Jodie GEISLER:** Yes, but it is an important clarification because it might be misconstrued. In 2022–23, 1,395 people are recorded as being removed from the waiting list by reason of death. In the most recent quarter this number was 351.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Sorry, 3 –

**Jodie GEISLER:** 351.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** As in, to now, effectively?

**Jodie GEISLER:** Yes, the most recent quarter.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Have you got 2021–22?

**Jodie GEISLER:** I do not, not on me today.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Could you provide that on notice perhaps? Thank you.

**RESPONSE -**

**Answer:** In 2021-22, of the 173,762 total patients removed from the planned surgery waiting list, 1,396 (0.8%) were removed due to death. The death of a patient on a planned surgery waiting list is not an indication that a delay in treatment was a contributing factor in their death. These patients include people who have passed away from unrelated illness, road trauma, old age or for other reasons. All deaths that are identified as potentially being preventable are assessed on a case-by-case basis and referred to Safer Care Victoria as part of the Sentinel event program. A review of the sentinel events notifications to SCV for 2021-22 did not reveal any events that related to a patient's death while on the planned surgery wait list.

**Source:**

Elective Surgery Information System (ESIS)

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### QUESTION 4

- 4a. Can you give me an update as to how many schools have been visited [by Smile Squad] now?
- 4b. How many have we got of those 300? Response provided during the hearing (pp. 26-27) – shift in issue from number of schools visited to number of treatment/examinations – not relevant to 8a and 8b
- 4c. Number of treatment/examinations over specific years – 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- 4d. What are we up to in total [given the statement that free dental treatment would be provided to 200,000 students]?

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, pp. 17-19

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Danny O'Brien and Mr Nick McGowan

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Yes, of course. At the hearings in June the minister said at the end of this year every government school will have received a visit from Smile Squad. I think we are a fair way off. Can you give me an update as to how many schools have been visited now?

**Jodie GEISSLER:** We are not actually too far off. The number of students examined by Smile Squad – let us just start with the number of students, because the performance metrics there are quite staggering. We have far exceeded the target, as has the number of students receiving treatment by Smile Squad, which builds on your previous question about them going on to get specialist care. 31,844 students were examined by Smile Squad against a target of 10,000. The target for the number of schools visited, as you say, in 2022–23 was 200; 177 schools were visited. The reason for that is –

**Danny O'BRIEN:** 177 have been done?

**Jodie GEISSLER:** Yes. The reason for this included clinical workforce shortages, which I will talk about in a second, but also schools prioritising resumption of learning in the classroom. You can understand there is a lot of activity in our schools. But in terms of workforce and how we are ensuring we have the necessary pipeline so that we can keep going out to schools – as many as possible – the 2022–23 budget provided \$3 million to recruit 100 new dental assistants. That is forward planning to ensure that more schools can be visited.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** How many have we got of those 300?

**Jodie GEISSLER:** I will have to get back to you.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Thank you – if you could take that on notice. Of the 177, are you projecting you will get to 200? You have about four weeks to go.

Response provided during the hearing (pp. 26-27)

In terms of schools visited by Smile Squad –

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Righto. Keep going.

**Jodie GEISSLER:** the number of students who received treatment in the calendar year 2021 was 11,244 and in calendar year 2022 it was 31,844, and results are reported by calendar year to reflect the school year.

And then finally you asked about additional specialist services and what has been established in terms of children receiving dental care. The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne has been established as a primary specialised hub, with new regional services being established in Bendigo, Latrobe and Barwon – plus six additional satellite clinics operated by private dental specialists.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** Okay. Thank you very much. Excellent.

**Nick McGOWAN:** Just on that figure there you gave for the treatment – 31,834, was it?

**Jodie GEISSLER:** Yes. Sorry, my computer has just frozen.

**Nick McGOWAN:** For 2022?

**Jodie GEISSLER:** Yes, I think so, yes.

**Nick McGOWAN:** Because that is very similar to the examined, is that correct?

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**Jodie GEISLER:** Yes.

