

ALBURY WODONGA HEALTH INTEGRATION UPDATE

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Welcome to this fortnight's Albury Wodonga Health newsletter. Transition work is progressing well. The Planning and Establishment Committee met in Albury today, with discussions focusing on key business and clinical transition work required to support integration.

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IT and Patient Records Data Collections Working Parties Established

The Planning and Establishment Committee has formed a number of working parties over the last few weeks to look at specific transition issues.

An Information Technology Working Party comprising representatives from GSAHS, Hume IT Alliance, WRHS and ABH has been established and has held an initial meeting. Two sub-groups have been formed:

- Financial Systems; and
- Communications and Connectivity across the Albury and Wodonga campuses.

The priority for these groups is ensuring that workable systems are in place to enable AWH to be managed as one entity from 1 July. In general, the existing systems will continue to be used post integration with longer term solutions to be developed over time in consultation with respective users.

A Patient Records and Data Collections Working Party has also been established, comprising representatives from GSAHS Area Health Information Management, WRHS Health Information Management, ABH Health Information Management, the Victorian Department of Human Services, and the NSW Department of Health. Terms of Reference and a work program are being developed for this group via the Joint Executive. This group will work closely with the Information Technology Working Party.

Frequently Asked Questions

The Project Team has responded to a number of questions about integration that have been received by email or via management at the two hospitals. Some of the more commonly asked questions and responses are provided below for your information.

If you have any questions about integration that are not covered below, please visit the website at www.health.vic.gov.au/awh or send your questions to awh@dhs.vic.gov.au

Why should the two hospitals integrate?

- The integration of the Albury and Wodonga health services will provide border residents with ready access to one of the largest health services between Sydney and Melbourne.
- The new integrated health service will meet the changing needs of the border community. It will ensure delivery of the best possible health care services into the future.
- The benefits of integration include:
 - improved continuity of care and more equitable access to services
 - better training opportunities for clinical staff
 - greater recognition and visibility of the combined health service, leading to improved recruitment and retention of the health workforce
 - greater "critical mass" assisting in attracting a greater range of specialist services to the region
- The new integrated health service will provide a strong foundation for service growth to match population growth in the border region.

When will Albury Wodonga Health be operational?

- Albury Wodonga Health is scheduled to be operational from 1 July 2009.
- There is still a substantial amount of work to be undertaken in order for this to occur.
- The establishment of the new health service and the appointment of the Chairperson of Albury Wodonga Health, which is scheduled to occur in March 2009, will mark the next major milestone in the integration process.

Why has Albury Base Hospital come under the control of a Victorian health service rather than Wodonga Regional Health service coming under the control of a NSW health service?

- Both the New South Wales and Victorian Governments agree that this is the most appropriate model available for the new health service under the legislation of either state.
- Professor Duckett's 2005/06 review of progress of integration of hospital services in Albury Wodonga recommended that Albury Wodonga Health be established as a Victorian public health service following extensive consultation with key stakeholders.

Who has been consulted?

- All key stakeholders, including the community, local government, unions, hospital staff and the medical community, have been consulted in various ways as the integration project has progressed.
- In particular, Professor Duckett consulted extensively with community opinion leaders and senior clinicians in his review of progress in 2005/2006. He identified widespread local support for the integration of acute health services in Albury

Wodonga.

- Now that the broad model for integration has been agreed, the focus is on how Albury Wodonga Health will work on the ground. Staff and other key stakeholders will continue to be consulted as integration progresses.

Will residents in the two cities have equitable access to the services?

- Ensuring that the community has access to a quality health service is a key objective for Albury Wodonga Health and the two governments.
- A key objective for the Board of Albury Wodonga Health will be to ensure all members of the community have equitable access to acute health services provided by the new integrated health service.

What services will Albury Wodonga Health offer?

- Albury Wodonga Health will provide the acute health services (excluding mental health) currently provided at Albury Base Hospital, and all services currently provided at Wodonga Regional Health Service.
- Planning and consultation regarding integration of mental health and community health services will follow.
- Over time, there will be opportunities to increase the level of service coordination between the two sites.
- The greater "critical mass" of the new integrated health service is expected to assist in attracting a greater range of specialist services to the region.

What opportunities will there be for staff to discuss how AWH will operate?

- There will be regular communications with staff in Victoria and NSW during the transition period.
- A range of communication methods will be used.
- The first staff meetings were held on 19 December 2008 at WRHS and ABH.
- A website has been established.
- Over the coming months there will further staff meetings and this fortnightly newsletter on integration.

Further information

Visit: www.health.vic.gov.au/awh or email: awh@dhs.vic.gov.au