



Stat Report 2015/14

Victorian Budget a start to reversing health cuts but fails pathology: MSAV

The Medical Scientists Association of Victoria (MSAV) has welcomed the Victorian Government's budget but while it is reversing some of the former Coalition government's cuts, it has failed to address the crisis facing pathology, and other clinical services. The MSAV is warning that if the Government doesn't start addressing workforce planning it won't be able to guarantee better health outcomes for all Victorians.

While the Andrews Government is reversing some of the worst aspects of the former Coalition government's cuts, this Budget completely ignores that services such as pathology, an absolutely essential clinical service, is in a state of crisis in many Victorian public hospitals.

More than 80% of all acute care cases get their diagnosis from a pathology test. Without those tests performed by medical scientists there is no diagnosis and no treatment can be started.

No government in Australia can believe for a minute that by spending more on infrastructure healthcare outcomes will magically improve. But unfortunately the Andrews Government seems to believe it. The stark reality is that a growing number of pathology services in public hospitals are struggling to cope as scientists jobs are cut to save money and are replaced with under-qualified workers.

And with fewer scientists performing critical pathology tests, crucial turn-around times are blowing out, causing delays in diagnoses and therefore delays in treatments being started. And for many patients delays in a test being completed and treatment starting can mean life or death.

Right now clinical services across Victoria are under enormous strain with research conducted by MSAV showing unpaid work and overtime being relied on to keep these services functioning.

With turn-around times for tests being as vital as ambulance waiting times, it is shocking that the Government has failed to acknowledge the vital work of medical scientists and ensure there is adequate workforce planning so our hospitals have the best and brightest scientists.

To truly improve the long-term health care outcomes for Victorians, the Andrews Government must invest in its medical workforce, not allow for vital clinical services like pathology to be outsourced to private providers only interested in profits.

The Medical Scientists Association of Victoria calls on the Andrews Government to commit to a public health system that has at its core vital clinical services, with properly funded pathology being run by highly qualified and trained staff

Over the long term, Victoria will have much better health outcomes with an Andrews Government rebuilding the professional health workforce we need to meet growing demand.

Victorian Budget shows strong commitment to mental health: VPA

The Victorian Psychologists Association Inc (VPA) has welcomed the Victorian Government's increased investment in mental health services, helping to reverse some of the former Coalition government's cuts, and providing additional resources to assist people with severe mental illnesses.

In doing so, the VPA is calling on the Government to ensure that those suffering from severe mental illnesses have access to appropriately qualified psychologists.

While the Andrews Government is providing more funding, it must ensure that the best and brightest are involved in rolling out and designing new programs.

The VPA is pleased that the Victorian government has recognised the problems associated with people with a dual diagnosis – that is, people who are experiencing a severe mental illness and who are also suffering from other conditions such as alcohol or drug problems, a forensic history, acquired brain injury or a co-existing intellectual disability, which exacerbate their condition.

The VPA also welcomes the increased funding for the treatment of eating disorders, and calls on the government to ensure that services to the target groups are delivered by clinical psychologists.

These are the very people who will benefit from the skills and intervention of specialist clinical psychologists, in assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

The VPA is aware that some health services, in particular community-based health services, in attempting to do more with their limited budgets, have employed counsellors at the expense of more qualified and highly trained psychologists. This is ultimately a short-sighted policy as it fails to ensure that people and their families have access to the best possible treatment and support.”

This budget helps ensure that mental health is elevated to a priority issue, as demand for mental health services continues to grow.

Quality mental health care doesn't come from infrastructure spending alone; clinical psychologists are needed to ensure people are given the highest standard of care and support.

Over the long term, Victoria will have much better mental health outcomes with an Andrews Government rebuilding the clinical psychologist workforce we need to meet growing demand.

Dorevitch Wage Freeze Enters 8th Year

Dorevitch Pathology management yesterday informed the MSAV that it would not make a wages offer for scientists employed in Dorevitch operations in Victoria.

The reason given is that the company believes that it is not in a strong enough financial position to pay an increase – “at this point in time.”

A workforce of over 2,500 people is being held in a wages freeze that is now 8 years long and the executive management refuses to indicate when it anticipates the business will be in a position to offer a wage increase.

This behaviour puts Dorevitch in the bracket of the worst and most ruthless management in Australia. We are unable to find another employer of any size that has such an unconscionable attitude to its workforce.

Undeterred, the MSAV will continue the negotiations and will maintain the claim members made 8 years ago to have an agreement on a fair and reasonable wage increase agreed.

Latrobe Regional Hospital slashes pathology standards putting patients at risk

The Medical Scientists Association of Victoria (MSAV) is extremely concerned about the ongoing cuts to the standards for turn-around times for pathology tests at Latrobe Regional Hospital. Turn-around times on pathology tests are crucial to ensuring patients are diagnosed quickly so treatment can begin as soon as possible.

More than 80% of all acute care cases get their medical diagnosis from a pathology test of one kind or another. And this is no different at Latrobe Regional Hospital except that there is growing evidence that senior management at the hospital are knowingly and willingly letting Dorevitch Pathology to increase turn-around times.

It is clear from information that we have recently seen that the Latrobe Regional Hospital decided to accept extended pathology turnaround times after the pathology contractor since 2010 consistently failed to deliver to the level required under the pathology services contract.

