

Wednesday 31 October 2012

Board begins building healthy futures for Illawarra Shoalhaven

The foundation which will underpin the delivery of quality health care services across the region over the next decade has been set with the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Board endorsing the *Health Care Services Plan 2012-2022 - Working Together Building Healthy Futures*.

Finalisation of the plan comes after a detailed six-month consultation phase, facilitated by external consultants, which has included extensive discussion, input and feedback from almost 800 participants representing clinicians and hospital staff, general practitioners, the community, consumer groups and other local stakeholders. Planners have also used extensive data analysis to outline future demand for services across a growing region with changing demography, health priorities and clinical practice.

ISLHD Board Chair, Clinical Professor Denis King, thanked all of the participants for their input in developing the plan, which sets a clear direction for the delivery of appropriate and equitable services to meet the needs of communities across an expanse that will be home to around 425,000 residents by 2021.

“This plan reinforces the District’s strengths and identifies key areas where quality evidence-based decision making will enable us to operate most effectively and efficiently. There will of course be different views about priorities and resources, but as a Board we have a responsibility to provide most benefit for the most people, within the workforce and financial constraints that are a reality of our health system.

“The District now has a blueprint for building healthy futures for all communities in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven,” he said.

The plan is based on the creation of three acute hubs at Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven. This will reinforce Wollongong’s capacity as a specialist tertiary referral and teaching centre whilst expanding the range of services provided at Shellharbour for a rapidly growing population. Shoalhaven’s development as a hub for the southern sector of the District will focus on service expansion over the next 10 years across areas including cancer and mental health.

“The significant enhancement of services across the three hubs has already begun with substantial capital works investment well underway. Construction on Wollongong Hospital’s \$86 million *Illawarra Elective Surgical Services Centre* has commenced, so too has the \$14 million enhancement of the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre and the \$34.8 million Shoalhaven Regional Cancer Centre. In the past two years Shellharbour Hospital has seen a \$10 million upgrade to its campus with the NSW Government allocating a further \$10 million for future enhancements,” said Clinical Professor King.

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The Bulli and Coledale Hospital precincts will be developed into Centres of Excellence for Aged Care, while Port Kembla Hospital will become a Centre of Excellence for Ambulatory and Primary Health Care, with networked outpatient and community services at Kiama Hospital.

Bulli Hospital's role as a vital component of the District's integrated network of emergency services has been confirmed. The service provided will remain at the current level between 7am and 10pm daily.

"This means Bulli Hospital will have a clearly defined role in the provision of emergency primary care services across the District. When people arrive at Bulli, they will know the hospital specialises in lower acuity emergency presentations while more serious cases requiring a higher level of care will be treated at Wollongong – the region's specialist tertiary referral hospital," said Clinical Professor King.

"With a total of 89% of presentations to Bulli for GP-type ailments, it makes good sense that Bulli's support role in the network is confirmed. This not only gives the community reassurance about the type of service provided at Bulli and when; but it will also strengthen capability at Wollongong and reduce waiting times for those who present to hospital with less serious conditions."

The Health Care Services Plan also highlights the need to expand health care services for indigenous communities and those that experience relative disadvantage. It looks at focussing on providing efficient treatment and care in high volume services enabling ISLHD to build additional service capacity. A need has been identified to improve internal collaboration and extend external partnerships to increase local community access to health services, as well as the need to implement a sustainable medical staffing program to meet future demand.

The complete *Health Care Services Plan 2012-2022 - Working Together Building Healthy Futures*, as well as an overview, will be available on the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District website www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au from Wednesday 31 October.