

Health Services in Sunbury



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Health Services in Sunbury

● Overview

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● Geographic and Demographic Issues

- Sunbury is a town of 35,000 situated at the western end of the City of Hume in the North West Metropolitan Region
- Hume is an interface Local Government area with three (3) main population centres surrounded by a large area of farming land
- Sunbury is surrounded by a green belt of rural land and is 25 to 30 minutes drive from the other populated areas of Broadmeadows and Craigieburn
- Unlike the rest of the LGA, the population of Sunbury is predominantly born in Australia or the United Kingdom. There is almost no non-English speaking population.
- Population consists of mainly young families with a growing number of older family members retiring to be near their children.

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● Current Health Services in Sunbury

- Currently, there are five (5) GP clinics in Sunbury, none of which are offering after-hours services
- Sunbury Community Health Centre Inc. provides allied health (aged and paediatric), counselling, dental, early intervention, drug and alcohol, financial counselling, domestic violence and men's behaviour change, aged care services, Family Day Care, audiology and community health nursing
- There are several aged care services, including Goonawarra Nursing Home, Riddell Gardens, Lions Hostel and Abbey Court which provide a mixture of high and low care and special accommodation
- There are no acute hospital services in Sunbury

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● History of Health Services in Sunbury

- Sunbury Community Health Centre Inc. was established in 1974 with a grant from the Federal Government. It had three (3) staff and was situated in a portable building on a large block of land
- In 1981, a purpose built community health centre was constructed on the same site for the growing population of 9,000
- In 2000, the community health centre, together with a disability provider, Distinctive Options, approached the Government with a plan to provide a joint facility that was large enough to provide services for the growing population of 35,000
- The new “Integrated Care Centre” was opened in 2002 and included a private medical practice as well as the community health centre and Distinctive Options

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- History of Health Services in Sunbury (Cont.)
 - Sunbury has never had a public hospital
 - In 1977, a group of Sunbury businessmen established the Sunbury Private Hospital. This was eventually sold to Health Life Care, but coinciding with a fall in the private health cover, the company went into receivership
 - MBF, the private health fund, came to the rescue and purchased the private hospital and ran an extremely successful hospital for a number of years. The community health centre and the private hospital established a number of programs together that won several awards for innovation. During MBF's ownership, an after-hours GP service was run from the hospital, but this closed after several years
 - In 1998, MBF sold the private hospital to Mayne Health, who immediately closed the maternity services which had been the backbone of the hospital. With services deteriorating, Mayne then sold the hospital to Prime Life in 2005. Prime Life have now established an aged care facility

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● Community Expectations

- Sunbury is similar to a rural town and has strong community connections and with the closure of the private hospital, a groundswell of anger erupted
- A public meeting with around 500 people attending, voiced their disapproval to the Minister and local member of Parliament about the lack of after-hours medical care
- The Minister announced that she had given the community health centre \$20,000 to do a service plan for a day hospital
- Consultants were engaged to run community focus groups and gather evidence for the services required
- Following lobbying from community groups and the health centre, \$1M was allocated in the last State budget for the planning

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● Progress to Date

- Western Health and Melbourne Health were invited to submit expressions of interest to run the clinical services. Western Health were successful and are working closely with DHS and the community health centre in designing the service mix
- Architects, Engineers and Quantity Surveyors have been appointed and are to provide details of the design plan by the end of the year to hopefully enable the project to be funded in next year's budget
- Discussions are being held between Western Health and Sunbury Community Health Centre on how the two organisations can work together to provide a successful "Care in Your Community" operational model

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● Conclusion

- The evidence based practice data has been gathered
- Community input has been obtained
- A new Day Hospital will be built
- BUT, we will not satisfy the community expectations because the community want an after-hours (emergency department) medical service. The community in general do not understand the funding of health services and presume that DHS has the power to make doctors provide after-hours services
- What the community would really like is a small rural hospital. Unfortunately, lines on the map dictate that they are very much a part of the metropolitan health system