

10 October 2024

Mr. Gerard Hayes  
Secretary  
Health Services Union  
Locked Bag 3  
Australia Square NSW 1215  
Email: secretary@hsu.asn.au

Dear Mr Hayes,

I am writing to inform you that NSW Health Pathology (NSWHP) is engaging with relevant NSWHP staff, Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) and other key stakeholders to seek input into exploring a Regional Networked Pathology Service for our Cootamundra and Young laboratories.

In light of evolving clinical needs, MLHD has indicated a shift in future service delivery at Cootamundra Health Service as part of the new Cootamundra Health Services Plan. As a result, NSWHP is consulting with key stakeholders to explore ways to ensure the continued provision of high-quality pathology services to Cootamundra whilst utilising advancements in technology.

NSWHP is exploring a Regional Networked Pathology Service Model that would involve the following:

- The majority of testing would be performed at an expanded NSWHP laboratory in Young, with extended operating hours, including weekends, to meet clinical demand and minimise call-backs.
- Enhanced Point-of-Care Testing (PoCT) capabilities, including new full blood count technology, would be available at Cootamundra for urgent, on-site testing.
- Cootamundra will retain its collection services for both inpatients and outpatients.
- Additional courier runs between Cootamundra and Young will be established to support same-day testing and maintain current turnaround times.
- Options like a remote-release blood fridge with O-negative emergency blood products are being explored to enhance emergency response capabilities.
- The model would retain and strengthen local expertise to support partnerships with clinical teams and primary health providers in the region.

While this proposed model would require some reorganisation of roles and responsibilities, staff from both Cootamundra and Young would come together as one team based at the Young laboratory. Importantly, no reductions in overall staffing levels are anticipated.

We are undertaking a four week period of consultation commencing in early October 2024, and we're seeking the expert perspectives of stakeholders on how modern, sustainable, patient-centred services can be provided for the Cootamundra and Young region.

Cootamundra is a 30 bed facility, and similar NSWHP networked regional service models to Cootamundra are already successfully in place in other parts of NSW, including Parkes (28 beds), West Wyalong (22 beds), Boorowa (18 beds), Murrumbarrh-Harden (33 beds) and Temora (34 beds).

However, we appreciate the importance of listening to and understanding local practices to ensure any proposed change in service model is fit for purpose and meets the clinical needs of the community. Be assured that no decision has been made with respect to this proposed model which is currently in exploration stage.

NSWHP remains committed to delivering the highest quality, most efficient and reliable public pathology services for the people of NSW regardless of where they live, and to support the growth, development and wellbeing of our staff across our network.

We invite you to share your thoughts or arrange a meeting to discuss this proposal further by close of business on Thursday 24 October 2024. Your collaboration and input are valued as we work towards enhancing pathology services for our communities.

Thank you for your engagement throughout this consultation process.

Kind regards,

*Dr Deanna Paulin*

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