

# Building on 50 years of heritage

## Sustaining health services for the future

### Objective

To retain our Medical Practice workforce, avoid skills gaps and recruit suitable senior staff to ensure the sustainability of our 50-year-old general practice services.

### Background

BCHS faced several competing challenges and many uncertainties within our Medical Practice:

- Senior leadership changes
- Staffing and skills gaps
- Redevelopment and vacation of our main site
- The need for a clinical governance, skills and capability audit.

These were on top of the well-known challenges facing all medical services right now.

In relation to GPs, the immediate problem was unrest within the cohort. We also identified skills shortages in our management team.

We worked with Larter Consulting to address these challenges and ensure the long-term sustainability of a service many of our community's most vulnerable people have relied on since 1974.

### Methods used

We put people first. New BCHS CEO Mandy Hutchinson took the time to meet one-on-one with each GP to listen and deeply understand their issues and concerns.

We undertook specific individual mentoring of senior staff.

Larter took an impactful 'deep dive' into our revenue.

We reviewed pay structures, accreditation, and clinical governance requirements to ensure best practice.

### Results

Over 12 months of consultative work and with the support of Larter, we:

1. **Retained our general practice workforce**, particularly all existing GPs.
2. **Recruited senior staff, including GP clinical leads**, who are highly experienced and respected.
3. **Established a Clinical Governance Committee** reporting to the Board and assisting the appointment of Board Directors with health backgrounds and expertise.
4. Introduced a fairer and more equitable **remuneration and employment scheme** for GPs.
5. **Implemented an improved rostering system** to support nurses, which strengthened accreditation compliance and clinical governance.
6. **Mentored the new general practice manager**, including a focus on securing general practice accreditation.
7. **Implemented mixed billing within the practice**, including training to support each clinician to maximise their effectiveness.



**“It is critically important to listen deeply and work in partnership with GPs. Our changes after consultation with our GPs were designed to provide flexibility and access to expertise so together we can achieve our goal of improved health equity through the social model of health.”**

**-BCHS CEO Mandy Hutchinson**

### Conclusion

We are now well prepared to face immediate and future challenges within the healthcare sector as a stronger, more committed and supported team. Our staff know they are valued.

We are not only retaining but expanding services, particularly within our Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub.

We are ready to be seen as an employer of choice for medical professionals seeking to make a difference in regional healthcare.

### Future direction

We are currently refurbishing our main site in the suburb of Eaglehawk, where community health began in Bendigo in 1974. This is the largest of eight BCHS sites across the city.

Long-term staff are counting down to returning 'home' and new staff are looking forward to transitioning to a contemporary, fit-for-purpose building.

The site re-launch in 2025 will confirm our status as a modern, progressive service embedded in community, with the community at the heart of all we do and with trusted staff who share this ethos.



### Acknowledgements

Mario Gupta, Larter Consulting  
primary health consultant