**Nick McGOWAN:** Because the examined was 31,844. It sounds like it is the same thing. It is a large number –

**Jodie GEISLER:** It sounds like the same thing, yes. (p. 26)

**Nick McGOWAN:** It does. It sounds a large number to have treated and examined – that does not seem to be plausible.

**Jodie GEISLER:** I am sorry, my computer has frozen, so it is going to be hard to pull up.

**Nick McGOWAN:** I thought the number of treated was in the order of 10,000 – or 7,000 I think it was.

**Euan WALLACE:** Well, in the financial year 2022–23 treatment was 7,759 I think; and examined, 31,844.

**Nick McGOWAN:** So that figure we have just received would not be correct, then, in terms of treated?

**Euan WALLACE:** It is probably –

**Nick McGOWAN:** Examined.

**Euan WALLACE:** Yes, it is the same. It is probably the definition of ‘treatment’ as an examination of treatment.

**Nick McGOWAN:** If you could just come back to us on that.

**Jodie GEISLER:** We can, and it might also come down to the calendar years – apologies. We will come back, yes.

**Nick McGOWAN:** But even calendar years – financial years – still would not tally, I would not have thought. But if you could come back to us, that would be great.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** In 2021 the government said that free dental treatment would be provided to 200,000 students. What are we up to in total? You mentioned 31,000 this year.

**Jodie GEISLER:** Yes, against a target of 10,000.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** That is 2022–23?

**Jodie GEISLER:** That is correct.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** What was 2021–22?

**Euan WALLACE:** The numbers were not collected then.

**Jodie GEISLER:** Yes, that was not a BP3 measure in the previous year.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** The numbers were not collected?

**Euan WALLACE:** It was not a BP3 measure.

**Danny O’BRIEN:** Okay. That is important to the committee, but when the minister says 200,000 surely we know how many actually got treated.

**Euan WALLACE:** Well, over the life of the program, so again –

**Danny O’BRIEN:** That is what I am asking.

**Euan WALLACE:** Yes. We will see if we have got numbers for 2021–22.

**RESPONSE**

**Answer:**

In 2021, 10,683 students received a dental examination and 3,233 students received at least one treatment service.

**Source:**

Victorian Dental Health Services

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**QUESTION 5**

Just to follow you up too on the sentinel matters, can you tell us how many of those related to children?

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, pp. 28-29

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Nick McGowan

**Nick McGOWAN:** Okay, thank you. Jodie, just to follow you up too on the sentinel matters, can you tell us how many of those related to children? That is, those under 18 years of age.

**Euan WALLACE:** This is sentinel events to do with the total sentinel event program?

**Nick McGOWAN:** Both the total sentinel program but also those who were waiting on a waiting list, so those two figures. I understand you might need to take that on notice.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** You said before there were 10 in each of the –

**Euan WALLACE:** Those were AV sentinel events. Remember we talked about 10 in 2021–22 and 2022–23? Those were 10 Ambulance Victoria sentinel events.

**RESPONSE**

**Answer:**

- Sentinel event data are currently publicly available up until 30 June 2022.
- In 2020/21 20 of the 168 sentinel events notified impacted children (consumers aged <19 years, 12% of sentinel events)
- In 2021/22 38 of the 240 sentinel events notified impacted children (16% of sentinel events)

**Source:**

Sentinel Events Annual Report 2020-21  
Sentinel Events Annual Report 2021-22

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### QUESTION 6

6a. Secretary, are you able to provide the number of patients presenting to EDs requiring mental health inpatient beds and waiting for more than 4 hours, 24 hours and 48 hours respectively?

6b. Could you do that by location over the past five years?

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 32

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Nick McGowan

**Nick McGOWAN:** Secretary, are you able to provide the number of patients presenting to EDs requiring mental health inpatient beds and waiting for more than 4 hours, 24 hours and 48 hours respectively?

**Euan WALLACE:** Yes, we are able to provide the –

**Nick McGOWAN:** And could you do that by location over the past five years? Is that possible?

**Euan WALLACE:** By all of our hospitals?

**Nick McGOWAN:** Sure.

**Euan WALLACE:** Yes, if we have got those data, we can provide them.

### RESPONSE

**Answer:** The Department of Health collects data on the counts of presentations to emergency departments (EDs) (rather than the number of patients presenting to EDs requiring mental health inpatient beds, as specified in the question). Data presented is grouped into two tables – services based in metropolitan locations, and services in rural locations.

When interpreting the data below, please note that suppression rules have been applied where counts of presentations are between one and four (<5). Further, those that presented in the 'More than 24' and 'More than 48' hour brackets are included in the previous bracket's data.

