

**Media Release
For Immediate Distribution**



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Celebrating Community Health

Northern District Community Health (NDCH) will be launching their campaign for 'Better Health Outcomes for Regional Communities' in Pyramid Hill on Wednesday 15 August 2018 and invite locals and the regional community to join them from 10.00am at their office at 12 Victoria Street for morning tea.

"We are joining with other Community Health services across Victoria calling on the next state government to better leverage and support community health services to meet the needs of our clients and communities," NDCH CEO Mandy Hutchinson said.

The event will call on the next Victorian government to ensure that Community Health has the capacity to reach every Victorian with truly integrated care within their community. "Community Health can help with big issues like avoiding or reducing hospitalisations," Ms Hutchinson said.

We are holding the event in Pyramid Hill to highlight the fact that we need funding to create a safer space for residents to access health care.

Regional Community Health services are stating that rural areas do not have the population to support the current model of funding, making those areas more marginalised compared to areas with much larger populations. Equity of access for rural communities needs to be on the agenda of the next government," Ms Hutchinson said. "Outreach does not work. The cost of travel means that services won't travel out of the larger towns and cities. That's why place based services – services located where people need them - are more cost effective." Currently, funding is being given to bigger organisations who do not share or deliver a place based approach, so people are missing out.

Whichever party holds government after the November state election, NDCH and other Community Health services are asking for:

- 1) A dedicated annual \$60 million Community Health service capital fund be established to ensure existing facilities can adequately support growth and continue to provide a service that meets the needs of the community in fit-for-purpose facilities.
- 2) Leverage Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution funding to establish new community health centres. These centres would be run by existing community health services and be registered under the Health Services Act.
- 3) Allocation of 29 registered Community Health services preferred supplier status from the Victorian Government for provision of services to vulnerable communities.
- 4) Delivery of additional funding to enable community health services to keep pace with demand brought about by population growth and to provide a stronger health safety net for vulnerable Victorians, to help keep them healthy and out of public hospital emergency departments.
- 5) Investment of \$4 million to fund six pilot hospital diversion projects including supporting partnerships between hospitals and community health services that see people presenting to hospital appropriately triaged to a community health setting. This would ensure people

receive the right care in the right place, alleviating demand on the public hospital system and ensuring Community Health services are adequately equipped to support these clients.

- 6) An increase in public dental funding to reduce wait times and allow more people to receive dental care in a timely manner, reducing the potential impacts on other areas of their health.

“Advocating to governments for the needs of our rural and regional communities is an integral part of the work Community Health services do,” said Ms Hutchinson. “And there is also lots to celebrate.”

NDCH will also use the event to launch their newly redeveloped Service Information Book, which now includes greater detail on the wide variety of services offered from their locations in Kerang, Cohuna, Pyramid Hill, Boort, Quambatook, Koondrook, Charlton, Sea Lake, and Wycheproof. The book also includes information on client rights, feedback, referral pathways, and fees.

“Most people aren’t aware just how many services we offer,” Ms Hutchinson said, “so this booklet is an important resource for our community and I would encourage everyone to pick one up.”

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Media Enquiries

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