

June 2025

Community Update

In May, the 2025/26 State Budget was released. It's a thoughtful budget, to help everyone through the challenges of today, but to also provide opportunities for the future. It's about looking after each other and providing real help with the current cost of living.

One example of this is the announcement that from January 2026, children and young people under 18 years of age will be able to access free travel on all public transport across the state. This is great news for kids and their families, reducing the cost of travel. It builds on a recent announcement that from next year, all public transport will also be free for Victorian Seniors Card holders on weekends and will continue to have discounted weekday transport.

While this announcement reduces the cost of travel, I acknowledge that there is a lack of public transport services that connect communities across the Bellarine. From young people trying to get to work, to residents needing to attend medical appointments, a cross Bellarine service is essential for improving local connectivity.

Since becoming the Member for Bellarine, I've met with local transport users, advocacy groups, community associations, and stakeholders – and invited many of them to meet directly with the Minister for Transport. These conversations have strengthened my advocacy for a full review to explore the next steps for improving our public transport system.

I'm excited to announce that the 2025/26 Budget includes funding for a comprehensive review of the Bellarine Peninsula bus network. As part of this process, the community will have the opportunity to share their views and help shape improvements to routes, timetables and the overall experience. Throughout this process, I will keep the community updated on how to get involved and ensure everyone has a chance to have their say as we work towards a better-connected Bellarine.

Another exciting announcement is that we're making Victoria's Community Pharmacy Program permanent – and even bigger. Throughout the pilot process, pharmacists delivered over 45,000 free consultations for conditions including uncomplicated UTIs, resupply of the oral contraceptive pill, mild skin conditions and travel vaccinations. But now, we're making the program permanent, and we're adding more than 20 conditions over the next two years including acute nausea and vomiting, school sores, allergies, reflux and minor wound management. This will free up our busy GPs and reduce the number of non-urgent ED presentations.

This program is all about easing the cost-of-living for Victorian families and making it more accessible for all Victorians to receive the care they need. Unlike other states, there will be no charge for accessing this treatment in Victoria.

There are currently 8 participating pharmacies across Bellarine including: Barwon Heads Pharmacy, Peak Pharmacy Drysdale, Drysdale Village Pharmacy, Direct Chemist Outlet Leopold, Peak Pharmacy Leopold, Direct Chemist Outlet Ocean Grove, Direct Chemist Outlet Kingston and Ocean Grove Terrace Pharmacy.

More information and locations can be found at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/community-pharmacist-pilot

