

Latest update: 27 August 2026

Community Frequently Asked Questions

1. What has been announced?

The Victorian Minister for Health has approved the voluntary amalgamation of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health. The voluntary amalgamation will take effect from 1 November 2026.

This decision follows a comprehensive business case and a joint recommendation from the Boards of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health, informed by structured engagement with staff, stakeholders and the community.

A voluntary amalgamation will create a more sustainable local health service and support the delivery of more connected care across the rural-metropolitan catchment, building on an established partnership between Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health already benefiting local patients and staff.

Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health will begin planning to voluntarily amalgamate from 1 November 2026.

Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health services, staffing and day-to-day operations continue as normal. As required, future decisions will follow all relevant workplace agreements, awards and requirements.

2. Why did the Boards of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health recommend that both services voluntarily amalgamate?

The business case found that voluntary amalgamation would create a more sustainable local health service and support the delivery of more connected care across the rural-metropolitan catchment. The two organisations already have a productive partnership, with around 40 per cent of hospital care for Alexandra catchment residents currently provided through Eastern Health.

Formalising this relationship creates the opportunity to expand specialist access locally, strengthen workforce pathways, enhance diagnostics and support more integrated care.

3. What will a voluntary amalgamation look like?

Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health will form a single health service under one Board appointed by the Minister for Health, which would include a current Alexandra District Health Board member possessing the requisite skills.

The amalgamated health service would have one CEO who is supported by local leadership at Alexandra District Health. The new amalgamated entity would be called Eastern Health, but Alexandra District Health would keep its name. At a time to be determined by the Board of the amalgamated health service, Alexandra District Health would formally be referred to as a campus of Eastern Health, retaining its name: Eastern Health – Alexandra District Health.

Locally raised funds and donations would continue to be used to support local services, and the Alexandra District Health Community Engagement Committee would advise the amalgamated Board.

All staff would transfer to the amalgamated health service on existing terms and entitlements. The intent is to strengthen and expand what is already available locally, while maintaining a strong local presence.

4. Will Alexandra District Health keep its name?

The Alexandra District Health name will continue. At a time to be determined by the Board of the amalgamated health service, Alexandra District Health would formally be referred to as a campus of Eastern Health, retaining its name: Eastern Health – Alexandra District Health.

5. What does the voluntary amalgamation mean for local services?

Both health services will continue to provide care to their local communities. The voluntary amalgamation will strengthen and expand the services already available. Over time, as indicated in the business case, the voluntary amalgamation creates opportunities to:

- Expand access to specialist care locally, including general medicine, geriatrics and paediatrics - reducing the need for patients to travel for routine specialist review.
- Deliver more low-complexity surgery services at Alexandra District Health, better utilising existing beds and theatre capacity.
- Establish a three-chair dialysis service at Alexandra District Health, operating as part of Eastern Health's renal hub-and-satellite model.
- Improve access to X-ray and diagnostic services.
- Strengthen workforce sustainability through expanded training and career pathways across rural and metropolitan settings, including an allied health graduate program from 2027.
- Support clearer, more integrated care pathways under unified clinical governance and, over time, shared patient information systems.

6. What are the benefits of a voluntary amalgamation for the community?

The business case identifies specific benefits for patients and community that will be delivered through a voluntary amalgamation, including:

- **Expanded local access to specialist care**, with new and increased specialist clinics delivered at Alexandra District Health, including general medicine, geriatrics and paediatrics – reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for routine specialist review.
- **Increased low-complexity surgery services** to better utilise existing beds and theatre capacity to safely deliver more care locally.
- **A three-chair dialysis service at Alexandra District Health**, operating as part of Eastern Health's renal hub-and-satellite model.
- **Improved access to imaging (X-ray) and diagnostic services**, addressing current service gaps that limit the ability to deliver and coordinate care locally.
- **Clearer, more integrated care pathways**, supported by unified clinical governance and, over time, shared patient information systems – making it easier for patients to move between local and metropolitan services when escalation or specialist care is required.

7. What are the benefits of a voluntary amalgamation for staff?

The business case identifies specific benefits for staff to be delivered through a voluntary amalgamation, including:

- Stronger workforce sustainability, supported by stronger career pathways across rural and metropolitan settings.
- Access for Alexandra District Health staff to Eastern Health to the full learning management system and staff scholarship programs.
- The commencement of an allied health graduate program starting in 2027.
- Opportunities for postgraduate education and specialist supervision, and exploration of rural generalist and registrar rotation models.
- More sustainable use of shared systems and support services, helping Alexandra District Health staff focus resources on frontline care. This includes extending Eastern Health's financial and health information systems to support Alexandra District Health, simplifying policies and processes, and strengthening long-term service viability while maintaining a strong local presence.

Importantly, the recommendation includes clear safeguards to protect local identity, leadership and community involvement.

All staff would transfer to the amalgamated health service on existing pay, location and employment conditions.

