
URGENT MOTION**1. Healesville Hospital****Background/Supporting Information:**

Eastern Health released a press release on 28 March 2013 stating that it has finalised the health services 10 year Strategic Clinical Service Plan known as *Eastern Health 2022*. The original draft plan was released with little community consultation in December 2012 and has been the subject of considerable community protest since.

Following from the cessation of birthing services in November, the draft plan proposed:

- *Increased antenatal and postnatal services in the local area*
- *Increasing acute, inpatient general medical services*
- *Continuing inpatient-based acute geriatric medicine services*
- *Moving surgical services to Yarra Ranges Health in Lilydale and other Eastern Health sites*
- *Exploring options for renal dialysis services*
- *Improving facilities for community health services*
- *Increasing ambulatory-based palliative care and mental health services*
- *Increasing acute specialist clinics, including cardiology, endocrinology (diabetes), gastroenterology, respiratory and pain management*
- *Completing a capital upgrade of the site, with plans to commence a \$3m upgrade*
- *Working in partnership with others to improve public transport and car parking at the site.*

The draft plan was met with significant community concern, and community members are extremely dissatisfied with the Clinical Services Plan as well. The lack of any meaningful community engagement and consultation on the plan and the loss of surgical services are major concerns for the community. The lack of certainty as to the delivery of many of the services targeted for “exploration”, of funds to deliver on the capital upgrade, and the inadequacies of the work to deal with issues of transport disadvantage are all seen as highly problematic.

Eastern Health has stated that *Eastern Health 2022* has responded to consultation and has amended the draft plan to include:

- *Endoscopy services*
- *Low-complexity surgery*
- *Renal dialysis*
- *Provision for a birthing suite (with the qualifying statement “in preparation for any future increase in demand for birthing services – and if the appropriate mix of skilled staff becomes available to support a safe, high-quality birthing service”).*

Members of the Save Healesville Hospital Community Group have met with members of the Eastern Health Board to express their concerns regarding loss of services and inadequate community consultation. They are also advocating strongly to the State Government for Healesville and District Hospital to become a rural health centre. The rationale regarding becoming a rural health centre includes the issues of access to additional funding, greater community control, and a capacity to determine service mix.

Healesville and surrounding communities nearby are among Yarra Ranges most disadvantaged areas. Evidence shows that high levels of disadvantage also result in lowered health status.

Conclusion

Access to health services has been identified as a significant issue within the consultation currently being undertaken in preparation of the Municipal Health and Well Being Plan. Any further reduction of services will impact on the health and well being of the community. There are high levels of disadvantage in the Healesville and surrounding communities with Healesville having one of the lowest levels of health status in the municipality.

Section 26 (2)(c) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 states *'The function of a Council under this Act is to seek to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipal district ...'* By undertaking the advocacy initiatives outlined above, Yarra Ranges Council is fulfilling one of its fundamental obligations under the Act.

Urgent Motion:

The matter meets Council's urgent business guidelines on the basis that:

- a) It arises out of a matter which has arisen since the distribution of the Council Agenda;
- b) The item cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next Ordinary Meeting as there is a need for an advocacy plan to be implemented immediately.

MOTION

1. That Council:

- a) ***Advocate to all local State and Federal members outlining the need for residents in the Yarra Valley to have access to high quality surgical and non-surgical health services;***
- b) ***Support the plan for the Save the Healesville Hospital Community Group to develop a detailed business plan for Healesville Hospital to have rural health service status through writing to Victorian and Federal Government to provide funds for the development of such a plan, and***
- c) ***Advocate to Eastern Health for further consultation and engagement with the Healesville community by Eastern Health to reflect ongoing discussions to revive, maintain and expand services.***

2. That a further report be provided to Council outlining the current issues facing Yarra Ranges in relation to access to health services.