

**healthy people, healthy  
communities**

**2018 Victorian election  
statement**

**cohealth has a clear vision for healthy communities, healthy people. We are committed to improving health and wellbeing for all and tackling inequality, in partnership with people and the communities they live in.**

Achieving better health and reducing inequality requires a multi-faceted approach that responds to both individual health factor, social structures and systemic policies and practices that are so influential on health and wellbeing. We recognise the significant impact that the broader social, economic and environmental structures and systems in which people live - the social determinants of health - have on the health of individuals and communities. The unequal distribution of income in our society, coupled with changing employment opportunities, reduced social expenditure from Governments and an increase in divisive narratives, means that for many, quality of life is deteriorating. Life is becoming harder for the communities we serve.

**current context:**

Our population is growing	Victoria is the fastest growing State in Australia in terms of population and this will continue into the future. The western suburbs of Melbourne in particular are growing rapidly - for example, the population of the City of Wyndham is forecast to grow by 114% between 2016 and 2041.
We are getting older	Victoria's aging population is growing and is driving significant growth in demand across the health and social services sector. <sup>1</sup>
Chronic disease rates are rising	<p>More of us have chronic diseases, and the proportion of people who experience multiple chronic diseases and complex needs is increasing.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Higher prevalence of multiple chronic diseases is experienced by people living in communities with lower socioeconomic status.<sup>3</sup></p>
Inequality is getting worse <sup>4</sup>	Health is directly correlated with income, with health status rising as income and wealth rise. As inequality increases, so too will the differences in health outcomes, unless radically different approaches are implemented.

Everyone deserves access to the physical and mental health care they need, that best meets their needs in the places that suit them. Care should be provided close to home, as soon as it is needed, to treat conditions before they require acute, complex care.

However, the current health system is fragmented and difficult to navigate. It is also costly – to government, and to individuals as out of pocket expenses continue to increase.. The vast majority of health funding is directed to costly acute and emergency services, particularly hospitals, and whilst standards are high, usability is not. People who have the greatest need for care are too often the ones who miss out or receive it too late.



**cohealth calls on all parties and candidates in the Victorian election this year to support the following initiatives to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequity.**

## **1. Social Determinants of Health**

cohealth recognises the overwhelming importance the **social determinants of health**<sup>5</sup> have in determining health outcomes. cohealth supports a 'health in all policy' approach – where governments consider the health impacts of all policy decisions, and proactively work to address the underlying drivers of ill-health, including:

- socio-economic inequality;
- stigma and discrimination;
- the availability of affordable, secure housing; and
- climate change.



cohealth is a supporter and ally of communities and organisations advocating to address these and associated issues, and we especially add our voice to those who call for:

- a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples
- affordable housing
- increased public dental funding
- fair and evidence based policy making in response to law and order, and
- evidence-based alcohol and drug reform.



## 2. Community based care

The health system is currently skewed to managing sickness rather than encouraging wellness. Reorienting the health system towards prevention, primary and community health is critical, as is taking a value-based healthcare approach to funding. A more effective health system will:

- A. Prevent health issues from developing in the first place, and treat them early, before they become serious. Currently, only 1.9% of recurrent health expenditure is spent on preventative care.<sup>6</sup>
- B. Place patients firmly at the centre of all care and funding. Providing incentives to focus on supporting positive health outcomes, particularly for those who have the highest health needs, will deliver better value based health care. 5 The conditions of daily life – “the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age – and the structural conditions in a society, which lead to unequal living conditions and affect the chances of living a healthy life”.
- C. Utilise funding incentives and approaches, set explicit policy settings and support and scale existing good practice to develop and deepen the integration of health and social care.
- D. Provide more physical and mental health care in the community, where people live. This will not only be better for individuals and those who care for them, but also reduce the demand for acute care services. Key features of this approach include:
  - i. Moving care from hospitals to community settings, where clinically safe to do so
  - ii. Providing comprehensive wrap-around services from hubs that provide integrated health and social support services in communities.

Community health services are ideally positioned to deliver health and social care this way. A uniquely Victorian asset, community health is deeply embedded in community and ensures that everyone, particularly those who are vulnerable and marginalised, are able to receive care, close to home. Community health fills the gaps left by the broader health system and bridges gaps that exist between services; helping to keep people healthy and taking pressure off hospital emergency departments and other acute services.

The critical role community health plays in supporting the health and wellbeing of Victorians, especially those experiencing disadvantage, has been recognised by the Victorian Auditor General's Office following a comprehensive audit<sup>7</sup>. VAGO also identified the need for a clearer funding approach for community health.

However, the community health sector faces significant pressure. Urgent action is required to protect, support and grow the community health sector in Victoria so that it may continue to fulfill its important role in reducing health inequity. To this end cohealth welcomes the work of the Community Health Taskforce, established to provide advice to government on opportunities to strengthen the community health sector<sup>8</sup>.



Increased investment in community health will enhance the ability of this platform to provide high quality, integrated, wrap around care that meets the needs of local communities.

