

# Care For Our Region

Healthier, stronger, together

## Introduction

**Welcome to the second fortnightly Care For Our Region update for the community. In this issue:**

- CEOs of the health services bust myths about coming together
- We address your questions around service provision
- We talk to Wimmera Health Care Group Health Information Manager Christine Gunn about how the new service can deliver more opportunities
- We answer additional key questions raised over the past fortnight

In our next issue, we'll look at how coming together will provide various opportunities for staff and what this means.

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## CEO's Video Update

With any new announcement there can often be uncertainty in the community. The CEOs of Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, Stawell Regional Health, Wimmera Health Care Group and Ballarat Health Services set out to address some of the myths they've heard.



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# Your Questions Answered – Service provision

Should the proposal be approved, the four health services will undertake joint planning, to look at all services currently delivered, understand how best to fill gaps and to identify the best opportunities for enhanced services. Opportunities are outlined below.

## Edenhope

1. Increased clinically appropriate care at the Edenhope campus, through transfers from Horsham to Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital
2. Initiate an Urgent Care Centre Telehealth support system to enable direct contact to Wimmera Health Care Group and Ballarat Health Services Emergency Departments
3. Increased specialist appointments in Horsham to minimise Edenhope patients travelling to Ballarat for treatment

## Stawell

1. Increased opportunities for patients to return to Stawell Regional Health for recovery and restorative care in hospital or in community care
2. Opportunity to expand oncology services delivered in Stawell either through the Day Oncology unit or at home with increased support from Ballarat & Wimmera Health Services
3. Maintain the Urgent Care Capacity as a 24/7 service with the support of Ballarat Health Services and Wimmera Health Care Group medical support and reduce the number of patients transferred to Ballarat for emergency care

## Wimmera

1. Increased access to clinical services across a broad range of areas which could include orthopaedics, plastics, paediatrics, obstetrics, and General surgery
2. Improved continuity and quality of care for patients by improving pharmacy and administration through increased sharing of business systems that enable access to patient information
3. A shared IT network and cohesive system with Ballarat Health Services could make out-of-hours palliative care a reality in the Wimmera

## Ballarat

1. Increased opportunities for staff to expand and grow their careers by gaining experience across services
2. Enhanced recruitment to specialised roles. A larger health service would have greater capacity to attract and sustain clinicians in specialised areas
3. Greater engagement and strengthening of clinical pathways can enable Ballarat Health Services to support patients to receive care they need in their communities
4. A cohesive IT system improves efficiency for patients to ensure information is easily accessible between health services

For more information on how these could be realised visit [here](#)

## Staff Spotlight: Christine Gunn – Health Information Manager



Christine Gunn has been working at Wimmera Health Care Group for the past eleven years as a Health Information Manager. Prior to this she worked at Warracknabeal for 22 years as a medical records clerk and health information manager.

We asked Christine about what she hopes for any future health service.

“Working at a smaller health service, you often work alone and might not be aware of a better way of doing something. One of the benefits I see of coming together is having the opportunity to confer and consult with others in a similar position,” Christine said.

“We will be linking all our resources. It’s been happening for a long time anyway through various partnerships like the Grampians Rural Health Alliance regional meetings and committees, but this will formalise it and ensure it’s not just for particular areas but the overarching organisation.

“We often look to Ballarat in terms of best practice, we contact them and ask questions to get support. This will make it much more seamless, processes will be more consistent and it will provide support for the participating regional hospitals who are sometimes lacking in resources or skills.

“For staff in the smaller health services there will more opportunities for them to learn from the best, to upskill to a higher level, just by being in contact with them you will learn.

“I can only see this new health service being a good thing, for everyone involved,” Christine said.

# Frequently Asked Questions

We're listening to your feedback. Please see below answers to your questions. Remember, if you have questions, email us at [info@careforourregion.com.au](mailto:info@careforourregion.com.au)

## **1. If we have such great partnerships already why are we coming together as a new health service?**

The boards of Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, Stawell Regional Health, Wimmera Health Care Group and Ballarat Health Services considered a full range of different options.

This extensive process included defining shared objectives, extensive engagement with patients, residents, clients, staff and community as well as a comprehensive examination of the full implications of each option.

What it came down to though is there are a wide range of benefits to closer collaboration across the four health services and we believe the best way to achieve this is to join together to create a new, united health service for the region.

Our proposal is driven by a desire to greatly improve the breadth, accessibility, quality and sustainability of local health care and the opportunities for local healthcare workers. This should also reduce the growing demand on services in Ballarat.

## **2. Ballarat is very far away from the rest of the health services. Can we combine without Ballarat?**

Currently patients in Stawell, Edenhope and Horsham are travelling to Ballarat to receive care they can't receive locally. Ballarat Health Services are admitting more than 300 patients from the Wimmera region and five per cent more patients from Northern Grampians, than five years before. As the largest health service coming together in the proposal, Ballarat is able to share their resources and learning programs with the other health services, helping them to deliver more care closer to home.

## **3. Why can't you attract staff to the region?**

The decline in activity at Horsham, Edenhope and Stawell reduces opportunities for the workforce to develop and maintain specialist or advanced knowledge and develop skills. By joining together across the four organisations, we can expect greater opportunities for both staff and the users of our services.

Together, the four health services will be one large employer, able to attract and sustain a larger workforce pool, especially for specialist roles. It will also reduce the reliance on temporary staff and locums in regional and rural communities, leading to greater workforce stability.

## **4. Will this increase mental health programs?**

One of the goals of the new service is to increase our overall capacity and therefore be able to recruit more specialists, including in the mental health space. Being able to offer specialists more work, because we are working together, creates an opportunity for us to recruit staff for more full-time positions across the region, which has been a barrier

to our ability to recruit to our roles in the past. Career opportunities will be expanded and the ability to share resources across the health services will enable greater collaboration and increased support, and enhanced training and development.

## **5. Will the Emergency Department at Horsham close?**

No, the opposite. Through the new health service local patients will see the capability of this service increase as we bolster it with the support from the other health services and improve our attractiveness as an employer for the medical workforce. There's also opportunity to share other services with Stawell and Edenhope, meaning we can possibly increase capacity at the Emergency Department, not reduce it.

## **6. How can you guarantee that there will be no loss to services in the region?**

No services will be reduced. This is about investing in services.

A proposed overarching entity will mean undertaking joined-up planning, looking at all services currently delivered and understand the gaps the current health system – all for the first time. Our main objective is to deliver services close to home, so we want to see how we can reduce the travel people currently have to undertake to access care.

This proposal is about securing health services into the future. This will not only enhance service provision, and invest in our workforce, but will further ensure sustainable delivery of healthcare across our region.

## **7. What is service planning?**

Service planning defines the core services to be delivered to the community – alongside ancillary or other support services – within a prescribed timeframe. The service plan for this new health service will be done next year.

The service plan must:

- Identify community or state needs for designated services, service gaps and / or surpluses, for a period of five to ten years
- Improve quality of designated services for clients
- Reorient services to better meet service gaps
- Provide the right level and mix of services to meet assessed community needs in a cost effective and coordinated manner
- Increase accessibility and better provide services to meet the catchment needs.
- Deliver services that are safe and fit for purpose

The service plan needs to address these objectives in consultation with service providers (both public and private), community members and departmental representatives. It is vital that in setting objectives for the relevant organisations, they can be evaluated and measured in terms of achieving projected changes in services to clients, service structure and profile.