8. Will voluntary amalgamation affect where and how I access care?

A voluntary amalgamation between Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health will help more people access care closer to home. Local services at Alexandra District Health will continue to operate, with opportunities over time to expand specialist clinics, diagnostics and treatment locally. Where care cannot be safely delivered locally, stronger and more integrated pathways with Eastern Health would support smoother, more coordinated access to metropolitan services when needed.

9. Will the voluntary amalgamation mean smoother transitions between sites?

Yes, patient movement between hospitals and sites will be made easier. We are already seeing this improve as the operational teams from the two health services are working together.

10. What are the local economic and employment implications of the voluntary amalgamation?

There are no job losses or employment changes as a result of the Minister's approval. A voluntary amalgamation is focused on strengthening local healthcare and the services offered to the community.

By supporting service sustainability and potential service growth, if more services are brought local, this would mean more jobs and more training opportunities for staff of both Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health. All staff would transfer to the amalgamated health service on existing pay, location and employment conditions.

11. How will services remain responsive to local needs?

Both health services will continue to provide care to their local communities and community feedback, and engagement structures will continue to inform service planning.

12. How will the organisational structure of the amalgamated health service be developed?

An implementation plan will be developed to guide the transition to a single health service, which will include how governance and organisational structures will be established.

This work will be led by the Chief Executive of the amalgamated health service and informed by existing expertise, local knowledge and input from staff and stakeholders.

A key principle of this work is maintaining strong local leadership at Alexandra District Health, while also creating opportunities to work more effectively across a broader health service.

13. How will governance and local representation be considered?

Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health will form a single health service under one Board appointed by the Minister for Health, which would include a current Alexandra District Health Board member possessing the requisite skills. The amalgamated health service would have one CEO who is supported by local leadership at Alexandra District Health. Locally raised funds and donations would continue to be used to support local services, and the Alexandra District Health Community Engagement Committee would advise the amalgamated Board.

The safeguards within the Boards' recommendation and the Minister's decision include:

- The amalgamated Board will include a current Board member of Alexandra District Health with the requisite skills.
- The Alexandra District Health Community Engagement Committee will continue to formally advise the amalgamated Board, ensuring community perspectives continue to inform service planning and decision-making.

14. Will Alexandra District Health retain its identity?

A strong local identity is central to Alexandra District Health and this will be protected in the voluntary amalgamation and was a core principle of the recommendation. This includes ensuring local voices continue to shape decisions, celebrating the role of our staff and volunteers, recognising the importance of community fundraising and traditions, maintaining community engagement structures and ensuring all locally raised funds remain local.

The new amalgamated entity will be called Eastern Health, but Alexandra District Health would keep its name. At a time to be determined by the Board of the amalgamated health service, Alexandra District Health would formally be referred to as a campus of Eastern Health, retaining its name: Eastern Health – Alexandra District Health.

Local leadership will remain in place, locally raised funds and donations will continue to be used to support local services, and the Alexandra District Health Community Engagement Committee will advise the amalgamated Board.

15. What happens next?

An implementation plan will be developed to guide the transition to a single health service. This will include timelines, governance arrangements and how staff, stakeholders and the community will be involved and updated.

It is business as usual while this planning work is undertaken.

We will continue to provide updates at key milestones and ensure staff, stakeholders and the community are informed as the process progresses.

For more information, please visit www.connectingcare.net.

16. Where can I find updates?

Updates can be found on www.connectingcare.net.

This includes FAQs, a public summary of the business case, factsheets and supporting documents. We will continue to communicate openly with staff, stakeholders and the community as the implementation process progresses.

17. Can I still provide feedback?

Yes. We remain committed to open, transparent communication with our community. You can provide feedback via feedback@connectingcare.net or visit www.connectingcare.net for further information.

Your feedback will continue to be recorded and shared with the implementation planning team.

18. Why did the Boards of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health decide to explore a voluntary amalgamation?

The business case found that voluntary amalgamation would create a more sustainable local health service and support the delivery of more connected care across the rural-metropolitan catchment. The two organisations already have a productive partnership, with around 40 per cent of hospital care for Alexandra catchment residents currently provided through Eastern Health.

Formalising this relationship creates the opportunity to expand specialist access locally, strengthen workforce pathways, enhance diagnostics and support more integrated care.

19. What were the other options considered?

The Boards of both Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health considered the feedback from the staff, patient, stakeholder and community engagement process, financial and service analysis and the long-term needs of both communities. The core factors included:

- Increasing access to services and care closer to home

- Improving integration of services for better experiences
- Addressing inequity
- Improving the sustainability of the workforce
- Improving the quality and safety of care
- Making best use of the systems resources
- Improving access to research and related activity; and
- Protecting local identity, including local fundraising and community engagement mechanisms

The Boards of both services shared a public summary of staff, community and stakeholder feedback, which highlighted the key themes that emerged from the engagement and informed the business case. The public summary can be found at www.connectingcare.net or via this [link](#).