**Table 1: Number of mental health-related Metro emergency department presentations that departed into a Mental Health Bed by wait time.**

Emergency Department	More than 4 hours					More than 24 Hours					More than 48 Hours				
	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Alfred	333	315	312	520	507	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Angliss	93	84	73	68	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ARMC Austin	314	378	370	286	258	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Box Hill	311	400	492	553	818	0	0	0	<5	54	0	0	0	0	<5
Casey Hospital	1,025	520	121	156	174	81	59	6	22	50	13	10	<5	<5	15
Dandenong	690	583	570	548	603	58	31	13	54	132	17	5	<5	8	24
Footscray	322	306	279	339	332	26	8	17	47	162	<5	<5	<5	9	58
Frankston	697	660	529	647	502	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0
Maroondah	651	786	903	851	1,012	0	0	0	<5	46	0	0	0	0	<5
Mercy Hosp Women	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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<b>Mercy Werribee</b>	527	520	564	570	588	47	7	25	51	176	<5	0	<5	11	42
<b>MMC Clayton</b>	763	543	420	427	352	84	43	18	42	98	19	13	0	7	24
<b>Northern</b>	1,264	1,365	1,094	1,384	1,311	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>RCH</b>	54	71	48	40	131	0	0	0	<5	6	0	0	0	0	<5
<b>RMH</b>	464	172	137	138	122	0	0	<5	18	56	0	0	0	<5	28
<b>Rosebud</b>	8	7	5	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Royal Women's</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>RVEEH</b>	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sandringham</b>	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>St Vincent's</b>	269	265	231	164	69	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sunshine</b>	853	994	1,036	908	269	25	197	314	246	107	<5	33	41	28	30
<b>Victorian Heart Hospital</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Williamstown</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 2: Number of mental health-related rural emergency department presentations that departed into a Mental Health Bed by wait time.**

Emergency Department	More than 4 hours					More than 24 Hours					More than 48 Hours				
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>Bairnsdale</b>	76	80	107	91	110	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Ballarat Base</b>	189	151	225	204	260	<5	<5	<5	6	19	0	0	0	0	<5
<b>Bendigo</b>	306	267	208	269	243	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Echuca</b>	26	24	20	25	37	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Geelong</b>	310	280	314	283	297	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Hamilton</b>	15	18	18	28	15	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Horsham</b>	44	33	47	36	26	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Latrobe Regional</b>	236	186	502	532	745	0	0	0	<5	115	0	0	0	0	35
<b>Mildura</b>	67	62	61	90	83	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sale</b>	57	60	66	58	66	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Shepperton</b>	111	132	135	160	159	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0

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Swan Hill	42	38	29	27	31	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0
Wangaratta	71	93	196	163	205	<5	14	58	10	22	<5	7	13	<5	<5
Warrnambool	58	57	73	83	81	0	0	0	6	<5	0	0	0	0	0
West Gippsland	55	83	40	49	51	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	<5
Wodonga	0	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0
Wonthaggi	47	41	42	22	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Source:**

Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD) Date extracted 17 November 2023

## PAEC Inquiry into the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Financial and Performance Outcomes

### QUESTION 7

Are you able to provide an update to the 20 recommendations made in the VAGO report for child and youth mental health –

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 32

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Mr Nick McGowan

**Nick McGOWAN:** Okay. And are you able to provide an update to the 20 recommendations made in the VAGO report for child and youth mental health –

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Mr McGowan. You are out of time.

**Nick McGOWAN:** I am happy to take an answer on that one – an update of the recommendations.

**The CHAIR:** Mr McGowan, you are out of time. We are going straight to Mr Hilakari.

### RESPONSE

#### Answer:

Seven of the recommendations made by VAGO in the *Child and Youth Mental Health* report (June 2019) were completed and closed as of March 2021.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (Royal Commission) was established in February 2019 after the Victorian Government recognised the system was failing to support people living with mental illness or psychological distress, families, carers and supporters, as well as those working in the system.

The Royal Commission released an interim report in November 2019 with nine recommendations and a final report in March 2021, that outlined an additional 65 recommendations.

In February 2023, the department and VAGO agreed that the remaining actions from the performance audit report *Child and Youth Mental Health* were superseded by recommendations made by the Royal Commission. This recognised the reform work underway and the 10-year reform program underway to transform Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system. As such, all recommendations have been incorporated into the reform guided by the Royal Commission and are deemed "acquitted" for the purposes of the VAGO report response.

