**26 June 2019**

### Local health providers in the mix for future aged care services

Surf Coast Shire Council is working with Hesse Rural Health and Lorne Community Hospital on a model for the future of aged care services in the shire.

The model could see Hesse Rural Health and Lorne Community Hospital taking over provision of aged care services for clients in zones incorporating Winchelsea and Lorne respectively.

In the short term Council would continue to provide aged care services in a zone comprising Torquay, Jan Juc, Anglesea and Bellbrae with a view to identifying an alternative provider for this zone in the future.

Cr Margot Smith, who is a member of the Positive Ageing Advisory Committee said while it was still in the concept stage the alliance with local health care providers could be a great outcome.

“Hesse Rural Health and Lorne Community Hospital are both highly regarded and respected community health providers and having them on board to manage aged care services could be a great outcome,” she said.

“One of the strong messages we’ve heard from our community as we’ve worked through the reform program is people are seeking a seamless transition. There is no doubt established local providers are well placed to achieve that,” she said.

Surf Coast Shire Council has been working for more than two years on its preparations for upcoming federal government reforms to the aged care services sector.

After 2020 Councils will no longer automatically be the provider of aged services in their area as the federal government moves to a model designed to provide greater consumer choice.

Council adopted its Positive Ageing Reform Readiness Plan at its June 2019 meeting after having reviewed its services and will now begin a comprehensive transition program.

Community feedback has been an important factor in Council’s decision making.

“The Council established a Positive Ageing Advisory Committee to ensure we have direct access to the views of people who use the services,” said Cr Smith.

“The committee members are volunteers who meet regularly to give guidance and feedback as we step through our reform plan, and we are very appreciative of their commitment and insight,” she said.

“The Committee unanimously supports Surf Coast Shire Council’s Positive Ageing Reform Readiness Plan and the direction it is taking,” said Christine Brooks, Chairperson of the Positive Ageing Advisory Committee.

“The Advisory Committee has been closely involved in developing and reviewing the plan.  We look forward to getting out to discuss the new model with the community and we are excited to work with Council on its future direction in positive ageing,” said Ms Brooks.

Council will communicate directly with clients as it continues with its transition program ahead of the 2020 federal government reforms.

One of Council’s guiding principles is that the community will not be left without access to critical positive ageing services.

ENDS

**Not for publication:**

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