

Agency: COUNTRY HEALTH SA – Yorketown Hospital Surgical Services

1. Title Movement of elective surgery from Yorketown Hospital to Wallaroo Hospital

2. Issue:

Yorketown Hospital is a 26 bed acute facility located in the Southern Yorke Peninsula. Yorketown Hospital provides a small range of theatre services. Visiting surgical services include Urology, General Surgery and Gynaecology. Anaesthetics are provided by a resident general practitioner (GP) at Yorketown who has indicated he is retiring from general practice, but will continue with anaesthetics in the short to medium term. This term is undefined.

Since 2010, consideration has been given to the safety and quality of continuing to provide a small number of elective surgery procedures at Yorketown Hospital. For the sustainability of surgical services in the Yorke Peninsula, it is timely to consolidate a majority of elective surgery to the larger surgical centre, Wallaroo.

The theatre at Yorketown Hospital is old and requires significant investment to meet current safety and quality standards. Yorketown theatre does not have an instrument washer; all instruments are washed by hand. This does not comply with ACORN standards.

Accident and Emergency, overnight medical care and colonoscopy procedures, will continue to be provided at Yorketown Hospital and Health Service. The consolidation of surgical services at Wallaroo Hospital will have no impact on these health services, which will continue to be provided at Yorketown Hospital.

3. Region(s)

The Yorketown catchment is the Yorke Peninsula - South Statistical Area, along with the Southern half of the Yorke Peninsula - North Statistical Area.

The population residing in the Yorketown catchment is approximately 6,127. This has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years and is not projected to grow over the next 10 years.



4. Stakeholders Affected

CHSALHN and the local Health Advisory Councils undertook a comprehensive local health service planning process in 2010-2011. The Yorke Peninsula 10 Year Local Health Service Plan recommended the following actions for surgical services in the catchment:

- By 2015 review the appropriateness of elective surgery at Yorketown in line with available resources and contemporary standards.
- Maintain existing elective surgical service and explore growth potential at Wallaroo.

This 10 year plan was made available via the internet.

The proposed change to surgery at Yorketown will impact about 50-60 people undergoing elective surgical procedures per year. Analysis over the last three financial years has indicated that around 11% of surgical patients have resided in locations which are closer to Wallaroo, 2% from other parts of SA, a further 30% have resided in, and around Minlaton (100kms South of Wallaroo and 30kms North of Yorketown). 57% of clients or approximately 34 patients reside in Yorketown or the remainder of the Southern Yorke Peninsula.

In 2015-16, there were 56 surgical procedures (excluding colonoscopies) performed at Yorketown Hospital, which represents an average of just one procedure per week. These procedures included 26 urology, 18 gynaecology and 12 general surgeries. This small number of procedures is insufficient to ensure Country Health SA meets its obligations under national Safety and Quality Standards, governed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

Broad consultation in late 2016 and early 2017 involved staff of both Yorketown and Wallaroo Hospitals, visiting Surgical Specialists, Dr Kokar (local GP Anaesthetist),

Health Advisory Councils for lower YP and Copper Coast and the YP Community Passenger Transport Service.

Of the Southern Yorke Peninsula catchment residents who accessed public surgical services in 2013-2014, approximately 14% were admitted to Yorketown Hospital, 9% to Wallaroo Hospital and 69% to metropolitan public hospitals.

Analysis of patient data indicated that there were no people accessing these services who had identified as being from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

Wallaroo is located 129 kilometres or approximately two hours by car from Yorketown.

5. Stakeholders Consulted

Groups and organisations consulted included:

- Southern Yorke Peninsula Health Advisory Committee
- CHSALHN (Yorketown Hospital Staff)
- GP Anaesthetist – Dr George Kokar
- Visiting Surgical Specialists (Urology, General Surgery and Gynaecology)
- Yorke Peninsula Community Passenger Transport
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Union

6. Consultation

A communication plan was prepared at the commencement of this proposed change outlining key groups and stakeholders. Local engagement with the Health Advisory Council, staff of Yorketown Hospital and medical staff were an important first phase of consultation.

Feedback from these groups was used to develop a Fact Sheet about the planned changes to surgical services at Yorketown Hospital which was disseminated broadly for information.

