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| Public intoxication response – frequently asked questions |
| About the health-led response |
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## What is the new public intoxication response (PIR)?

Following changes from the Victorian Government, being intoxicated in public is no longer illegal and the Government will instead be providing a health-led response.

This means that instead of being taken into custody for the offence of public intoxication, outreach services with qualified health and social support workers, will assist instead, where available.

Outreach services may help people on the spot or if needed, provide them with transport to a safe place.

For many people, this will be their own home or that of a family member, friend or carer. For others, it will be a place of safety or a sobering centre, where they can recover and receive support.

Staff will work alongside local health and social support services to ensure people can also access services for concerns like, alcohol and other drugs, family violence, homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, or financial difficulties.

## Why has this changed?

In 2019, the Victorian Government acknowledged that reform was long overdue and committed to decriminalising public intoxication and replacing the current criminal justice response with a health-led approach.

This means putting the right programs in place to help people who are intoxicated in public access the support they need to stay safe.

Victoria’s previous public intoxication laws had an unacceptable and disproportionate impact on certain communities, particularly Victoria’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

These changes respond to extensive Aboriginal community advocacy and action, key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and a coronial inquest.

## What services are now available?

The new PIR services will see 24/7 Aboriginal outreach services running across Melbourne, Frankston and Wyndham to support people who are intoxicated in public, and if needed, providing them with transport to a safe place or the dedicated sobering centre in St Kilda.

There will also be 24/7 outreach services available for the general public across Melbourne and a sobering centre established in Collingwood for the wider population to access as well.

Once the public intoxication response is fully operational, Aboriginal communities in eight regional locations will have access to Aboriginal specific outreach services and places of safety, with access to additional culturally safe social support services.

All of these services will be coordinated through a dedicated phone line, which will manage intake, referrals and the dispatch of outreach services when appropriate.

## Does this mean Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria are no longer involved at all?

Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police will continue to provide a response in instances of public intoxication where there are emergency health risks or community safety risks.

Where Victoria Police are in attendance, their response will be informed by the behaviour of the person and any particular risks presented, rather than the person's intoxication.

In areas across Victoria where there may not be dedicated PIR services available, Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police may still respond, and provide support and appropriate referrals with the consent of the person.

## What should I do if I see someone intoxicated in public?

If you see someone intoxicated in public and you are worried about their immediate health or for the safety of others around them, you can call 000 and they will divert the call to the appropriate emergency responders.

If you are in a licensed venue, let staff members know what the problem is. They will be able to call 000 or the new centralised service phone number to access the PIR services available.

In some areas outreach workers will proactively be visiting known public intoxication hotspots and will respond on site if they believe someone needs assistance.

# Find out more

Visit our website for further information about the health-led response and services available throughout Victoria: <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs/public-intoxication-reform-0>>

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| To receive this document in another format, email the [public intoxication response team](mailto:publicintoxication@health.vic.gov.au) at <publicintoxication@health.vic.gov.au>.  Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.  © State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Health, October 2023.  In this document, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori/Koorie’ is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.  **ISBN** 978-1-76131-436-0 **(pdf/online/MS word)** |