Rather than forcing Dorevitch Pathology to comply with its contract obligations, Latrobe Regional Hospital decided to reduce the contract performance level by setting a new lower standard. This is an outrageous situation that seriously puts patients at risk if diagnoses are delayed causing delays in treatment starting. And for many patients delays in diagnoses and treatment can have serious adverse outcomes.

Dorevitch Pathology has made a number of major changes to the pathology service since the contract commenced in 2010; all designed to increase its profitability. However the changes, such as moving critical pathology testing out of the Traralgon laboratory to Melbourne and cutting the number of medical scientists in the laboratory, have dramatically reduced pathology standards, and in turn health care standards in the hospital.

Why has the Latrobe Regional Hospital Board failed to take any action against Dorevitch Pathology when it made changes that are clear breaches of the terms of the pathology services contract? Why wouldn't the Board, which has a legislated responsibility to safeguard health care standards on behalf of the residents of the Latrobe Valley have told Dorevitch Pathology that it is absolutely unacceptable to move pathology testing to Melbourne and thereby blow-out turnaround times?

The LRH Board needs to explain why Dorevitch Pathology is allowed to continue to cut standards in turn-around times which endanger patients. Testing is no longer being performed in the hospital, which is already causing turn-around times to increase so to allow continued increases to turn-around times is absolutely unacceptable.

Turn-around times for pathology tests are as vital as ambulance waiting times – they can be literally a matter of life and death. It is shocking that the LRH allows a private provider, Dorevitch Pathology, to dictate what standards the hospital will have for pathology testing.

LRH can't deliver quality healthcare when they allow Dorevitch Pathology to slash testing in the hospital and then won't enforce their contract to have the highest possible standards for turn-around times.

The truly worst part of this terrible scenario is that the LRH Board is knowingly letting Dorevitch Pathology get away with lowering health care standards.

The Latrobe Valley has every reason to be angry when their hospital knowingly lets standards slide in order to help a pathology contractor save a few dollars.

The long-term health care outcomes for people in the Latrobe Valley will be much better off when the management at LRH enforces their contract with Dorevitch Pathology, brings pathology testing back into the hospital and ensures that the laboratory is staffed with a sufficient number of qualified scientists.

Easter & ANZAC Day Entitlements

It seems incredible, even somewhat laughable, but unfortunately we find ourselves in May and there remain a number of health services across Victoria that have been unwilling to pay members their entitlements for the Easter weekend and ANZAC Day.

The Union is following up with health services to make sure members are paid their entitlements.

But if you have any concerns please contact the Union on 9623 9623.

Annual Conference 2015

Annual Conference is rapidly approaching. And we're excited about it because it's a great chance for members across the MSAV, VPA Inc and AHP to come together and share experiences at work, explore the current and future industrial landscape, and find out more about our *No Pay? No Way!* campaign.

This year's conference is focussed on addressing the growing and structural issues around workloads and staffing.

It's also exciting to be able to announce that the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Mary-Anne Thomas, will be attending.

The Annual Conference is free and open to all members and we [strongly encourage you to register](#) to help us finalise preparations.

Conference details:

Date: 29 May

Time: 9:30am to 4pm (registration starts at 9am)

Venue: DownTowner on Lygon at 66 Lygon St Carlton

[Register for Annual Conference here](#)

Save the date – Friday 29 May – for Annual Conference

VPA Professional Development Seminar – Spots Still Available

There are still spots available for the upcoming VPA Professional Development seminar on **Wednesday 13 May 2015, at the Treacy Centre Parkville.**

The afternoon will begin at 12:30pm with light refreshments before the first session commences at 1pm.

The topic for the seminar is “What every psychologists can do to help clients with substance abuse issues”, which will be presented by Nigel Alexander from 1pm.

Nigel Alexander is a Clinical Psychologist who works with the Substance Use Mental Illness Treatment Team (SUMITT) from NorthWestern Mental Health. SUMITT is also part of the Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative. Nigel has worked in the AOD treatment sector for the last fifteen years and also runs a private psychology practice

Don't miss out on this PD seminar – RSVP today to alexs@msav.org.au.

If you have any questions regarding this Seminar please contact VPA Inc on 9623 9625.

Join the campaign – No Pay? No Way!

Show your support for the campaign by downloading & using one of our graphics for your email signature.



FORUM: The Trans-Pacific-Partnership - Why you should be Concerned

Discussions of key challenges for the left with thinkers and activists. Panel discussions co-hosted by the SEARCH Foundation and The New International Bookshop on the topics most critical to Australia's economic, political and environmental future

It's no secret that the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific-Partnership Deal (TPP) have been shrouded in secrecy. Perhaps that's because this latest corporate trade deal threatens to have wide-ranging negative social & environmental implications that will impact on our lives?

Come listen to an expert panel explain the multiple problems/flaws/dangers inherent in the TPP and join the debate on what we can do to fight against it.

Dr Matthew Mitchell - Has written critically about the corporate interests driving the TPP and is a Lecturer in Information Systems at RMIT

Dr Deborah Gleeson - Has written widely about the potential health implications of the TPP and is a Lecturer in the School of Psychology and Public Health at La Trobe University

Angela Daly - Has written about the intellectual property implications of the TT and is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Swinburne Institute for Social Research (Australia).

Matthew Rose - has written about the environmental implications of the TPP. He is works as an economist for the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Event Details

When: 21 May at 6:45pm

Where: Trades Hall - 54 Victoria Street, Melbourne

Admission: \$10 or \$5 Concession

More details at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/643047989159610/>

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