cohealth
care for all

Federal budget submission 2020-21

cohealth.org.au

about cohealth

cohealth is one of Australia's largest community health services, operating across nine local government areas in Victoria. Our mission is to improve health and wellbeing for all, and tackle inequality and inequity in partnership with people and their communities.

A primary health service, cohealth provides integrated medical, dental, allied health, mental health and community support services. 950 staff over 34 sites work directly with communities to understand their needs and develop responses and deliver programs that promote community health and wellbeing.

Our service delivery model priorities people who experience social disadvantage and are consequently marginalised from mainstream health and other services – people who have multiple health conditions, have a disability, experience homelessness and unstable housing, those engaged in the criminal justice system, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, refugees and asylum seekers, people who use alcohol and other drugs, and LGBTIQ communities.

cohealth recognises the significant impact the broader social, economic and environmental structures 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 and increase in divisive narratives, means that for many, quality of life is deteriorating. Life is becoming harder for the communities we serve, and demand is subsequently growing.

overview

cohealth has a clear vision of healthy communities, healthy people. The Australian health system is world class, providing excellent, cutting edge care. However, we also know that too many people are not able to access the care they need, particularly those who experience disadvantage. As a result, these groups have poorer health than other Australians.

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

Australia's health system also faces a range of challenges due to a growing and aging population, rising rates of chronic disease and increasing inequality. Responding to these challenges requires reorienting the health system towards prevention and early intervention and providing more care in the community.

Community health services are in a unique position to deliver health and social care in this way. The sector has extensive experience working with people who face disadvantage and marginalisation and developing service responses to reduce their barriers to accessing care. For some groups this might involve ensuring interpreters are available for all appointments and written materials are translated into community languages; for others this might involve longer appointment times or outreach approaches.

With co-located medical, allied health and social supports, community health services can assist people to navigate an otherwise fragmented system to deliver holistic, integrated care. The provision of holistic healthcare for our communities is enhanced by the sector's ability to draw together both State and Federal Government investment to provide a wide range of health and social support services.

Community health services can deliver on the vision of *Australia's Long-Term National Health Plan* for a modern health system that better supports people to stay well and contributes to the *Fifth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan* - to improve the lives of people living with a mental illness.

cohealth proposes to take this approach a step further by investing in an innovative model that co-locates health care and social housing on the one site, creating a community hub centred on the whole person.

In order to realise this ground-breaking proposal, cohealth seeks a commitment in the 2020-21 Federal Budget to invest $10 million over the Forward Estimates in the redevelopment of cohealth's clinic at 365 Hoddle Street in Collingwood, Victoria.

The current facilities on the site are beyond their useful life and without significant investment, cohealth may not be able to continue operating at the location beyond the next three years.

At the same time, widespread improvements in the health and wellbeing of all Australians will not be achieved unless the circumstances in which people live, work and age - that affect their chances of a healthy life - are improved. cohealth therefore also urges comprehensive action on addressing the social determinants of health, including reducing socio-economic inequalities and poverty, increasing social and affordable housing, and tackling stigma and discrimination.

the challenge

Population growth	Victoria is the fastest growing state in Australia in terms of population and this will continue.
Ageing population	Victoria's aging population is growing and is driving significant growth in demand across the health and social services sector.[i]
Rising chronic disease	More of us have chronic diseases, and the proportion of people who experience multiple chronic diseases and complex needs is increasing.[ii] Higher prevalence of multiple chronic diseases is experienced by people living in communities with lower socioeconomic status.[iii]
Rising inequality[iv]	Health is directly correlated with income, with health status rising as income and wealth rise[v]. As inequality increases, so too will the differences in health outcomes[vi], unless radically different approaches are implemented.
Rising homelessness and housing insecurity	Nearly 25,000 Victorians are homeless each night[vii], and very few rental properties are affordable to low-income earners. 3,000 new public and community-owned homes per year for 10 years are needed to relieve the pressure.[viii]
Growing social isolation	Social isolation and loneliness significantly increase risk for premature mortality and a range of health conditions. It impacts more on those people who are the most vulnerable.[ix]
Increasing rates of avoidable hospitalisations	A large proportion of hospital admissions could be avoided with appropriate care in primary and community settings
People are delaying care due to cost	People on low incomes are significantly more likely to miss or delay care due to cost.[x]

