

Media Release

Tuesday, 25 November 2025

Half of St Vincent's health and aged care to be provided at home or virtually by 2030

In a major policy announcement, St Vincent's – Australia's largest not-for-profit health and aged care services provider – has committed to delivering half of its care in people's homes and through virtual and digital platforms by 2030.

St Vincent's currently experiences around 2 million connections with patients and residents each year across its two major public health networks (Sydney and Melbourne), 10 private hospitals, and 25 aged care facilities in Queensland, NSW and Victoria.

Chief Executive Officer, Chris Blake, said St Vincent's was determined to "lead from the front" as Australia's health and aged care system passed through a once-in-a-generation transition.

"St Vincent's is building Australia's largest virtual and home care system," said Chris.

"Our ambition is that within five years, St Vincent's clinicians and support workers will be delivering half of our total care in people's homes – including nursing homes – either face-to-face or virtually.

"That includes hospital-level care: from pre-admission through to recovery.

"By making this transition, we believe St Vincent's will be able to add an additional one million virtual patient interactions by 2030.

"Bringing care directly to people in their homes will enhance recovery, improve outcomes, and take pressure off the health system, giving our hospitals capacity to do more," said Chris.

St Vincent's – which already provides the equivalent of 200 virtual hospital beds and is experiencing some of the fastest growth in 'hospital in the home' services in both NSW and Victoria – will begin its transition over the next 12-18 months by developing a central 'command centre' model to allow a dedicated virtual care team to engage in 24/7 observation and tracking of patient data through the use of wearable devices and other monitoring.

Last week, St Vincent's was chosen by the Commonwealth Government to design and deliver the new \$217m *Medicare Mental Health Check In* service: an Australian-first digital mental health support platform aimed at improving mental health access for any Australian seeking support, regardless of where they live.

Chris Blake said Australian health and aged care were facing a number of serious financial and demographic challenges but that technology and people's changing care preferences offered abundant opportunities.

"With rising costs, an ageing population, growing chronic illness, and overwhelmed services, many Australians are struggling to get the help they need, when they need it. At the same time, front line workers are exhausted," said Chris.

"Meanwhile, medical science and technology are changing the way we work. We know that innovations such as wearable technology and Artificial Intelligence are bringing a host of new possibilities.

“People’s expectations are also shifting. People want their care personalised, and either online or in their homes – when and where they need it – as much as possible.

“We have a tremendous opportunity here. We can utilise technology to meet people’s preferences. And in doing so, we can alleviate the pressures that are undermining our hospital and health system.

“And in doing so, we can make sure that people who currently struggle to access frontline health services - including the most disadvantaged - don’t encounter the same barriers they’re experiencing now.

“As we make this transition, hospitals will also change. For St Vincent’s, our world-class hospitals and their precincts will become destinations for specialised care, cutting edge research, and world-class training. They’ll become ‘hubs’ to support care everywhere: whether that be in people’s homes, in aged care facilities, or in people’s pockets on their mobile phone.

“As hubs for connecting care throughout the community, they’ll take on an even more important role providing care, not just in their catchment, but across the state and nationally.

“*Medicare Mental Health Check In* is a great example of this transition in action. It’s using technology to provide significant health benefits for tens of thousands of Australians, particularly those in rural and regional areas who might struggle to access mental health care face-to-face.

“And it’s not about ‘doing the same with less’. We believe that in a health and aged care system that has transitioned to intentionally focus on providing in-home care, we can drive funding further, reach more people, and cater to unmet need. We can see more people, more efficiently, and in a way that people prefer.”

Chris Blake said that the organisation’s announcement showed St Vincent’s was ready to lead the wave of inevitable health and aged care change.

“We’re at a turning point. Everyone involved in health and aged care – including the politicians and policymakers who are responsible for the system – know that this is where things are heading,” said Chris

“Today’s announcement is St Vincent’s signalling its intention to lead that change guided by its mission, history, and values,” said Chris.

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