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**QUESTION 8**

Do you see that that [the distribution guidelines, re: existing Commonwealth-based naloxone program] has been a barrier?

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 36

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Ms Ellen Sandell

**Ellen SANDELL:** Just to clarify, those are the distribution guidelines [existing Commonwealth-based naloxone program]. They have been in draft form since October 2022. So you are saying next week they will be finalised and it will be clear that NSP workers can distribute?

**Katherine WHETTON:** We are expecting to commence that from next week. So it might be a bit of a staged start in terms of supply – as you mentioned before, there are some supply challenges the moment. But the program itself will commence.

**Ellen SANDELL:** From next week – excellent. Good to hear. Can I just confirm, do you see any barriers in terms of the list? Under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act* there is actually a list under the regulations of who can carry naloxone. So currently, for example, police are not on that list and drug users are not on that list. **Do you see that that has been a barrier?** We are hearing that from AOD workers – they are saying, 'We are not actually on that authorised list, and the list might need to change.'

**Katherine WHETTON:** I might need to come back to you on that one.

**RESPONSE****Answer:**

- Victoria's Take-Home Naloxone Program, now implemented, seeks to increase community access to naloxone.
- Approved workers in approved organisations may supply naloxone to people who are at risk of, or who may be more likely to witness, an opioid overdose including carers, families or friends of people who use opioids.
- To be approved to participate in Victoria's Take-Home Naloxone Program, an organisation must:
  - be included in the government approval for the program published in the Victorian Government Gazette
  - follow the conditions of program participation as specified in the government approval.
- Approved classes of workers include Registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner; Alcohol and other Drugs (AOD) worker; Case manager/worker; Community support worker; Consumer worker; Counsellor; Enrolled nurse; Medically Supervised Injecting Centre worker / coordinator / manager / director; Mental Health worker, Needle and Syringe Program worker / coordinator / manager / director; Outreach worker/officer; Paramedic; Peer support worker / coordinator; Registered nurse; Social worker; and Youth worker.
- The role of peers is enhanced by allowing a person (community members) who collects naloxone from an approved organisation to give it to another person (and that person to another, and so on) for the purposes of responding to an opioid overdose.

These changes aim to reduce opioid overdose-related morbidity and mortality by removing barriers to access experienced by people in the community who may have limited engagement with health services.

- The program commenced operation on 30 November 2023.
- The department is monitoring participating organisations safety, quality and compliance standards. In time, and dependent on safety data, the program may expand to increase the opportunity for approved organisation to participate in this program.

**Source:**

- <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/victoria%27s-take-home-naloxone-program-operational-guidelines.docx>

**PAEC Inquiry into the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Financial and Performance Outcomes**

**QUESTION 9**

**I am just wondering if you have data on the number of surgical terminations provided by public health services and where that data is published.**

**SOURCE:** 'Inquiry into the PAEC Financial and Performance Outcomes', Unverified Transcript of public hearing, 24 November 2023, p. 38

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION:** Ms Ellen Sandell

**Ellen SANDELL:** Okay, great. Thank you. I would like to ask about access to termination services. There is performance data published in the budget regarding many services provided by public health services – so the number of knee replacements, for example – but not published data on surgical terminations of pregnancy. Is that data collected?

**Euan WALLACE:** We do collect data on surgical terminations. As you know, the pregnancy termination landscape is ever changing, and the majority of pregnancy terminations have always been first trimester. A very large proportion of those are now done medically, and we do not record those numbers. Surgical terminations we do record. I do not know if Ms Wainer wants to add anything. I mean, as you know, and as I alluded to in my introductory comments, one of our focuses now is on women's health and the provision of sexual and reproductive services in particular. Zoe, do you want to –

**Zoe WAINER:** Thank you, Secretary. Could you just restate the question?

**Ellen SANDELL:** I am just wondering if you have data on the number of surgical terminations provided by public health services and where that data is published.

**Zoe WAINER:** I would need to come back to you as a question on notice, if that is okay.

**RESPONSE**

**Answer:**

Reflecting the progressive and ongoing shift to medical termination of early pregnancy, the demand for surgical termination of pregnancy in Victoria has been decreasing year on year since 2018-19. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, 10,149 and 8,971 surgical terminations were performed.

**Source:**

Victorian Admitted Episodes Data, unpublished data as of 31 October 2023, updated to 31 August 2023. Surgical termination of pregnancy includes all procedures provided as part of a hospital admitted episode.