20. What engagement happened with staff, stakeholders and the community before the recommendation was made?

Before the Boards made their formal recommendation, Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health conducted a structured engagement process with staff, stakeholders and the community.

Engagement included direct conversations with more than 150 stakeholders across local Members of Parliament, council representatives, neighbouring health services, community groups, donors, volunteers and community members. Both health services also spoke directly with hundreds of staff across both sites.

A community feedback survey was also conducted. The findings from this engagement informed the business case and the Boards' recommendation.

21. How was feedback from the engagement process reported back to staff, stakeholders and the community?

The Boards of both services considered the feedback provided by staff, patients and the community and it informed the business case. A summary of staff, community and stakeholder feedback was made publicly available, which highlighted the key themes that emerged from the engagement.

The feedback informed the business case and highlighted strong support for sustainable local healthcare, alongside clear expectations about protecting Alexandra District Health's local identity, maintaining services and ensuring local voices continue to be heard. These themes are directly reflected in the safeguards included in the Boards' recommendation and the Minister's decision.

The key themes that emerged from the engagement can be found on www.connectingcare.net or via this [link](#).

22. Was this a government-mandated change?

No. This was a voluntary, Board-led process. The Boards of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health independently found that voluntary amalgamation provides the strongest platform to protect and enhance local healthcare for the Alexandra and district community and jointly recommended voluntary amalgamation to the Minister.

The Minister's role is to consider and decide on the Boards' recommendation under the Health Services Act 1988. The decision has now been made.

23. Whose idea was the voluntary amalgamation?

The decision to explore a voluntary amalgamation was initiated by the Alexandra District Health Board as part of its ongoing consideration of how best to strengthen local healthcare and ensure long-term sustainability for the community. Recently, both health services have successfully partnered on a range of initiatives, including local oncology and infusion services and shared training programs, which have already delivered real benefits for patients and staff.

The recent Longwood fire highlighted the value of the existing partnership between the health services, with Eastern Health providing support to Alexandra District Health during a period of heightened demand across the district.

Building on that foundation, the Boards jointly agreed to formally recommend a voluntary amalgamation to deliver even greater community benefits. This process is entirely Board-led and the Minister's role is to consider and decide on the Boards' recommendation under the *Health Services Act 1988*. The decision has now been made.

24. Was the voluntary amalgamation pre-determined?

No. The decision is the outcome of a voluntary, joint Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health Board-led process based on detailed evidence and analysis, including a comprehensive business case and structured engagement with staff, stakeholders and the community over many months.

The business case assessed two options – maintaining the current arrangement and voluntary amalgamation. The options were assessed against sustainability, workforce, service capability, governance, financial impact and community benefit. Both Boards independently considered the findings before making a formal recommendation of voluntary amalgamation to the Minister for Health.

25. In 2024, there was a community meeting and petition against amalgamation. Why is a voluntary amalgamation now happening?

We understand the community has concerns about the future of local health services and in ensuring Alexandra District Health retains its local identity.

The decision by both Boards to recommend a voluntary amalgamation followed a thorough, evidence-based process. A comprehensive business case was developed, informed by structured engagement with staff, stakeholders and the community. The Boards independently considered the evidence, and both concluded that voluntary amalgamation is the strongest platform for delivering sustainable, locally accessible care for the Alexandra and district community.

The Minister's decision to approve a voluntary amalgamation includes explicit safeguards to protect what matters most: Alexandra District Health retains its name, local leadership remains in place, locally raised funds stay local, and the Community Engagement Committee continues to formally advise the amalgamated Board.

26. Were the Murrindindi Shire Council survey results taken into consideration?

Yes. Feedback from the Murrindindi Shire Council engagement activities, along with other community input, was considered as part of the broader engagement and informed the business case and the Board's formal recommendation of voluntary amalgamation.

27. How does this decision relate to the East Metro and Murrindindi Local Health Service Network and other services in the network?

The voluntary amalgamation of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health builds on the existing East Metro and Murrindindi Local Health Service Network. Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health are already partners within this network, and voluntary amalgamation provides a more formal and accountable structure to support long-term planning and delivery.

We will continue to have a strong, ongoing partnership with St Vincent's, Yea and District Memorial Hospital and Darlingford Upper Goulburn Nursing Home, including through our Network.

28. Why is Alexandra District Health voluntarily amalgamating with Eastern Health rather than exploring a partnership with Yea and Darlingford under a Murrindindi Health model?

The Alexandra District Health Board has an obligation to make decisions that deliver the greatest benefit for the local community. Based on detailed analysis, including sustainability modelling, service demand projections, governance considerations and community feedback, the Board determined that voluntary amalgamation with Eastern Health represents the strongest and most viable long-term option for a sustainable health service for the Alexandra and District community.