



New Outer North Hospital: increased health services

Current health services in Melbourne's north are at capacity. With a growing population, our region needs government support to ensure that all our residents have access to health services and the public transport they need to access those services.

What we need

We urgently require a new public hospital in Melbourne's north to cater for the growing population and increasing health needs in our community, providing emergency care with provision for specialist services such as obstetrics, dialysis, oncology, maternal, neonatal and paediatric services.

To facilitate construction of the hospital, land acquisition in the Cloverton precinct will cost approximately \$25 million.

A firm commitment from federal and state governments is urgently required to ensure there is provision of land for the construction of the hospital.

Why we need it

The only two public hospitals within the north (Northern Hospital in Epping and Austin/Mercy in Heidelberg) are at capacity.

The Northern Hospital in particular is undergoing significant pressure from the continued population growth and demand in the outer northern area. Currently, it has the busiest hospital emergency department in Victoria. A new major public hospital is required in the short term to address current and future high demand. Importantly, there is no dedicated trauma support in the north and expanded service provision in this area is also urgently required.

Plan Melbourne promotes a range of planning responses to improve the provision of health services and facilities. Specific actions related to planning for health include creating neighbourhoods and communities that support healthy lifestyles and creating health precincts to meet the needs of residents across Melbourne.

The Cloverton precinct in Melbourne's outer north is ideally placed for health service provision, and three of our Councils are activity working together to coordinate activities in this area.

Our population is growing fast

The Northern Growth Corridor is projected to accommodate 30 per cent of Melbourne's future growth over the coming decades, adding approximately 500,000 extra inhabitants by 2036, substantially higher than government predictions. It is projected that Mitchell's population will double almost every five years for at least the next 20 years. Current health services available in the north will not be able to respond to the needs of this growing population.



Upfield rail line improvements

As noted in the *Hume North Growth Corridor Health Infrastructure Plan*, it is anticipated that the new and emerging communities will include high numbers of refugee and asylum seeker families, families with early years and youth aged children, and single parent households. Often these are families with limited transport opportunities, emphasising the need for transport infrastructure that links to health and other services.

The Upfield rail line services the growing populations of Merri-bek and southern Hume, ending at Upfield Station. Yet beyond that station are Melbourne's booming northern suburbs, which stretch across Hume, Whittlesea and Mitchell. Melbourne's north will ultimately be home to more than 1.5 million people.

Key rail investment actions on the Upfield line, including extension and electrification, are required to ensure equitable access to existing and future health services and to activate the precinct.

New technology initiatives

To strengthen health service access, further investment in technology initiatives is needed. The Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED), run out of Northern Health, sees roughly 100,000 patients a year and has been a great success.

It diverts many patients from the crowded physical emergency department to an online care environment. Note that new technology initiatives may not be the VVED itself but would include other initiatives that promote health productivity.

A new hospital creates an opportunity to expand this much-needed service.

Benefits of expanded health services

The new hospital could be leveraged to expand current allied and mental health services in the outer north, which are not meeting demand.

For example, in the City of Whittlesea, adolescent mental health service providers report wait times of up to four weeks for an initial assessment and eight months for ongoing counselling¹.

The lack of adequate investment in preventative care results in further pressure on the hospital systems, including increased emergency department presentations.

A new hospital in the north will also attract commercial investments – in allied services, health, education and training, and related businesses. It will contribute significantly to the local economy in an area of high growth, and provide a significant number of jobs, both during construction and in ongoing roles across a range of employment categories.

¹ Bell, T, Mendoza, J, Stretton, A, and Salvador-Carulla, L, 2018, *EMPHN integrated mental health and AOD service atlas (East and North East Melbourne) – Final report*.



Next steps

Stockland have reserved the required land for a hospital but need a firm commitment from the Victorian Government. Land also needs to be set aside and acquired to enable the construction of two new train stations proposed as part of the Upfield line extension.

Building a new hospital in the outer north is necessary and will bring long-term benefit to a fast-growing community. Our residents need reassurance that they are being listened to and supported.

We are advocating for a public announcement of land acquisition in the Cloverton precinct as the first step of this vital project.