



Media release

From the New South Wales and Victorian Ministers for Health

Friday, 19 December 2008

GOVERNMENTS ENDORSE INTEGRATED BORDER HEALTH SERVICE

The Victorian and NSW Governments have formally endorsed a model for an integrated acute health service for the border region community.

The decision to establish a cross-border health service – to be known as Albury Wodonga Health – is the culmination of a complex and meticulous process that has involved collaboration between the two state health systems.

Albury Wodonga Health's initial responsibility will be focused on acute hospital services.. Broadening the new health service's responsibilities to include community and mental health will follow over time and in consultation with stakeholders.

In a joint announcement, the Victorian Health Minister, Daniel Andrews, and the NSW Health Minister, John Della Bosca, said the integration of the Albury and Wodonga regional health services would provide border residents with ready-access to the major regional health service between Sydney and Melbourne.

The new management of the integrated health service, which will be a Victorian public health service, is expected to be in place and operational from 1 July 2009.

In the meantime, both hospitals will continue to operate and serve the border community as they currently do.

The formation of Albury Wodonga Health is the result of a long-standing commitment by both Governments to meet the changing needs of the border community while maintaining the delivery of the best possible health care into the future.

The Ministers said the integration would remove existing artificial barriers and ensure the continued delivery of quality health care and medical services in the region.

Activities to progress integration will continue to proceed during 2009. The establishment of the new health service and the appointment of the Chairperson and Board of Albury Wodonga Health will mark the next major milestone.

Mr Della Bosca emphasised that existing staffing conditions and awards will continue at both hospitals and there would be no compulsory redundancies involved in the creation of Albury Wodonga Health.

“Day to day management of staff will remain with their respective organisations until Albury Wodonga Health becomes operational on 1 July 2009,” he said.

“From 1 July next year Wodonga Regional Health Service employees will be under the direct employment of Albury Wodonga Health and subject to Victorian agreements and legislation, as they are at present. NSW Health employees will be seconded to Albury Wodonga Health and will remain subject to NSW awards and industrial relations legislation.”

Mr Andrews announced the appointment of Ken Taylor as a sole Board member to guide Wodonga Regional Health Service towards integration with Albury Base Hospital over the next six months.

The appointment is the first “on-the-ground” action to implement the formal decision by the Governments to integrate the two health services.

“Mr Taylor has extensive experience in guiding health services through periods of substantial change,” Mr Andrews said.

“His experience over the past 10 years includes periods as sole director of the Mildura Base Hospital and Rural Northwest Health, and as a delegate to the Board of West Wimmera Health Service.”

The terms of appointment of the existing Wodonga Regional Health Service Board members will expire on 31 December 2008.

“I am grateful to the outgoing Board members and Chair for their significant commitment to the Wodonga Regional Health Service over a number of years, and for the unflagging enthusiasm they have exhibited for the integration of health services across the border,” Mr Andrews said.