

9. Staff Reports

9.1. General Manager's Reports

9.1.1. GM - 28/11/2022 - Lithgow Community Private

Prepared by Craig Butler – General Manager

Department Executive

Authorised by General Manager

Summary

This report provides an update on the matter of Lithgow Community Private's challenges in continuing to operate.

It acknowledges that positive negotiations are occurring between the key parties with the goal of overcoming these challenges. Notwithstanding, the report recommends continuing advocacy so that specialist medical services are not lost from Lithgow.

Commentary

At its September Meeting, Council considered a report about the Lithgow Community Private's announcement around that time that they would cease to operate after 2022. **A copy of that report is attached.**

As reported to Council when this matter was last considered - *Lithgow has a significant aged cohort of the local population. The socio-economic circumstances of our community predispose it to certain adverse health consequences. Also, there is a cluster of medical businesses and services which agglomerate around LCP because they are complementary. Removal of the specialist medical component (LCP) of this small but important health ecosystem could have implications for the performance of all of these other health services. Lithgow is not a local government area that can endure any reduction in medical services. In fact, there is the risk this could result in an unacceptable spiral down in terms of local availability and access to much-needed health services.*

Council undertook a number of actions to advocate to prevent the loss to Lithgow of the critical and much-needed specialist medical services provided by LCP. This included media releases to highlight the gravity of this matter and meetings and representations with LCP, local politicians and health bureaucrats.

As it stands, LCP are currently negotiating with the Local Health District to achieve sustainable future terms which ensure they are viable and able to continue to operate. Meanwhile, LCP is continuing day surgery and specialist medical appointments and they report that activity levels have improved since the first half of the year. Their next goal is to restore services to pre-Covid levels.

The Chair of the LCP Board has written to formally acknowledge and thank Lithgow Council for the support shown to LCP over the recent months. A media release by LCP, which was published last week, follows -

LITHGOW COMMUNITY PRIVATE ACKNOWLEDGES COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Board of Directors of Lithgow Community Private Hospital (LCP) are aware that there is community concern regarding the ongoing services provided to our community by LCP. This uncertainty is presenting challenges when choosing to schedule important procedures.

Last week the board announced that LCP will continue normal operations beyond November 2022, in anticipation of finalising a new service agreement with NBMLHD.

LCP Chair Robert Swinton said “LCP and the Nepean Blue Mountains Health District are in discussions regarding a new sustainable model and services agreement that aims to provide certainty for both parties. There is acknowledgement of the valuable role played by LCP in addressing the health needs of the Lithgow community. While discussions are still ongoing, we want to assure the community that there is genuine commitment on both sides to resolve the current issues.”

The Board would like to thank our LCP staff, doctors, patients, and the community for their support during the past couple of uncertain months. In particular, we would like to thank the Lithgow Mayor – Maree Stratham, and the Lithgow City Council for their support. We also acknowledge support from Paul Toole MP, Member for Bathurst, and Bronnie Taylor MLC Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for Mental Health for their support of LCP in continuing to provide valuable health services to the community.

It is encouraging that negotiations are occurring between LCP and the Local Health District. But the community deserves assurances that this issue will be resolved and a long-term solution will be found. For this reason, it is recommended that Council continue with its advocacy.

Policy Implications

Nil.

Financial Implications

- Budget approved - N/A
- Cost centre - N/A
- Expended to date - N/A
- Future potential impact – loss of LCP from this city would have profound social consequences because there is the need for local specialist medical services

Legal and Risk Management Implications

N/A

Attachments

1. 26 September 2022 - Update Lithgow Community Private [9.1.1.1 - 3 pages]

Recommendation

THAT;

1. Council continue to engage with the NSW Government and Lithgow Community Private to advocate for a long-term agreement between these parties which ensures that much needed specialist medical services are available in Lithgow for the long term, and,
2. A further report be presented to the Ordinary Meeting in January to either recognise that a solution has been arrived at, or to canvas other available actions to achieve this outcome.