

Minutes

Open Campaign Committee – Community Health Services



Date	10 August 2026
Time	6:00pm-7:00pm meeting opened at 6:05pm
Location	Collingwood Town Hall, Wurundjeri Room
Chair	Councillor Sophie Wade
Minute taker	Gaye Stewart, Yarra City Council
Content Manager Reference	D2026/0317862

Statement of Recognition of Wurundjeri Land

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

Attendees

Councillor/s	Councillor Sophie Wade (Chair)
Committee members	Natalie Savin, Mike Naismith, Chris Dite, Elizabeth Gherardin, Heather Hindle (online), Glenda Scalise, Robyn Williams
Council Officers	Malcolm McCall (Manager Ageing, Equity and Community Development), Gaye Stewart (Policy Advisor)
Guests	
Apologies	Mayor Cr Stephen Jolly

Item number	Item title or subject	Minute notes
1.	Welcome and Acknowledgment of Country	Mayor Cr Stephen Jolly sent his apologies
2.	Declarations of conflicts of interest	No conflicts of interest were declared.
	Governance	Role of the Committee - To make recommendations to Council
3.	Confirmation of previous minutes and actions	<i>Minutes of 20 May 2026 accepted</i>
4.	Context update	1. An overview of the independent review was provided by a council officer, which outlined the following matters; • The review confirms that cohealth's GP clinics were operating at a loss. • It does not attribute that outcome solely to Medicare settings. Instead, it identifies interrelated causes: ○ governance and management issues within cohealth, ○ the organisation's model of care, and the complexity of the client base. • The government funding announcement of \$ 1.5 million to secure GP services to remain operating (while cohealth undertakes improvements to its operations). • Council outlined actions taken since the report was released. This included various letters and contact with State and Federal Ministers and cohealth.

		2. Following the officer update, committee members identified different understandings about the purpose of funding to cohealth and arrangements for its use. The following notes record key issues from committee discussion. • The Commonwealth funding was not to continue GP services, but to develop a new model of care. • The announcement states that the 1.5 million is time-limited and conditional on making necessary changes to governance and a sustainable general practice model of care. • Funding is to make a new model that works for cohealth clients and is financially viable in an ongoing way. • NWMPHN's role in funding oversight is still unclear, and the latest information is that they are awaiting instructions on their role and funding arrangements (July 2026). Note: The following items summarise matters raised during general discussion, including community members' observations, experiences and reports concerning cohealth operations and related issues. These comments are recorded as part of the meeting discussion. Their inclusion in the minutes should not be taken as confirmation of their accuracy or as representing Council's views or findings. 3. The following cohealth operations issues were raised: • cohealth seem to be operating as if implementation is underway, yet the plan is not articulated. Their lack of transparency continues to be concerning. • Federal Minister for Health Mark Butler expects a new model to be advised to him by August 2027. • The Save our Community Health (SOCH) group have been advised that there is 'in principle' agreement for redevelopment of the Collingwood site. • SOCH is focusing efforts on reinstating the Pharmacy at Collingwood, and the previous proprietor is in discussions on this. It was reported that an extension to the pharmacy licence has been granted and SOCH has received correspondence from cohealth saying they approve the pharmacy reopening. • The appointment of the board monitor, Chris Altis, was seen as a positive step. There was an understanding that he will attend all board discussions, including on the new model of care in development. • The committee noted the appointment of the interim CE, Kate Gillan. 4. The Chair invited general discussion on community insights. • The committee has 4 SOCH members, who can provide feedback to Council on actions and knowledge generated from their activities. • There are still questions about cohealth commitment to the service, and the lack of advertising for restored GP services and other actions was a matter of concern. • Funding provided by the state government allows for flexibility in service provision, and counselling services fit within that, yet cohealth have not entered into discussions about reinstatement of generalist counselling.
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5.	Priority advocacy items	Matters raised by the committee: • It would be useful if cohealth could address a public meeting to report on its progress and make public statements. This would align with their rebuilding of community trust and preparedness for community engagement. • There is still a lack of clarity (trust) about cohealth's intentions for its long-term commitment to community health services in Yarra. • Council needs to have discussions with the new Victorian Health Minister on funding to cohealth. • Is it possible to confirm the state and federal commitment to the build at Collingwood? Both the Housing Australia Future Fund and the State Health Building Authority would need to be aligned. We don't know the commitment until we see something in writing. Actions: • Write to cohealth CE to ask for a meeting to discuss intentions for counselling and pharmacy. • Write to cohealth and ask if they will host a community meeting to discuss their plans and commitment to Community health services in Collingwood and community engagement plans. • Write to State Health Minister, Ingrid Stitt, to meet and discuss plans to support and direct changes at cohealth • Write to opposition to identify their policy position on the cohealth issue.
	Other Business	• Council asked to fix the QR code for the Save Community Health Services site, as it doesn't put the call to action up high enough. • Council asked to consider running another public meeting to update the community on what's been happening as there is still uncertainty. Further discussion on this matter, including purpose and timing, is needed. • SOCH meetings occur weekly on a Thursday, and a council representative is welcome to attend any of these meetings. • Link to cohealth progress tracker tracking our progress - cohealth
	Meeting closed	The meeting closed at 7.08pm.
	Next scheduled meeting	7 September 2026 at 6pm at Collingwood Town Hall.