

# More beds ease overcrowding

By NICOLE JACKSON

LATROBE Regional Hospital's expanded emergency department has been officially opened.

An extra three cubicles have been added, bringing the total number of beds to 11.

There have also been alterations to triage and waiting areas.

The \$420,000 expansion was funded by the State Government and officially opened by Health Minister Daniel Andrews yesterday.

It started operating last month and according to Latrobe Regional Hospital CEO Peter Craighead, the extra space had already helped with the treatment of patients.

"The big difference is giving us the additional space, which reduces the tension and allows things to flow," he said.

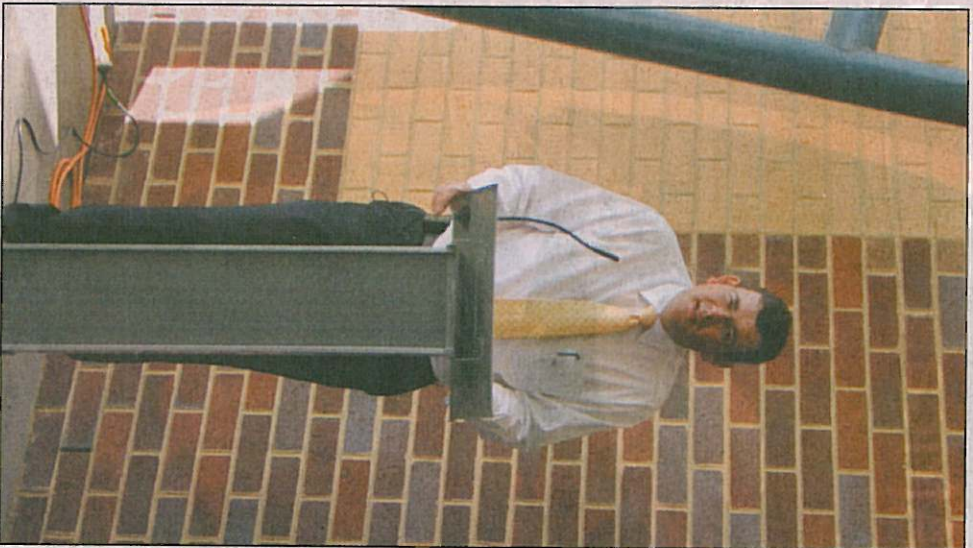
"The staff have noticed a big difference, it has added more privacy for the patients."

In 2007/08, LRH's ED treated 28,048 people, up three per cent on the previous year.

Mr Craighead said the extra cubicles would help manage the load of patients presenting at the ED in the interim, but more beds could be added as part of a master plan for the hospital, which is currently being developed.

Mr Andrews said the new cubicles would enhance Latrobe's ability to meet a growing demand.

"When I first became health minister, LRH made it clear they needed some greater capacity to



deal with the very substantial increases in the number of people that presented for care at the ED," he said.

"There has been very substantial growth and in some respects that is a good thing because it shows the local community is growing and there is a real need for

that regional health service role, so that throws down a challenge to the staff here.

"It's also one we need to help them to meet and that's about making sure there is the physical infrastructure to cope with the number of people presenting for care, that's why we provided this funding."

**Officially open:** Latrobe Regional Hospital will be able to cater for more patients with the opening of the expanded emergency department, which was opened by Health Minister Daniel Andrews yesterday.