

Monday, 28 October 2024

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

As members of the Border Medical Association (BMA) and as concerned clinicians, we write to request federal intervention in response to clinician and community concerns regarding the current proposed redevelopment of Albury Hospital.

The BMA, alongside other health professionals and our community, has long advocated for a new single-site hospital for Albury Wodonga Health (AWH), the only cross-border health service in the nation.

In October 2022 the New South Wales, Victorian and Federal governments made an ill-advised commitment of \$558 million to redevelop the Albury campus. This commitment came in face of a recommendation for a greenfield hospital. A single-site hospital was supported by both state governments following the release of the AWH Clinical Services Plan in 2021. It is now apparent that support of the States has dissipated, without consideration of the impact on patients or the community.

The BMA has repeatedly raised major concerns regarding the redevelopment with the New South Wales and Victorian Health Ministers, as well as seeking representation to the Federal Health Minister. Frustratingly our concerns continue to be ignored.

If realised, this redevelopment will cripple healthcare services in the Albury Wodonga region for a generation, undermine regional workforce recruitment and retention, and disincentivise major training and education institutions from investing in our region.

Ultimately, it is our patients who will continue to suffer due to the failure to address critical clinical shortcomings.

It is unacceptable that AWH currently operates two undersized regional hospitals merely ten kilometres apart. Splitting of key services threatens safe patient care on a daily basis and leads to inefficiencies and duplications. The risk to patient safety is compounded by perilous deficits in bed capacity, operating theatres, outpatient clinics,



renal dialysis, critical care services and support services. Unfortunately, the proposed redevelopment of the current Albury site will see all of this continue unabated.

The release of the concept plans in August 2024 by NSW Health Infrastructure include drastic compromises to the scale of all departments and services. These compromises are a consequence of the New South Wales and Victorian state governments providing an arbitrary and grossly inadequate funding commitment, and then cutting healthcare capacity and services to fit.

The capacity spelled out in the concept design will barely cover current clinical demands let alone any growth, with a net increase of approximately 35 acute beds. This comes as the capacity that was planned for in the 2021 Clinical Services Plan was serially slashed without recognition of the current deficits AWH faces, let alone the size and scale of the service. There is now insufficient capacity to decant hospital wards leaving the Albury campus hamstrung in terms of any further development. A costly, protracted and disruptive staging plan would be subsequently required for further development.

As it stands today, there is no single site hospital on the horizon. There is no government commitment to any further stages. Patients and staff will be forced to remain in the dilapidated wards of Albury Hospital. Design, functionality and safety are all compromised as the footprint is far too small.

If realised, this redevelopment plan will lead to the same issues for patient care that we face every day. The service will still be strewn across two campuses, and the capacity will not be sufficient to cover our current deficits. This is despite the two states previously committing to a single site hospital, following the recommendation of the 2021 AWH Clinical Services Plan.

We have written to the New South Wales and Victorian Premiers calling for:

1. A halt to the current redevelopment plans.
2. Immediate capacity relief through construction of modular wards and operating theatres. We need relief urgently.
3. A return to the original Clinical Services Plan (2021) points of care projections and a commitment to fund the 15+ year infrastructure requirements spelt out for a new single-site hospital on a new site.

The intransigence of the states in the case of AWH has been shameful. The need for federal intervention is clear.

There are multiple examples of where the federal government has participated in hospital developments. There are several mechanisms under which this can be considered, as spelt out in the National Health Reform Agreement.

There are opportunities for the Albanese government to commit through:

1. Reopening the case for the Albury Wodonga Regional Deal which held a new hospital as its signature infrastructure request. This deal was hamstrung by the politics of sparring governments at the cost of our community
2. Defence investment to support AWH being the lead health education precinct for defence personnel.
3. Reviewing options of funding from the Federal government that could include repayment or lease arrangements with the States. This would be the simplest approach rather than attempting to drag the states to comply with the duties they have so far failed.

Long ago identified by the Whitlam government as a centre of regional and urban development, Albury Wodonga is now rapidly growing with strategic transport, defence and industry links. Future economic expansion of this important region will be compromised without delivery of adequate health services.

Our concerns are for the sake of our patients and our community. They can no longer be ignored. We call upon you, as Prime Minister, to support federal intervention to provide a new single-site hospital for the Albury Wodonga region.

We would appreciate any opportunity to further present our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Barbara Robertson - Chair, Border Medical Association

