

Albury Wodonga Health Integration Update

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Welcome to the Albury Wodonga Health newsletter. The newsletter will keep staff and stakeholders updated on the integration of acute health services for the Albury Wodonga community. The newsletter will be published once a fortnight.

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IN THIS EDITION

The Albury Wodonga Health Model

Appointment of a Chair, Board & CEO

Managing the transition

Business as usual

Staying in touch

The Albury Wodonga Health Model

In December 2008 the Victorian and NSW Governments formally endorsed the model for an integrated health service for the Albury Wodonga community. The Victorian Minister for Health and the NSW Minister for Health announced that the new entity, Albury Wodonga Health (AWH), would be scheduled to be operational from 1 July 2009. This announcement is the result of a significant amount of work and cooperation between the two governments.

The new integrated health service will be a Victorian public health service, established under the Victorian *Health Services Act 1988*. It will operate from two campuses: one in Wodonga, and one in Albury. From 1 July 2009 the new health service will have financial and operational responsibility for inpatient and outpatient services at both sites (excluding mental health inpatient services at Albury). It is expected that after consultation with all stakeholders, all mental health and community health services will also be integrated into the new health service in the medium term.

AWH will be governed by a board. The initial board will have equal numbers of directors nominated by the Victorian Minister for Health and the NSW Minister for Health. The chairperson of AWH will be agreed by both Ministers.

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the NSW and Victorian Governments will outline the funding and administrative arrangements for AWH. Funding principles, industrial relations principles, and risk matters have now been agreed by both States.

Appointment of a Chair, Board & CEO for AWH

The establishment of the new health service and the appointment of the Chair of AWH will mark the next major milestone in the integration process. The work on appointing a Chair and Board for AWH is progressing well and a public announcement is expected in late March. Work is also progressing on the recruitment of a CEO for the new health service.

Managing the transition

The project has now moved into the transition phase. A major effort is required for the new health service to start on 1 July. However, this current transition phase is only the beginning. The AWH Board and Executive will have an ongoing role in managing the integration process over a number of years.

An Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) between Victoria and NSW will continue to be the formal mechanism for cooperation in relation to integration. The IDC comprises senior officials from both the NSW and Victorian Departments. It meets monthly and is focusing on the major strategic issues.

A Planning and Establishment Committee (PEC) has also been formed to coordinate the significant transition planning activities that are now underway. The PEC brings together Victorian and NSW Government project staff and local managers.

The PEC comprises the CEO of Wodonga Regional Health Service, Mr Ray Sweeney, the Site Manager of Albury Base Hospital, Ms Catherine O'Connell, and representatives from Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS), Hume region, and the head offices of DHS Victoria and NSW Health. The PEC is chaired by Ms Jan Norton, DHS Project Director. It holds weekly teleconferences and meets monthly in Albury Wodonga.

The PEC is focusing on core business transition activities required to ensure that AWH is able to effectively function from 1 July. Work is also being undertaken in relation to information systems and patient administration systems. The PEC is also responsible for communicating project information to staff and stakeholders during the transition process.

Approaches to the integration of clinical services are being developed through the WRHS and ABH joint Executive. Most of this work will be progressed by the new AWH Board and Executive after 1 July 2009.

Business as usual

For the great majority of staff, it will be business as usual from 1 July 2009. Day to day business in both hospitals will continue in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

There will be some immediate change associated with integration but this will be minimal. Many of the changes will occur in the weeks, months and years following formal integration. Where there is change, there will be formal advice from management on the change.

The key point is that it is business as usual on both campuses.

Staying up to date

A website has been set up at www.health.vic.gov.au/awh to provide you with up-to-date information on integration. The AWH website includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which are updated regularly based on questions received by the Project Team. The agreed industrial relations principles that will apply to AWH are also now available on the website

You can also send any questions regarding AWH and the integration to awh@dhs.vic.gov.au.