

11.1.2. GM - 23/01/2023 - Lithgow Community Private Update

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Department Human Resources

Authorised by General Manager

Reference

Min 22-225: Ordinary Meeting of Council held 28 November 2022.

Summary

The Council considered a report about this matter at the 28 November Ordinary Meeting. The report is attached. The council resolved:

22 -225 RESOLVED

THAT;

1. Council continues 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.

This report provides an update on the matter of Lithgow Community Private's negotiations to secure a long term and viable working arrangement with the Nepean Blue Mts Local Health District (the LHD).

The report acknowledges that there has been goodwill brought to the negotiations by both parties and some progress has been made toward achieving the abovementioned outcome.

In the absence of an appropriate arrangement between the parties, some risk remains that the Lithgow community could suffer a loss or reduction of the specialist medical services provided by Lithgow Community Private. For this reason, it is recommended that Lithgow City Council continue to advocate for the outcome.

Commentary

As has been reported to Council on previous occasions, Lithgow has a significant aged cohort of the local population. The socio-economic circumstances of our community predispose it to certain adverse health consequences. Of course, it is also widely acknowledged that the level of health services available in rural locations is less than metropolitan settings. Again, this backdrop, Lithgow Community Private (LCP) stands out as a community run, innovative and successful model of specialist health service delivery, complementary to the public health service, in a rural/regional setting. Also, there is a cluster of other medical businesses and services which agglomerate around LCP. Removal or dilution of the LCP specialist medical component of this small but important health ecosystem could have implications for the performance of all of these other health services. There is the risk this could result in an unacceptable spiral down in terms of local availability and access to much needed health services.

Like all medical services, the operation of Lithgow Community Private (LCP) was profoundly affected by the Covid pandemic. The same is the case for the LHD's Lithgow Hospital which is no doubt stressed because of the immense pressures on the public health system. These circumstances have threatened the continuing operation of LCP. But notwithstanding, LCP are ambitious to return to pre-covid levels of service. Indeed, they are committed to expanding the level of service available to the local community.

For some time now LCP have been in negotiations with the LHD (who they rely upon to purchase operating theatre time, rent premises and, occasionally, beds for overnight stays) for the establishment of a long term and viable working arrangement. This is needed so that LCP can continue to plan for and deliver much needed specialist medical services in Lithgow.

Since this matter was last reported to Council, in November 2022, negotiations have been on-going between LCP and the LHD. Council's administration have been assured that goodwill has been brought to the negotiations by both parties. It has been said that there is hope that satisfactory arrangements will be arrived at. But it has also been suggested that this outcome may be some way off yet and a number of key issues are still to be resolved.

LCP has also made a formal request to the State Government for a relatively small amount of funding to partially restore losses from the covid pandemic and to replace a lung function machine which has reached end of service life. The request has not been granted at this stage.

In the absence of an appropriate arrangement between the parties, some risk remains that the Lithgow community could suffer a loss or reduction of the specialist medical services provided by Lithgow Community private. Lithgow is not a local government area that can endure any reduction in medical services. On this basis, it is recommended that the Council continue to advocate for a long term and viable working arrangement that will ensure the continuing operation of LCP.

Policy Implications

Financial Implications to Council

- Budget approved - N/A
- Cost centre - N/A
- Expended to date - N/A
- Future potential impact – N/A

Legal and Risk Management Implications

Nil

Attachments

1. Email Response from Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Regional Health [11.1.2.1 - 1 page]
2. Report - 9.1.1. GM - 28/11/2022 - Lithgow Community Private [11.1.2.2 – 2 pages]

Recommendation

THAT Council continue to advocate to the NSW Government for a secure, long term and viable working arrangement for Lithgow Community Private with the Nepean Blue Mts Local Health District.