Methods of consultation in the initial phase have included:

- Face to face meetings with individuals and groups (for example Dr Kokar and the Director of Medical Services end of November 2016)
- Telephone and face to face conversations with visiting surgeons
- Fact Sheet distributed 21/02/17 including to staff, uploaded to www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/yorketownhospital and to Yorketown Hospital services page.
- Utilising existing stakeholder meetings (for example Health Advisory Council meetings on 30/11/16 and 01/02/17)
- General staff meeting at Yorketown Hospital on 3 February 2017

30 November 2016 – meeting held with Lower Yorke Peninsula Health Advisory Council member and Country Health SA. Proposal outlined. Issues about the availability of an Anaesthetist into the future and the theatre standards were discussed and the difficulty for staff to maintain skill levels when surgery is infrequent.

The outcome of this meeting:

- Proposal was noted
- Scope procedures would continue to be undertaken at Yorketown Hospital as closed procedures and safely provided within current facilities and staff experience.
- Management to consult with specialists and theatre staff regarding changes

1 February 2017 – Meeting held with Lower Yorke Peninsula Health Advisory Council informing them of planned changes to elective surgery at Yorketown Hospital. They were advised that there would be no changes to staffing levels at the Yorketown Hospital as part of this change.

A second phase of consultation was initiated following feedback from the local general practitioner, community members and local Member of Parliament to ensure ongoing consultation occurs with all interested parties.

A series of Open Days are being held at Yorketown Hospital between Monday 3 April and Sunday 30 April, where members of the community are able to attend between set times to receive information about the proposed changes to surgical services at Yorketown Hospital, ask questions and provide verbal feedback. Open Days are as per below:

- Wednesday 12 April (12 people attended)
- Tuesday 18 April (8 people attended)
- Wednesday 19 April, morning (2 people attended) and evening forum (yet to be held)

Visitors who would like to provide written feedback will be encouraged to send an email to HealthCHSA@sa.gov.au. Feedback received via email will be collated and provided to the Regional Director for consideration and, where appropriate, implementation.

The local MP has called a public meeting at the Yorketown Town Hall for 20 April 2017 about the proposed change.

Following this extended consultation period, updated content will be loaded to the Yorketown Hospital page of the SA Health website (www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/yorketownhospital), along with an updated fact sheet.

Some comments from consultation with stakeholders and community were:

- Difficulty attracting GPs with Anaesthetic skills has been noted.
- Noted maintenance of appropriate skill levels of theatre staff.
- Noted current age of theatre staff, the infrequency of theatre lists, anticipated issues of maintaining accreditation compliance of theatre and instruments.
- Limited consultation (prior to second phase of consultation) with community about the change.
- There was a community perception that there may be accommodation issues for family members travelling to Wallaroo to support the surgical patients.
- Concern has been raised about the perceived reduction of health services in country S.A. and the risk of the Yorketown Hospital closing.

- Community pleased to hear hospital not at risk with continuation of accident and emergency, medical inpatient services and 24/7 care at Yorketown Hospital.

A sample of comments from staff include:

- Disappointed but understanding of the proposed change to surgical services at Yorketown Hospital

It is planned to undertake a review of service changes at 6 months post-implementation.

7. Summary of Impacts and Analysis

7.1. Economic Factors

Existing businesses will be unaffected by the service change, given the small and highly specialised scope of the changing surgical specialties. The tourism industry which attracts significant numbers of visitors to this region will be unaffected by the change, as the service change affects planned elective procedures, not the emergency needs.

It will not impact population numbers or the demographic nature of the catchment, given the small and one off nature of the procedures.

All theatre nurses will continue to be employed within the Yorketown Hospital. The visiting surgical specialists will be able to continue to undertake their lists from Wallaroo. Liaison with the Dr Kokar, Yorketown GP and Anaesthetist is being explored to determine any implications for maintaining lists from Wallaroo.

Yorketown Hospital will continue to provide its core services which support the local fabric of the community and economy.

The Wallaroo Hospital will be enhanced by bolstering the visiting specialist profile, enhancing access to a larger catchment across the Yorke Peninsula.

7.2. Social Factors

The decision is driven by a need to ensure patient safety. Yorketown would find it difficult in the longer term to maintain safety – associated with maintaining an ageing operating theatre and retaining medical workforce with anaesthetic credentials and nursing staff theatre skills.

This is a small change, with only 50-60 minor elective procedures currently taking place each year, some of which occurs for people which are residing closer to Wallaroo. The type of procedures are planned and one off type procedures, meaning the small number of people impacted may only have to travel to Wallaroo once in their lifetime for such a procedure. Emergency medical procedures / theatre activity is not conducted at Yorketown currently and lives are not being put at risk by the consolidation.