**To achieve strong community based health care we need to:**

- Increase community health specific funding to meet increased demand and respond to demographic changes
- Realign funding models to target groups with the greatest health needs, and promote greater health equity. Funding needs to be long term, and oriented to achieving health equity outcomes for priority groups, rather than being throughput based.
- Increase capital investment – to modernise existing community health facilities and equipment, and to develop new health and social services hubs in growth areas

To realise the benefits of community based care a number of further policy changes are needed to enhance the ability of community health to meet community needs and embrace the opportunities presented by a digital age.

**To support community based care we need:**

- The inclusion of community health in health funding initiatives that to date have been reserved for hospitals, including (for example):
  - responding to occupational violence
  - Electronic Medical Records integration projects, such as the Parkville Precinct
  - BetterCare Victoria grants
- Increased investment into community health ICT infrastructure (and interoperability)
- Greater investment into the community health workforce
- Funding increases that recognise the increasing cost of providing services, such as EBA increases, rising utility costs, and increased administrative and compliance costs





### 3. cohealth specific proposals

cohealth has identified four key organisational funding priorities that we are confident will help to improve the physical and mental health of Victorians, and demonstrate the benefits flowing from enhanced community based care.

#### **community managed mental health services**

Increased and ongoing investment is required to ensure that people with serious mental illness can receive the psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery support they need to remain healthy in the community.

Hospital-based and clinical mental health services have received significant funding boosts in recent Victorian budgets. The services that support people with serious mental illness to live well in the community similarly require adequate and ongoing funding to ensure Victorians can receive the care and support they need, when they need it, and to reduce demand on acute/hospital services. Funding is sought to support cohealth's well- developed model for the provision of psychosocial rehabilitation and support services in community health settings, particularly in locations with high levels of demand.



#### **redevelopment of cohealth's 365 Hoddle St Collingwood site**

A much loved and critically important site for health service delivery in the Collingwood area, the community health centre at 365 Hoddle Street is aged and requires redevelopment. cohealth, together with housing provider Unison have entered into a partnership to deliver to establish a ground-breaking community hub centred on the whole person. The project will deliver a modern community health facility – able to support the delivery of expanded, safe and quality services that meet the needs of the Collingwood community now, and into the future – as well as providing additional social and affordable housing stock in the area.

To be realised, this \$44m project requires funding support from the Department of Health and Human Services - \$12.5m from Health to finance the build of the community health centre component, and \$12m from Housing for the social and affordable housing component.



## Laverton services hub for families with complex needs

Laverton North and the neighbouring suburb of Laverton are the third and fourth most disadvantaged suburbs in Melbourne respectively. Both places have a high number of vulnerable families, with the Australian Early Development Census finding that children in Laverton experience significantly greater developmental vulnerability than those in Victoria as a whole. Despite the high degree of need in the area, there is a significant lack of services – a problem which is expected to worsen as population growth in the region continues. To help address this unmet need, cohealth seeks State Government funding support to deliver additional primary health and social care services designed to better meet the complex needs of vulnerable families living in Melbourne's West. Based within the existing Laverton Community Hub, cohealth will deliver comprehensive health, family violence, alcohol and drug, and other social support services, funded through a creative model that combines and leverages both State funding and existing Commonwealth monies. Peer workers will be employed from the local community to help families connect to and navigate services, and the service could later be scaled for delivery across other health sites or to other rising risk population groups.



## multi-generational health and wellbeing hub in Brimbank

The St Albans Leisure Centre in Keilor Downs, whilst in an old and tired state, is much loved and used by the local community. Brimbank Council has committed to redeveloping the site, and to developing it into a health and wellbeing hub that co-locates sport and recreation facilities alongside health and other social and community services.

cohealth has agreed to participate in a collective partnership to be established at the site for the purposes of delivering improved health outcomes for the local community. In particular, the planned collaboration will work to reduce the proportion of children who are at risk, lower the high rates of chronic disease present in the municipality, and drive a sustained increase in healthy behaviours, such as physical activity.

The total project will cost an estimated \$50m, with a contribution of \$25m being sought from State and Federal Government.

**cohealth welcomes the opportunity to provide briefings or further information on any of the issues and initiatives outlined in this statement to both interested media, and/or election candidates. To request further information or arrange a meeting, please contact Aram Hosie, Executive, Public Affairs on 0403 317 618, or via email: [aram.hosie@cohealth.org.au](mailto:aram.hosie@cohealth.org.au)**

[references](#)



<sup>1</sup> The number of people aged over 70 is forecast to increase 95% in the 15 years to 2031. Growth will be concentrated in Melbourne, Brimbank, Hume, Melton and Wyndham. <https://nwmphn.org.au/our-community/community-and-population-health-profiles/>

<sup>2</sup> More than 90 per cent of people aged over 70 years have two or more chronic conditions <https://nwmphn.org.au/our-community/community-and-population-health-profiles/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nwmphn.org.au/our-community/community-and-population-health-profiles/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.acoss.org.au/inequality/>

<sup>5</sup> The conditions of daily life – “the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age – and the structural conditions in a society, which lead to unequal living conditions and affect the chances of living a healthy life”. [http://apo.org.au/node/55699\](http://apo.org.au/node/55699)

<sup>6</sup> <http://ahha.asn.au/Blueprint> p21

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/community-health-program>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/primary-and-community-health/community-health/community-health-taskforce>

