

MEDIA RELEASE

Sue Race, Chief Executive Officer



19 October 2021

Maldon Hospital and Castlemaine Health exploring how to come together

Mount Alexander communities to have say on joint health service's future

The Boards of Maldon Hospital and Castlemaine Health have jointly agreed to explore a voluntary amalgamation they believe would deliver better health services for the communities of Mount Alexander, and secure Maldon Hospital in its current form for generations to come. The Boards will now commission a proposal that will examine the potential benefits of unification.

The announcement builds on the long and close history of cooperation that has spanned 42 years, delivering complete healthcare and wellbeing services for the region, and kicks off six weeks of community engagement into what a unified service could look like.

Maldon Hospital Board Chair Vanessa Healy said she was excited about the possibilities of further health services being delivered to the Maldon community, and exploring how their flagship aged care offering could be enhanced.

Castlemaine Health Chair Peggy Ronnau said it was overdue for both health services to examine how a new unified health service could benefit the communities of Mount Alexander.

Currently the two services have a joint CEO but separate boards, with many shared staff and services. The two health services also share common concerns over changing community profiles and increasing demand for health, wellbeing and aged care services.

CEO Sue Race said "Over the last few months, we have started making changes, big changes, to the way we deliver healthcare in this region. This needs to continue to ensure the sustainability of services for the communities of Mount Alexander, with our highest priority being Maldon Hospital.

"These changes, such as the recent integration of CHIRP Community Health into Castlemaine Health, have been motivated by demand from patients and residents, changes in the Mount Alexander demographic, dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the implications of two health Royal Commissions and reassessing how the services allocate resources."

Given this, the boards of both Maldon Hospital and Castlemaine Health agreed it was time to explore the benefits of voluntary amalgamation.

Maldon Hospital Board Chair Vanessa Healy said this was about meeting the future healthcare needs of people in and around Maldon, and supporting accessible care as close as possible to home.

"We need to examine how a unified service could free up the compliance burden that takes up so much of our staff's time, while channelling this into frontline services tailored to Maldon's needs," she said.

Media Contact: Janine McCarthy | 03 5471 3505 | jmccarthy@castlemainehealth.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

Sue Race, Chief Executive Officer



“We’re keen to provide Maldon with more opportunities to access publicly funded allied health services such as physiotherapy and community health services.

“This examination is about respecting and building on Maldon Hospital’s 161-year history in our community, investing in our staff and supporting our future,” she said.

Castlemaine Health Board Chair Peggy Ronnau said “We have a growing population which is increasing the demand for better healthcare every day. We need to plan now for how we can meet community needs, while building on the momentum created with new partner CHIRP Community Health.

“We are acting now to make our health resources work better for everyone and to building on our long and close history of cooperation,” she said.

Staff of both services were introduced to the project this week and will be deeply involved over the next two months. Communities will also have opportunity to provide their feedback on the plan with a comprehensive outreach program starting next week.

Vanessa Healy said that this engagement with staff and community will be methodical, consultative, timely and transparent, and will ensure that the best outcome for the community.

“I encourage the Maldon community to embrace this proposed change and contribute to the conversation over the next few weeks about how we can meet the healthcare challenges in this region,” she said.

The exploration will include the potential benefits of an amalgamation of services, which, under the Health Services Act (1988) would need to be voluntary and agreed between the boards – and benefit each community. Change will only happen if the boards are in agreement, if community benefit is assured, and if approved by the Minister for Health.

More detail on the engagement program and how the community can get involved can be found at www.maldhosp.vic.gov.au.