

2020-21 Victorian Budget: Improving Cancer Outcomes



Tuesday 24 November 2020

The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) has welcomed the *2020-21 Victorian Budget*, which includes \$33.1 million for the alliance to continue its work to improve cancer outcomes across the state.

The VCCC alliance is a multi-disciplinary, multi-site partnership between 10 leading research, academic and clinical institutions, working together to accelerate and amplify cancer research, knowledge and expertise to benefit the Victorian community.

“Every Victorian is affected by cancer in some way,” Executive Director of the VCCC, Professor Grant McArthur, said. “Despite significant advances in screening, diagnosis, treatment and management, it is still expected that one in two Victorians will get cancer in their lifetime, and three in ten will die from the disease.”

“That’s why the work we do is so important. As an alliance, the VCCC delivers far greater benefits more quickly than any single organisation could achieve. We work together to integrate cancer research, clinical trials and education to improve cancer treatment and care for Victorians.”

This new funding will support projects that focus on the limited treatment options for low survival cancers (such as lung cancer, which has a 14 per cent five-year survival rate, and pancreatic cancer, which has just four per cent five-year survival), and increase access to personalised medicine through the expansion of genomic testing and precision oncology.

In addition, the investment in the VCCC will enable strategic programs that will:

- Improve data linkage to accelerate cancer research;
- Embed translational research into routine care;
- Invest in initiatives to improve equity and ensure world-class cancer outcomes for all Victorians; and
- Lead the world in cancer education through a new Victorian Centre for Cancer Education.

“We want to improve outcomes for *all* Victorians with cancer,” Professor McArthur said.

“We know that, currently, Victorians living in regional or rural areas experience a five-year survival rate of 67 per cent, compared to 71 per cent for patients in metropolitan areas. With this investment, the VCCC will be able to facilitate more clinical trials, particularly in regional and rural areas, and expand our cancer teletrials program, which has already demonstrated great potential.”

Earlier this year, the VCCC established Affiliate Partnerships with Albury Wodonga Health and Bendigo Health, with more regional networks to come in the near future.

“We’re focused on improving cancer care and fostering cancer workforce expertise across regional Victoria,” Professor McArthur said.

The VCCC alliance will also expand and link its data platform to enable rapid translation of the latest advances in cancer research, and implement data-driven value-based cancer services across the system.

A Victorian Centre for Cancer Education will be established to help build a highly skilled and diverse Victorian cancer workforce.

“It’s critical that we have a strong and expert cancer workforce right across Victoria – one that is well networked and collaborative, so that all Victorians are able to access the best and latest in cancer care and treatment close to home.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impact on Victorian cancer patients – including decreased screening, diagnosis, and delayed treatment, and, in some cases, reduced engagement with palliative care. The VCCC responded quickly, activating its state-wide networks to co-lead the Victorian COVID-19 Cancer Network to address key issues for patients with cancer and their cancer healthcare professionals.

“This demonstrates a realisation of Victorian Government’s original vision for the VCCC model – as an enabler and facilitator of collective innovation and excellence,” Professor McArthur said.

In 2016, the Victorian Government provided the VCCC alliance with its first major funding, and the task of accelerating the process of turning cutting-edge research into the future of cancer prevention, treatment and care for Victorians.

“Over the past four years, the VCCC has made direct and tangible contributions to the prevention, treatment and recovery from cancer across Victoria. The alliance has expanded clinical trials, built workforce capacity, facilitated Australia’s largest and highest impact cancer research program, and helped enable the translation of research discoveries into clinical care for patients, faster.”

“We have more to do, and together we have the opportunity to ensure more Victorians with cancer benefit from the capabilities of this alliance,” Professor McArthur said.

The funding will create new jobs across metropolitan and regional Victoria, and supports the *Victorian Cancer Plan 2020-2024*, released in September 2020.

For more information about the VCCC, visit www.viccompcancerctr.org.

- ENDS -

Media Enquiries

Evelyn Ek | CPR Communications | e.ek@cprcomm.com.au | 0412 887 853

Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre members

