



Westgate Health Co-operative

# Strategic Roadmap

June 2017



## Introduction

Westgate Health Co-operative is a not-for-profit provider of general practice, dental and allied health services in Melbourne's West.

The co-operative operates two medical clinics from 17-21 Vernon Street, South Kingsville and 2 Home Road, Newport.

Westgate Health Co-operative started as South Kingsville Health Services in 1980, with the backing of a group of local residents and Baptist Social Services.

Today the co-operative has more than 11,000 members, employing about 30 medical, dental and support staff, who provide high-quality, affordable services to more than 4000 patients per month.

The co-operative's mission statement remains:  
To contribute to the health and wellbeing of individuals and their communities through the provision of high-quality, affordable health services.

To that end, the Board of Westgate Health Co-operative has established a strategic roadmap for the service which outlines current and future strategic priorities from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020.



## Our four priority destinations

The four identified priorities, or destinations, are:

### Destination 1

Having a strong, unique identity as a co-operative

### Destination 2

Facilitating innovation through technical and personal delivery of better primary healthcare services

### Destination 3

Identifying gaps and facilitating better health care for:

- \_ Vulnerable people
- \_ Men

### Destination 4

Establishing new services using the co-operative model

## Strengths and Opportunities

Pursuing these four priority destinations will allow Westgate Health Co-Operative to take advantage of its existing strengths and opportunities.

These include:

- \_ High quality health services, with dedicated, professional staff.
- \_ A solid financial position, developed through strong and consistent executive and board leadership.
- \_ An investment in fit-for-purpose facilities for the benefit of members and staff.
- \_ The opportunity to expand existing services to new locations and attract new members in Hobson's Bay and neighbouring municipalities.
- \_ A chance to better articulate Westgate Health Co-operative's point of difference with consumers.
- \_ An opportunity to re-establish a stronger connection within the local Hobson's Bay community, and with community leaders in other nearby municipalities.



## Destination 1:

### Having a strong, unique identity as a co-operative

Westgate Health's identity as a co-operative provides an assurance to people that use the service, that it is truly a not-for-profit provider of healthcare services.

This status as a not-for-profit organisation appeals to local people, providing a basis for trust, which is an essential element in the relationship between healthcare professionals and their patients.

The service's strong reputation is supported by good governance, which in turn strengthens the co-operative's ability to attract and retain quality staff.

The 'grassroots' history of the co-operative and its long history in the area are another key strength.

Westgate Health Co-operative has the opportunity to take advantage of its structure and status to further enhance its reputation with the aim of attracting and retaining members, developing even higher levels of satisfaction and engagement among community members and further contributing to the wellbeing of the community overall.

#### Westgate Health Co-operative can use these strengths to:

- \_ Establish an identity as a key local primary healthcare practice, which is consulted on major changes in the community.
- \_ Consider and take action to address gaps in healthcare provision within the community, contributing to enhanced collective wellbeing.
- \_ Build relationships with other agencies that work on social determinants of health such as social housing organisations, welfare and financial services providers.
- \_ Better utilise the co-operative's identity in all written materials, communicating the co-operative's brand at every opportunity.
- \_ Use the co-operative's status as a not-for-profit healthcare provider to become an opinion leader in local communities, utilising editorial and advertising opportunities to promote the service to existing and new members.
- \_ Develop an understanding of the co-operative's community fund, encouraging members of the local community to donate and have a say in how funds are expended.

This status as a not-for-profit organisation appeals to local people, providing a basis for trust, which is an essential element in the relationship between healthcare professionals and their patients.

## Destination 2:

### Facilitating innovation through technical and personal delivery of better primary healthcare services

Innovation is essential in the provision of healthcare services, with general practitioners and other healthcare professionals continually required to keep up-to-date in order to best care for their patients.

Westgate Health Co-operative also has an obligation to promote innovation, through the use of information technology, improved processes and procedures and in the approach to management and staffing.

The co-operative has a history of embracing innovation, through its transition from paper files to a computerised system, the ability to connect IT systems across multiple sites of an online membership payment system.

Innovation in services has occurred through free dental checks, the provision of allied and mental health services and the service's electronics prescriptions service.

Hence, the services provided today look very different to those that were offered to patients nearly 40 years ago.

With a strong financial position and experienced and talented leaders and medical practitioners, Westgate Health Co-operative is now in an exceptional position to better tailor its services to the needs of patients, making them more effective and more convenient.

