



MEDIA RELEASE

POTENTIAL EROSION IN PROVISION OF BOURKE MEDICAL & HEALTH SERVICES

Mayor of the Bourke Shire, Councillor Barry Hollman, today raised significant concerns at the service delivery specifications for the provision of medical services at the Bourke Multipurpose Service as included in tender documentation currently in the marketplace.

"The Western NSW Local Health District has invited tenders for the provision of Medical Officer Services at the Bourke Multipurpose Service". Councillor Hollman said.

"As part of the tender, the documentation proposes new minimum requirements for Visiting Medical Officer coverage at the Bourke Service with the minimum face-to-face coverage being over five (5) days from 8.00am-6.00pm. Outside of these days and times, the documentation provides that proposals will be considered for virtual care service options", the mayor added.

The Mayor acknowledged that whilst the five (5) day/8.00am - 6.00pm hours are a minimum, and that the final hours may vary, the tender documentation requires respondents to identify how they will provide cover outside the minimum on-site requirements.

"To suggest that residents and visitors to Bourke are to be subjected to a five (5) day a week "business hours" only face-to-face medical service and for the remaining hours of the week, a virtual service is abhorrent to Council. People in the far west of the State simply deserve better", he stated.

The Mayor said that the Council was of the very strong view that 24/7 access to on-site medical care at the Multipurpose Service is essential for the on-going health of the Bourke community and should be maintained.

The Bourke Multipurpose Service is the hub for out of hours' medical services for the broad region that Bourke serves. With the proportion of Bourke's population aged 70+ expected to double by 2036 and when coupled with the acknowledged higher rates of chronic disease in remote communities, the Bourke community needs higher levels of services and not reduced levels of care, as proposed in the tender" Councillor Hollman said.

"I will table a Mayoral Minute on this matter at Council's meeting to be held on Monday, 28 September 2020. In the meantime, I have written to the Acting Executive Officer of the Western NSW Local Health District raising concerns to the proposal on behalf of Council and the community and seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the matter. The issue has also been brought to the attention of those ultimately charged with Policy making in these matters".

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