Each year, for those 50-60 patients who will have travel, they will have access to a service with reduced risk. Yorketown GPs will still be providing surgical after-care for Yorketown residents who have procedures at Wallaroo, with the visiting Specialists maintaining their close ties to Doctors and other clinicians in Yorketown. Country Health SA surgical patients will be able to access a range of transport options to and

from Wallaroo, which is 129 kilometres or approximately two hours by car from Yorketown.

- Yorke Peninsula (YP) Community Transport (contact number 1300 132 932), including the Yorke Peninsula Bus and volunteer driver services.
- Patients may also be eligible for the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS). PATS is a subsidy program that provides funding for some travel, escort and accommodation costs when eligible rural and remote South Australians travel more than 100 kilometres each way to see a specialist.

This is not the start of closure for Yorketown Hospital – Yorketown is an isolated town and Country Health SA remains committed to providing local services that meet the needs of the community. Colonoscopies (approximately 120 / year) will continue to be provided from Yorketown.

Wallaroo can easily accommodate the additional procedures. By building capacity at the Wallaroo Hospital, it is also enhancing the long term sustainability as an important centre for Health Services for all people residing across the wider Yorke Peninsula.

7.3. Environmental Factors

The service proposal has minimal impact on the environment. There is some energy savings in operating one operating theatre instead of two, along with reduced use of water and cleaning products. An insignificant increase in car emissions associated with the 50-60 people that will travel to Wallaroo for procedures.

7.4. Equity Factors

The proposal seeks to improve the equity in surgical procedural outcomes by enhancing the quality and safety of the service. By shifting some procedures, such as gynaecological surgery to a centre which has a higher volume, CHSALHN expects to enhance the quality and safety for Yorke Peninsula residents. There are a range of published studies which have identified that low volume gynaecological surgery, when compared with high volume, has higher rates of complications and higher rates of operative injury.

Analysis over the last three financial years has indicated that around 11% of surgical patients have resided in locations which are closer to Wallaroo, 2% from other parts of SA, a further 30% have resided in, and around Minlaton (100kms South of Wallaroo and 30kms North of Yorketown). 57% of clients or approximately 34 patients reside in Yorketown or the remainder of the Southern Yorke Peninsula.

Whilst the service change will lead to the need for a longer patient journey for up to around 50 people per year, these patients are going to receive a more equitable service outcome in terms of enhanced safety and quality.

8. Solutions

Issue: Country Health SA has been criticised for a perceived lack of community consultation.

Mitigation: Clear and consistent messaging about the consultation period being extended and how members of the public can have their say.

Issue: the public may incorrectly perceive that all services will cease at Yorketown Hospital and that Country Health SA intends to close the site.

Mitigation: reiterate key messages that:

- Country Health SA does not intend to close any sites across country South Australia.
- the proposal to relocate surgical procedures to Wallaroo Hospital is driven by the need to ensure that the services provided are safe, effective and reliable, as well as being provided as close to patients' homes as safely possible.
- Accident and Emergency, overnight care and colonoscopies will continue to be provided at Yorketown Hospital.

To support patients getting to Wallaroo from Yorketown, transport options including through the Yorke Peninsula Community Passenger Transport and the opportunity to claim through the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme have been communicated through the Fact Sheet.

9. Coordination

Led by the Regional Director, Yorke and Northern Region a small working group facilitated the consultations and information gathering leading up to the proposed changes.

10. Local Government

It is anticipated there will be no significant impact on local council resources, however the two affected councils (Yorke Peninsula Council and District Council of The Copper Coast) were engaged. Country Health SA senior leaders met with Ray Agnew, Mayor – Yorke Peninsula Council and Andrew Cameron, CEO - Yorke Peninsula Council.

11. Preferred Option

The preferred option is that Yorketown Hospital plan towards the cessation of high risk surgery and continue with colonoscopies. The outcome would be a continued safe and low risk service to the local community. The consolidation of elective surgery to Wallaroo Hospital will contribute to the sustainability of elective surgery on Yorke Peninsula. Yorketown Hospital will retain accident and emergency, overnight medical care and colonoscopy procedures.

Although this change will impact on a small number of Yorke Peninsula residents requiring them to travel to Wallaroo to undergo an elective procedure, the benefits associated with improved patient safety are considered of paramount importance.

12. Agency Contact:

**Roger Kirchner
Regional Director – Yorke & Northern Region
Country Health SA Local Health Network**