#### To pursue this kind of innovation, the co-operative will:

- \_ Establish an innovative technologies working group that will explore available solutions that improve accessibility and convenience for members. This will require a secondary analysis of the potential IT solutions available and an assessment of the costs and benefits of each of these.
- \_ Members will have the opportunity to make suggestions about IT and process solutions that would improve the service from their perspective, with the ideas compiled and presented to the board.
- \_ The board will identify three priority options for the Westgate Health Co-Operative's board to consider. Implementation may be undertaken on a trial basis, with a small group, or offered to all members.
- \_ Initiatives will be thoroughly evaluated with a cost-benefit analysis, with qualitative analysis being undertaken through a survey of members utilising the IT solutions, compared with a control group.
- \_ While pursuing IT solutions, the board will keep in mind that some of the most innovative solutions can also be the most simple, and innovative improvements to processes and procedures will be given equal priority with more technology-focused solutions.
- \_ The co-operative will also consider the need to prioritise investment in on-site technology including facilities such as ultrasound, x-ray, pharmacy services and diagnostic and support equipment.

## Destination 3:

### Identifying gaps and facilitating better health care for vulnerable people and men

The profile of the community has changed dramatically since Westgate Health Co-operative was established, which must be considered in the context of health planning as it impacts on the 'raison d'être' for the organisation.

However, the fact remains that there many vulnerable groups within the community that Westgate Health Co-operative seeks to assist.

This is consistent with Westgate Health's original mission, which was to provide accessible health care to disadvantaged population groups who may not have been able to afford or access care without assistance.

#### Vulnerable groups within the community now include:

- \_ Over 55s experiencing mental health issues
- \_ Victim/survivors of family violence
- \_ Young children
- \_ Adolescents
- \_ Low-income individuals and families

#### In order to assist vulnerable groups, Westgate Health Co-operative will consider:

- \_ Charitable opportunities within the local community, to provide services or funds.
- \_ Health clinics, with a focus on health checks for vulnerable groups, diabetes and its related complications, obesity and weight management and other identified areas of need.
- \_ The provision of medical and health services in partnership with local organisations and businesses such as legal service providers, senior citizens' associations, Men's Sheds, schools and others.
- \_ Developing stronger referral mechanisms to other healthcare providers, as well as community services such as family violence support services, early childhood services, mental health services and charitable groups.

In addition to vulnerable groups within the community, it has been identified that adult men are often unenthusiastic consumers of healthcare services, and would benefit from further assistance and tailoring of services.

Westgate Health Co-operative has committed to developing a series of projects designed to increase the participation of men in the local community in preventing health issues as well as seeking appropriate help for personal health problems as they arise.

#### In order to achieve this, Westgate Health Co-operative will:

- \_ Engage in data mining of the co-operative's patient base to describe the nature of problems with men's access to health services.
- \_ Conduct research to learn more about the specific needs of men in the local community.
- \_ Liaise and partner with council, community services organisations and other groups to identify needs and opportunities.
- \_ Develop innovative concepts to address men's health issues that have been identified.
- \_ Access funding to develop innovative, tailored solutions to identified problems.
- \_ Implement new models of care and service delivery – in collaboration with community partners where this is possible and advantageous.

## Destination 4:

### Establishing new services using the co-operative model

Westgate Health Co-operative provides quality, low-cost services in a way that focuses on individual needs, within a family and social context.

The unique strengths of the co-operative model and its human capital can be utilised more extensively with the expansion of the service.

**Therefore, Westgate Health Co-operative will pursue opportunities to expand its services, including:**

- \_ Pursuing the chance to open a new clinic in the Yarraville area, with the backing of Maribyrnong City Council.
- \_ Focus the services of the new clinic on areas that have been proven to work for people in the South Kingsville and Newport areas.
- \_ Capture the learnings from the new clinic in order to test the expansion model, which can be repeated in the future.
- \_ Consider the feasibility of a franchise model and/or develop such a model, if advisable.
- \_ Develop and implement new models of care by exploring the future of virtual and electronic clinics.

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## Evaluation

In order to assess Westgate Health Co-operative's progress on the four destinations, the board of Westgate Health will consider achievements in each direction on a quarterly basis, assessing progress in conjunction with the business planning process and reporting back to members in each annual report.

The four strategic destinations of this roadmap will also be built into the co-operative's annual business plans.