

**Monday 17 November 2025**

## **Letter to the community from Alan Studley, Alexandra District Health Board member and Taggerty resident**

Dear community,

As someone who has lived and worked in this district, I know how important our health services are to the people of Alexandra, nearby towns and right across Murrindindi. Alexandra District Health has always been more than a hospital. It's a part of the story of this town and the people who built it.

That's exactly why our Board is taking planning for the future so seriously. We've been looking at how we can make sure our local health service stays strong, sustainable and local for years to come. That's what our exploration of a voluntary amalgamation with Eastern Health is all about.

I want to be clear – this is not a takeover and it's not being forced on us. It's about protecting what matters and improving what we can. We're already working closely with Eastern Health, and it's been paying off. Because of that partnership, people can now get cancer treatment and blood and iron infusions right here in Alexandra instead of having to travel over the hill. Our nurses and doctors have access to training and support that smaller hospitals often can't provide on their own. That's a big win for patients and staff alike.

But the truth is, small health services like ours are under continuing and growing pressure. Despite the hard work of Alexandra District Health leaders, staff and the Board, it's getting harder to attract medical staff, keep up with rising costs, and offer the range of services people need as our community gets older and health needs get more complex.

The simple fact is, we can't do this on our own anymore. If we stand still, things will only get tougher, and the services we rely on such as urgent care and specialist care might start to slip away. That's why we need to tap into the strength and scale of a bigger health service – so we can keep caring for our communities well into the future.

A possible voluntary amalgamation means we'd come together by choice, as equals, to strengthen what we have. Alexandra District Health service would keep its name, its staff, its fundraising. Every dollar raised here would stay here and be used to support local care. The health service would still be here for urgent care, acute patients and community health. What would change is our ability to do more. This could mean more visiting specialists, enhanced local services such as X-ray, ultrasound and infusion care, expanded hospital-based treatment, and greater career opportunities for staff. It could also support nurses and allied health professionals to broaden their skills and scope of practice to provide enhanced care.

Some people have said they're worried we'll lose our local voice. I understand that completely. The Board and I want to make sure local people continue to have a say in how our services are run. We've all seen what happens when decisions get made from afar, and that's not what this is about. If a voluntary amalgamation ever did go ahead, there would still be local people leading the health service at the executive level and at the decision-making table. The Minister for Health would appoint a new Board for the new entity, and it's expected that it would draw on the experience and local knowledge from both existing Boards. Our Community Engagement Committee would also keep playing an active role to make sure community voices continue to guide how services are run. It's about keeping local input strong – not losing it.

Some in the community have said they value the partnerships we already have with other services and wonder if that could be enough without voluntary amalgamation. It's a fair question. The truth is, partnerships only get you so far. They rely on goodwill and short-term projects, not long-term certainty. A voluntary amalgamation could bring stronger accountability and clearer decision-making – one structure, one plan, and a shared commitment to our communities. It could let us move faster to expand local services like oncology and dialysis, grow our workforce, and make sure we can keep delivering quality care close to home for years to come.

And then there's the question about what this means for nearby health services. Each Board has to make the decisions that are right for their own health service or hospital. Our job is to plan for the future of Alexandra District Health and the communities it serves. Other Boards will make the choices that best suit their own services, just as we're doing now. Whatever the outcome of this voluntary amalgamation exploration process, Alexandra District Health will continue to play an active role in the East Metro and Murrindindi Local Health Service Network.

At the end of the day, our job as a Board is to protect and enhance our community's health services. Protect the things that make Alexandra District Health special – our people, our culture, and our care. Enhance what we can offer through new services, new specialists and better, connected healthcare.

I know even talking about possible change can feel uncomfortable, and people will have different views – and that's okay. But I do ask that people take the time to learn the facts about what's really being explored – not proposed. Visit [connectingcare.net](https://connectingcare.net), attend a local Tea Talk, ask questions, and share feedback via email at [feedback@connectingcare.net](mailto:feedback@connectingcare.net) or by completing this short [survey](#). This is about protecting quality health care and enhancing it – not losing it.

Like most of you, I want to know that if my family or neighbours need care, it will be there for them, close to home, delivered by people who know them. That's what this voluntary amalgamation exploration process is about – making sure we can keep that promise for the long haul.

**Alan Studley**

Proud Taggerty community member and Board Director, Alexandra District Health