



MEDIA RELEASE

For release: 9 July 2021

JOINT STATEMENT

Joining together across our region for better healthcare

Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, Stawell Regional Health, Wimmera Health Care Group and Ballarat Health Services, are working together to deliver better health outcomes for our communities now and into the future.

A proposal for these health services to come together formally and create a new health service, supported by a comprehensive business case, has been approved by the four health service boards and will be sent to the Secretary of the Department of Health for consideration.

While the Department reviews the proposal, all four health services are continuing extensive engagement with staff and the community on top of the community engagement which has already occurred in each local community.

A new, combined health service would have the scale to shape a better health system for all parts of the Wimmera and Grampians region. In the proposed structure, all services will continue to deliver health care to their communities.

The proposal would enable the provision of safe, connected and people-centred healthcare, closer to home. There will be significant opportunities for sharing resources and working together, creating career pathways while providing more services locally and reducing the need for patients to travel.

Staff and community engagement across all four communities has helped define clear commitments should the proposal proceed:

- Under the new, combined health service each of the four health services will continue to provide public healthcare for the Grampians and Wimmera regions;
- Retention of the local hospital names and identity;
- Patients from Edenhope, Stawell, Horsham and Dimboola and Ballarat will continue to access high quality care from their local hospital;
- A new board will be established with the necessary skills and local representation;
- There will be no loss of services at any of the health care services;
- There will be no job losses; and,
- Past and future fundraising will be tied to the community and the purposes it was raised for.

All health services remain committed to an open and transparent process with patients, staff and communities in each local community to develop an inclusive strategic services plan, defining our shared vision and plan for the future.

Our priority will be to provide certainty and confidence for staff and communities, and – as always – ensuring high quality care across the Wimmera and Grampians regions.

Under the Health Act (1988), any proposal for voluntary amalgamation must be submitted to the Department of Health for Secretary review and subsequent approval by the Minister for Health.

Quotes attributable to board chairs:

WHCG Board Chair

“We are excited by the opportunities a new health service could bring. Should approval be given, it will create better services for our patients and career opportunities for our staff and support enhanced health and wellbeing for our communities.

“After extensive consultation with the other boards, the community and staff, I am confident about the future of health care for our local area and the region. The new entity will have the scale to shape a better health system for all parts of the Wimmera and Grampians region, enabling safer, connected and people-centred health care, closer to home.”

EDMH Board Chair

“This decision is an important milestone for our four health services. It comes after an extensive decision-making process, including consulting widely across all four communities and undertaking detailed due diligence.

“This process has highlighted the persistent challenges we face in providing safe, accessible and sustainable health care for our patients and has highlighted the scale of the opportunities we have from working together. We have identified new and practical opportunities to provide more services locally and reduce the need for patients to travel.”

SRH Board Chair

“Our community has told us what’s needed to ensure greater health care for the future. A new formalised partnership would mean we could provide better services to our local communities close to home, whilst maintaining our local identity and the sense of community that people value.

“Should this proceed, it will strengthen our workforce and unlock new opportunities for sharing resources and working together. Together we can achieve so much for our community and the whole region.”

BHS Board Chair

“Our decision-making process highlighted some of the great things about our services. We have highly skilled and dedicated staff that provide leading healthcare to tens of thousands of patients every year. We have great connections and partnerships with our communities, a proud legacy of care and innovation, and trusted relationships with patients, families, carers, volunteers and other health services in the region.

“We are committed to a well-planned and resourced implementation process and to including our patients, staff and partners in the decisions that impact them.”

Media invitation

The board chairs of the four organisations will be available via a Zoom press conference tomorrow morning, details below.

Date 9th July 2021
Time 1.45pm
Location Zoom (link to be provided on RSVP)
RSVP media@bhs.org.au

ENDS