Dr David Clancy – Deputy Chair



Dr Phillip Steele – Secretary

Dr Lachlan McKeeman – Deputy Secretary

Dr Robert Smith – Treasurer

Dr Adrian Kay	Dr Annie Hung	A/Prof Craig
Dr Ajay John	Dr Antoinette Del	Underhill
A/Prof Alam Yoosuff	Popolo	Dr Damian Heman
Dr Alan Dyason	Dr Asani Saidi	Dr Daniel Chubb
Dr Alan Luckie	Dr Ash Bhanot	Dr Daniel Travena
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Dr Alison Palmer	Dr Brett Anderson	Dr David Allin
Dr Alison Walsh	Dr Briallen Davies	Dr David Di Fiore
Dr Alyssa Di Grande	Dr Brian Litherland	Dr David Newsom
Dr Amy Polmear	Dr Bryan Ngui	A/Prof David Prior
Dr Amy Reid	Dr Carlo Ilagan	Dr David Rutherford
Dr Andreas Baisch	Dr Carolyn Re	Dr Eliza Tweedle
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Dr Andrew Kelly	Dr Christopher Cain	Dr Elizabeth Onley
Dr Andrew Kong	Dr Christopher	Dr Ellen Meyns
Dr Andrew Rechtman	Johnson	Dr Else De Wit
Dr Andy Ho	A/Prof Christopher	Dr Emma
Dr Angela Ramsay	Steer	Polkinghorne
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Dr Angela Temple	Dr Colin Kingsell	Dr Erin Fairlie
Dr Anna Keedwell	Dr Corinne Antonoff	Dr Evan Heineke
A/Prof Annabel	Dr Craig McLeod	Dr Ferencz Baranyay
Martin		Dr Fiona Christie

Dr Geoff Rofe	Dr Jessica Madden	Dr Maddi Bullock
Dr Geoff Slaven	Dr Jessica O'Keefe	Dr Marc Paffen
Dr Geoff Williams	Dr Jessica Paul	A/Prof Mark Norden
Dr George Gayagay	Dr Ji Lee	Dr Mark Trotter
Dr Gerard Fogarty	Dr John Burston	Dr Matt Elliot
Dr Glenn Singleman	Dr John Russell	Dr Matthew
Dr Gordon Slater	Dr John Stubbe	McAlpine
Dr Grace Miller	Dr John Stuchbery	Dr Megan Bailey
Dr Grace Ukich	Dr Jonathan Da Silva	Dr Michael Bailey
Dr Greg McCarten	Dr Jonathan Lewin	Dr Michael Bulman
Dr Hang Chau	Dr Jordan Caddy	Dr Michael Njovu
Dr Hannah Mahoney	Dr Justin Jackson	Dr Michael Seymour
Dr Hannah Mason	Dr Kate Drummond	Dr Michael Thomas
Dr Heather Chaffey	Dr Kate Penfold	Dr Michele Quigley
Dr Heniz Deiter	Dr Katrina Pavic	Dr Michelle Larkin
Dr Henry Duncan	Dr Ken Davey	Dr Mike Giltrap
Dr Hong Yu	Dr Kim Cheah	Dr Mike Stone
Dr Ian Lippiatt	Dr Kirsty Jackson	Dr Mira Kapur
Dr Irene Han	Dr Kristen Barrett	Dr Miriam Siever
Stevenson	Dr Laura Shobbrook	Dr Muhammad Essop
Dr Jacinta O'Neill	Dr Laura Zagorski	Dr Nabeel Sunni
Dr Jack Heron	Dr Lauren Cussen	Dr Nakul Bhuta
Dr Jaideep Vazirani	Dr Lauren Sanders-	Dr Nalin Bholra
Dr James Robertson	Berg	Dr Nicholas
Dr Jeff Mahoney	Dr Leigh Fitzpatrick	Sharrock
Dr Jeff Robinson	Dr Libby Garoni	Dr Nick Mason
Dr Jennifer Law	Dr Lindsay Chow	Dr Nick Tipping
Dr Jenny Giddens	Dr Loran Towell	Dr Nicole Clancy
Dr Jessica Lawford	Dr Luke Baitch	Dr Nikita Xiao

Dr Paresh Ramjee	Dr Ryan McCann	Dr Tim Shanahan
Dr Phil Huang	Dr Sally Smith	Dr Tim Steele
Dr Phil Wicks	Dr Sam Daly	Dr Tracey Merriman
Dr Philip Frawley	Dr Samantha Cooray	Dr Travis Leahy
Dr Pieter Mourik	Dr Sarah Dahlenburg	Dr Trixie Rasmussen
Dr Queenie Chan	Dr Scott Giltrap	Dr Vishal Bhargava
Dr Quinton Smith	Dr Shannon Elliott	Dr Volha Pankevich
Dr Raj Shukla	Dr Simon Craig	Dr Warren Hall
Dr Rasmita Mishra	Dr Simone Mulder	Dr Warwick Cann
Dr Rebecca Beaton	Dr Skye Delaney	Dr Wei Sim
Dr Richard Eek	Dr Sohei Nakagawa	Dr Wen Guha
Dr Richard McMahon	Dr Sophie Gettens	Dr William Reilly
Dr Robert Szabo	Dr Stephanie Walton	Dr William Sargent
Dr Rose McGowan	Dr Stuart Heslop	Dr Ziggy Spencer
Dr Rosie Brewer	Dr Tess Goodwin	
Dr Roy Bartram	Dr Tessa De Speville	
A/Prof Russell	Dr Thanh "Chook"	
Auwardt	Tran	

cc. The Hon. Mark Butler, MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care
The Hon. Peter Dutton, MP, Federal Parliamentary Leader of the Liberal Party
Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston, Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care
The Hon. Chris Minns, Premier of NSW
The Hon. Jacinta Allan, Premier of Victoria
The Hon. Justin Clancy, MP, Member for Albury
The Hon. Bill Tilley, MP, Member for Benambra
The Hon. Dr Helen Haines, MP, Member for Indi
The Hon. Sussan Ley, MP, Member for Farrer