

MEDIA RELEASE

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More care, closer to home: Voluntary amalgamation of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health approved

Victorian Minister for Health, Ingrid Stitt MP, has approved the voluntary amalgamation of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health, marking a significant step toward strengthening access to care closer to home for the Alexandra and district community, from 1 November 2026.

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

Alexandra District Health Board Chair Kim Flanagan welcomed the Minister's decision.

"Today's announcement is a positive outcome for the Alexandra and district community. It will strengthen local health services and includes safeguards to protect local identity, leadership and community involvement."

"We will now work closely with Eastern Health to implement the Minister's decision and ensure the benefits of the voluntary amalgamation are realised for our community."

Once implemented, the following service improvements will be delivered, as identified in the business case:

- **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.
- **Stronger workforce sustainability**, supported by expanded training and career pathways across rural and metropolitan settings, including access to Eastern Health training programs, commencement of an allied health graduate program from 2027, extension of learning management and scholarship programs, and opportunities for postgraduate education and specialist supervision.
- **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.

- **More sustainable use of shared systems and support services**, including emergency and disaster response, allowing Alexandra District Health to focus resources on frontline care while maintaining a strong local presence.

The Minister for Health's 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.

Feedback from this engagement highlighted strong support for sustainable local healthcare and expanded access to services, alongside the importance of protecting Alexandra District Health's strong rural identity, maintaining essential services and ensuring local voices continue to be heard.

"Alexandra District Health will retain its name. All locally raised funds and donations will continue to support services for the local community. Local leadership will remain in place, and the Community Engagement Committee will continue to play a formal role in ensuring community perspectives inform service planning and decision-making," Mr Flanagan said.

"We are proud of the process we undertook and grateful to the many staff, community members and stakeholders who contributed to the structured engagement process."

Eastern Health Board Chair Eugene Arocca said the approval reflects the strength of a partnership that is already delivering for patients.

"Around 40 per cent of hospital care for people living in the Alexandra catchment is already provided through Eastern Health. This decision allows us to plan and deliver services in a more coordinated way, and to build on what is already working."

"Our organisations share a commitment to delivering safe, high-quality, connected care and voluntary amalgamation is the strongest platform to do that," Mr Arocca said.

The Minister's decision follows the Boards of both health services recommendation of voluntary amalgamation to the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Health and the Minister for Health for consideration and approval, in line with the *Health Services Act 1988*.

"This partnership is already delivering for our community, and today's announcement allows us to build on that foundation in a more coordinated and sustainable way," Mr Flanagan said.

More information is available at www.connectingcare.net.

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