



FACT SHEET
13 September 2021

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED – STAFF OPPORTUNITIES

Each fortnight, Care For Our Region will address key questions raised by local communities. This fortnight, CEOs from each health service answer key questions on how a new health service can provide more opportunities for staff members.

Will there be an expectation staff will have to travel to a different area for work?

There is no expectation existing staff would be required to work across the health services to fill gaps, unless they see it as an opportunity and would like to explore this avenue. The health service may result in great opportunities for staff to take up short- and long-term roles across all the services. The choice is up to them. For future roles, there is potential for staff to be employed across multiple campuses.

Why is this a good thing for staff?

The creation of a new health service will provide a number of opportunities for staff as we share resources, skills and services. Opportunities include:

Greater scope and breadth of practice

As a single health service, we can offer a greater scope and breadth of practice which in turn can offer greater opportunities for staff to develop and maintain their skills. This can include clinical rotations through different sites or specialty areas, joint training and development, and practice support to enable a greater scope of practice locally.

Wider workforce pool

A wider pool of resources allows services to cover short-term gaps or challenges in workforce availability more easily. This can include rostering and other staffing arrangements that offer less on-call hours and more readily available back-fill for leave. Joint recruitment for specialist roles will help alleviate demand as we share skills and resources across the region. This approach can reduce the workload burden on specialist staff or GPs and promote greater retention.

It also offers better support for staff in terms of peer collaboration, shared resources and broader experience levels. There are also opportunities to participate in regional strategies and innovations.

Medical and clinical training placements

With a combined health service there is a real opportunity to expand and coordinate clinical placement across the region. A new regional health service can create rural-focussed student placement models to provide positive and extended rural training experiences (i.e. 12 months and longer).

For example, a medical student at Horsham that typically does one short term (three month) placement as part of an otherwise metro-centric education training program could have the opportunity to complete 12 to 24 months within our region. The ability to retain graduates is enhanced by a more complete rural training experience that a larger service could provide. This is just one example of a training program we can explore.

Training and development

Employment within a leading rural training institution provides prospective and current employees with greater learning, development opportunities and career pathways. A strong training environment is a major drawcard for clinicians across disciplines and levels of seniority.

As our education units come together, there is an opportunity share resources, course design and delivery, in both clinical and non-clinical services. This will improve training opportunities across the region, supporting our region to offer a larger variety of development programs so we can grow our own local workforce.

As a single independent health service, we can offer more opportunities for training and development across many disciplines including apprenticeships and accredited training and traineeships programs. This will encourage participants to take up training in the region and provide them with a great experience so that they are more likely to stay in the region. The aim is to grow people locally and ensure they can progress their careers close to home.

How will these opportunities be realised?

A detailed workforce plan will be developed as a part of implementation to set out precisely how and when these opportunities can be realised.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

SUE ROBERTS – EDENHOPE AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL CLINICAL TRAINING COORDINATOR

Sue has been working at Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital for nearly twenty years, working her way up the ranks to her current position of After-Hours Coordination and Clinical Training Coordinator. She devotes two days week to her Clinical Training role where she works closely with Wimmera Health Care Group to implement and develop training programs. Sue is passionate about the idea of coming together.

"A single health service offers infinite possibilities – it's very exciting. As part of the Grampians Regional Educator Group, I've seen the amazing amount of knowledge, experience and skills that are in the region that we can tap into," Sue said.

"For some of the smaller health services like Edenhope, we have limited staff numbers, but we still must ensure clinical governance, so everybody wears a lot of different hats. If we tapped into a wider health service that would take the pressure off and we would be able to put more time and effort into education and training.

"Currently I create learning packages and education sessions, which the other health services could create as well. By coming together, instead of us all doing our own thing we can standardise it and utilise everybody's different skills. A single health service would be fantastic and free up our time to offer more development opportunities.

"Improved education will ensure we're providing best practice of care and in turn empower our workforce and staff. Staff satisfaction would improve which will help staff retention. As a small Urgent Car Centre, you don't know what's going to come in the door. Your skills and knowledge must be quite varied, and our staff are fantastic at keeping up their knowledge and skills, but you always need to be preparing for a case you might not have seen before. Education can help us prepare," Sue said.

MICHAEL KIRBY – STAWELL REGIONAL HEALTH DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL & RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES

Mick Kirby is on secondment at Stawell Regional Health to cover the Director of Clinical & Residential Care Services, while she is away on maternity leave. He saw the opportunity to hone his skills in a different area and support Stawell in a fixed term position that can be difficult to fill.

“I’ve been here for six weeks and it’s been a breath of fresh air to work in a new environment. I have really noticed how prominent the community focus is and the impact it has in all decisions made around the community,” Michael said.

“It’s a very exciting time to be here as we explore the new opportunities that coming together could present. I’m in a great position as I’ve been able to experience healthcare across the region, not just in Ballarat.

“I’ve noticed the different processes across the health services and see opportunities for improvement at Stawell and to tap into resources from somewhere like Ballarat, and there have already been examples in recent weeks. My secondment up here is an example of how we can work together.

CHRISTINE GUNN – WIMMERA HEALTH CARE GROUP 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 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.

CRAIG WILDING - BALLARAT HEALTH SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PRIMARY AND COMMUNITY CARE

As Ballarat Health Services Executive Director of Primary and Community Care, Craig Wilding sees a range of areas in which staff can have increased opportunities through a bigger service.

“In terms of increased education through partnership, we currently have a Dental graduate who is based in Wimmera and comes to Ballarat Health services for training and receives telehealth peer support from us to complete her training. When she finishes her training, she will be able to continue working in Horsham. The ultimate aim is to have a student program that rotates from Ballarat up to Horsham, improving the services in regional communities,” Mr Wilding said.

“Once you start getting students in place that know and like the area, they will want to stay on. We’re also unique in what we do in terms of training at Ballarat, we provide dental assistants to support students, whereas in Melbourne and other regional clinics it’s the students helping the student. We offer them more responsibility which helps them to learn.

“We’ve previously had arrangements with allied health and community programs to improve services across the Grampians region. The whole idea is to invest into joint recruitment opportunities for Horsham, to offer a position that is longer term and can rotate through both services. When we do workforce planning for allied health and nursing teams, we can say while we’re recruiting here in Ballarat what are we doing to help there in Horsham, Stawell or Edenhope.

We have a really good foundation for progressing things forward and offer these programs to Stawell, Horsham and Edenhope. Having these conversations and being closer as a team allows improvements to actually happen,” Mr Wilding said.

The Boards of Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, Stawell Regional Health, Wimmera Health Care Group and Ballarat Health Services believe they will be healthier, stronger, together.

For more information or to have your say visit carefourregion.com.au