

# Virtual assessment may replace ambos

by Alyssa Fritzlaff

A new virtual triage service, the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED), is beginning to be rolled out state wide.

The service is the result of a \$21 million investment by the Victorian Government and is intended to help ease pressures in emergency departments and free up paramedics quicker.

The service expansion announcement was made last month, and the first

Northern Hospital has been trialling the service, which allows paramedics to virtually link the patient with the VVED for assessment on whether a trip to the hospital is required.

The project trial was a success, and 87 per cent of people referred to the service avoided a trip in an ambulance to the hospital emergency department.

Northern Hospital's VVED team will accept referrals from Ambulance Victoria crews across the state and provide virtual clinical assessments, medical advice, treatment, and where required, local referrals to appropriate services for ongoing management.

Local paramedic Peter Parkinson said he was excited to have the tool available in the future, having previously used the service to manage COVID-19 patient care locally.

"I'm eagerly awaiting it," he said.

"You don't want to go to the hospital if you don't need to... if you can be treated at home you're going to be much more comfortable."

Mr Parkinson explained that the service would help to free up paramedics for responses, especially in regional areas, as travel times can often be significant.

"In rural areas, our drives can be upwards of 40 minutes," he said.

He said that, in his experience, the virtual service is easy to use - although patients do need a smart device to access it.

"It's very straightforward... even for those who are not tech-savvy, it's quite user-friendly, which I like," he said.

Northern Hospital's clinical director Dr Loren Sher explained how the VVED operates.

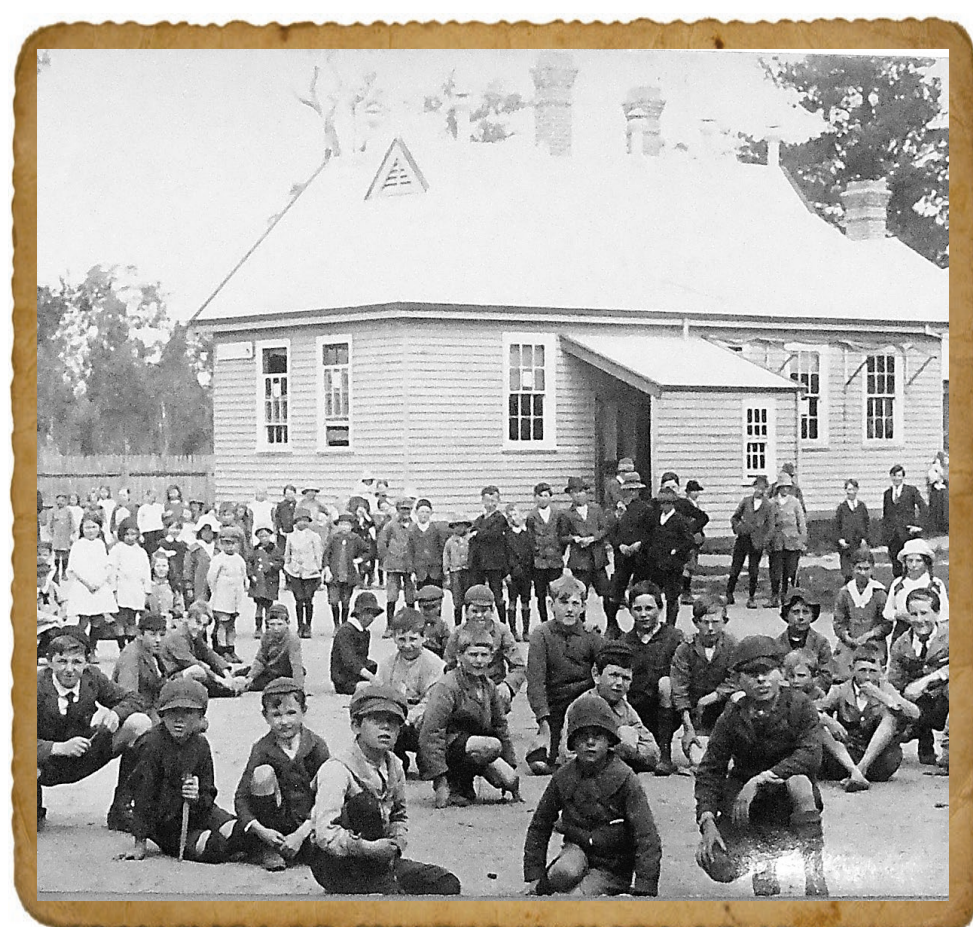
"Patients can be referred or they can refer themselves if they think they've got a problem but they're not quite sure they need to attend the emergency," she said.