Proposal

A ground-breaking redevelopment

cohealth and Unison have partnered to propose a redevelopment of the high-profile community health centre at 365 Hoddle St, Collingwood.

It will generate a cutting-edge supportive housing model that will sustain tenancies and increase participation by connecting people to existing services and activities.

The new, purpose-built facility will:

- Ensure that cohealth remains at the site beyond the next 3 years;
- Support sustainable health service provision from the site and meet the needs of the local community now and into the future;
- Ensure community health services are provided in an environment that is safe and contemporary for both clients and staff;
- Enable a wider range of services to be provided from the site and at much greater capacity; and
- Establish affordable housing that is closely linked to health and social services and well connected to broader community amenity.

The location of this site near to public housing and areas of concentrated disadvantage within the City of Yarra (as measured by SEIFA ranking) makes it critical to the health and social outcomes of the local population. People who access cohealth services are presenting with more complex and more chronic health conditions, overlayed with social vulnerabilities.

Demand is also set to increase - by 2031, it is predicted that 18,000 additional visits will be required across the City of Yarra each year with the resident population estimated to increase by 32%. The increase in population, coupled with the loss of affordable housing options, will only heighten the need for local, affordable health care and housing.

The site at 365 Hoddle Street, Collingwood is aging, inefficient and is at the end of its lifespan, limiting cohealth's ability to keep up with community demand. This redevelopment will ensure that cohealth remains at the site beyond the next three years.

Alignment with Commonwealth policy objectives

The redevelopment would contribute to several Commonwealth health policy objectives. It would deliver on the modern health system envisaged by *Australia's Long-Term National Health Plan*, providing more equitable and integrated care that better supports people to stay well.

Primary healthcare will be patient-focused, more accessible, and better able to provide preventative health and management of chronic conditions. It would also provide mental health services to particularly vulnerable groups.

We believe it is a good candidate for critical infrastructure investment through the *Community Health and Hospitals Program*, as it addresses three of the four key areas: preventative, primary and chronic disease management; mental health; and drug and alcohol treatment.

It would also assist government to deliver on the *Aged Care Roadmap*, as people with multiple health and social support needs, particularly older people, are the key demographic for housing at the site. Housing, health care and social support will be integrated on the one site so residents will receive the care and support they need to remain healthy at home, avoid illness and reduce pressure on the residential aged care sector and hospital system.

Investment required

The overall cost of the redevelopment is projected to be $40 million. We propose to split the costs between cohealth, Unison Housing, the Victorian Government and the Commonwealth.

We anticipate a contribution from the Victorian Government towards the housing component of the project through a Social Housing Growth Fund. We seek a Commonwealth investment of $10m in the health clinic redevelopment.

Funder	Proposed contribution
cohealth	$7.5m
Unison Housing	$3.5 m
Victorian Government	$19 m
Commonwealth Government	$10 m
Total Cost	**$40 m**

A detailed project prospectus is available.

[i] 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/

[ii] 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/

[iii] https://nwmphn.org.au/our-community/community-and-population-health-profiles/

[iv] https://www.acoss.org.au/inequality/

[v] http://apo.org.au/node/55699\

[vi] https://www.australia21.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Final-InequalityinAustraliaRepor-2.pdf

[vii] https://vcoss.org.au/analysis/ending-homelessness-it-can-be-done/

[viii] https://chp.org.au/electionplatform2018/

[ix] https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness

[x] https://grattan.edu.au/report/commonwealth-orange-book-2019/