

Wednesday, 4 November 2020

NDCH 31st Annual General Meeting

“30 Years Strong – The Journey So Far”

Northern District Community Health (NDCH) will hold its 31st Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 18th November. The theme for this year’s AGM is “30 Years Strong – The Journey So Far”. 2020 marks thirty years since NDCH first started providing services into the community in early 1990. This year’s AGM will be the first time in the agency’s history that the meeting will take place online instead of a public setting.

“What a year 2020 has been!” Mandy Hutchinson, NDCH CEO said. “And while there have been challenges like many of us have never experienced before, there is much to celebrate.”

Ms. Hutchinson said that while COVID-19 has had a massive impact on the way NDCH has provided services, it has also been a chance to prove how important community health is. “In partnership with other health services, we were able to support people in hospital to return home with appropriate care,” she said. “This freed up hospitals to prepare for any influx of patients with COVID-19 infections.”

“We also had to change the way we do everything,” she said. “That way we could protect our staff, our clients and the broader community.” While people couldn’t leave their homes due to the lockdown, and as a way to reduce risk of infection, NDCH clinicians started seeing clients via telehealth. So, NDCH has continued to provide services to people who cannot go without them.

“Those services that could be provided without people leaving their homes, like a doctor’s consult or a counselling session, were provided over the phone or a person’s computer,” Ms. Hutchinson said. “And those appointments that could only be provided face-to-face, like podiatry and wound dressing, were done under the strictest of infection control protocols. We had to assess the risk to the person of coming into one of our sites including the risk of them getting the virus. We also had to assess the risk of them possibly bringing the virus into our buildings and infecting staff and other clients.”

Ms. Hutchinson said the organisation manned phones to screen people for appointments before they came in, as well as managing the COVID-19 screening and assessment clinics (SAC) right across the service area. “Throw into the middle of that the annual flu clinics where people had to come in to get a vaccine,” she said. “It all took a lot of extra work but I am so proud of everyone at NDCH and the community for stepping up and doing what we had to do to get through.”

NDCH, which started as Northern District Community Health Service in 1989 after the appointment of its first CEO, continues to play a vital part in rural health services. Like many community health services right across Victoria, NDCH has been an essential part of the State’s response to the pandemic, including the second wave. The organisation has been at the table for local, regional and state meetings in assuring effective pandemic response. “And while we have come a long way, there’s still a lot of unknowns about when we may have a vaccine,” Ms. Hutchinson said. “So COVID-19 and our management of it will continue for some time to come.”



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Ms. Hutchinson said this is why the 31st AGM for NDCH is such a great chance to celebrate the history of the organisation and the achievements of the last year. “Our guest speakers this year are four great women who have been part of NDCH since the beginning,” she said. “Board Directors Merril Kelly (current Chair) and Margaret Piccoli (former Chair) are speaking. Then we also have our first CEO Elaine Bartram, who retired in 2016, and Lianne Lloyd who has been employed here for thirty years in an administrative role.”

During the AGM, NDCH will present awards for service recognition, including the appointment of the inaugural NDCH Life Governors. Life Governorship is awarded to people who have made a significant contribution to the organisation through voluntary, philanthropic and/or professional service.

Due to the continued need to keep to social isolation protocols, the AGM will take place across Zoom. People wishing to attend to celebrate the history and work of NDCH can RSVP by Monday 16th November by visiting the NDCH website www.ndch.org.au/events or emailing rsvp@ndch.org.au. People can also call the Customer Engagement Team on 54510 0200 and register their attendance. Attendees will be emailed a Zoom link before the meeting so they can watch from the comfort of their own home or office.

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