Patients then fill out an electronic form, which asks them the same questions they would get asked in an emergency department, and then get a link to the emergency nurse's virtual waiting room, Dr Sher explained. The nurse will then start the video consult, and go through the standard triage process.

Dr Sher said that the service has been used to help those who don't necessarily need to access an ambulance but do believe they need to consult with a medical professional.

"I think a lot of patients can call in with minor injuries, and the stress of the minor injury can cause them to call an ambulance," she said.

Dr Sher said that people with COVID-19 had been able to get advice about their symptoms, and people experiencing other illnesses such as vomiting have been able to be prescribed medication through the service.



## Snapshot of the past

As it is Education Week, fittingly we feature a schoolyard photograph at Longwarry State School c1914.

Note the dress of the children, boys mostly separate from the girls and the bare yard lacking equipment.

This photograph is part one of a series capturing "Education in Longwarry" which will feature over numerous editions.

The Crown land around what is now Longwarry was initially occupied by workers cutting sleepers or firewood. These men were generally single.

Things began to change with the coming of the railway line. Industry came into the area with Donald Fraser's timber mill in 1883 and Edwin Witton's brick works a year later.

This meant more permanent residents with families occupying the area. Families meant children and children meant schools were needed.

It was determined by the 1872 Education Act that all children of a certain age must attend school. Education was to be free to all who wanted it. It was compulsory if a child was not attending a recognised school for parents to show suitable alternative arrangements were made.

In the Longwarry district, a school had been established at the railway workers camp at the

Rock Cutting, about 1.5km east of the town in 1880.

It was operated by some mothers of students.

It was expected that students from the township would walk up what is now Boxshall Rd and along the railway line to attend. Needless to say, walking in winter was difficult and in summer there were too many distractions along the way. As a result, student attendance was poor.

In 1881, William Rhodes petitioned the government for a school in the town with a prospective enrolment of 30 students. It was agreed to lease an 8.5 metre by 3.5 metre weatherboard building with a bark roof on the corner of Mackey St and Drouin Rd from him. The Longwarry State School No. 2505 opened on July 1, 1882 and operated on a part-time basis with the Rock Cutting School. Maria McBride was teacher of both schools.

In 1883, the Education Department decided both schools should operate full-time and Maria McBride took on the job at Longwarry.

Photograph courtesy of Mary Davies and information courtesy of the Longwarry and District History Group.

The history group focuses on history in the 3816 postcode, including Longwarry, Laber-touche and Modella.

For further information, visit [longwarryhistory.org.au](http://longwarryhistory.org.au)

## Bowens to open in Warragul

Bowen's timber and hardware store is taking up residence in the old Bunnings Warehouse site on June Court in Warragul.

This is part of a \$50 million investment in six new stores and refurbishments across Australia this year.

Bowens director and chief investment officer Andy Bowen said the company had been looking to set up shop in the area for some time.

"This is a decision that has been made over four or five years," he said.

"We've been watching the area grow and we think we've found the perfect site to set ourselves up in."

Some staff already living in the area will be moving down from the already established Pakenham store, and the store will also create full-time work opportunities.

"Our hope is that within a couple of years we'd have 35 full-time employees there," Mr Bowen said.

"We are not just there to sell building supplies, we are there to be a fabric of the community and support the community."

"Part of that is hiring local talent and local

residents, and that is exactly what we intend to do in that area."

Mr Bowen said there was still some work to be done on the site. However, it is the perfect fit for a Bowens store.

"It is perfect for what we do, we are absolutely focused on professional builders, professional trades. That's what we do," he said.

"The site is fantastic from a logistics perspective. We can move product in and out really quickly."

Mr Bowen said most of the company's customers are medium to small sized building companies, many of which operate in Warragul and surrounds. However, anyone can purchase their products.

"We have a really diverse range of timber and building supplies... we will service whatever needs the market requires," he said.

"Bowens is more focused now more than ever on other building supplies - not just timber."

The store is expected to open for business in August.

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