

Dear coworker,

Last year, the cohealth Board announced a decision to close general practice services at our Collingwood, Fitzroy and Kensington sites.

Since then, we have heard from many of you, our clients and our communities, about the way we managed the change and how the process has impacted people.

We recognise this has been a traumatic period for some people, and that the changes and uncertainty over the past year have taken their toll on staff, clients and community members.

Today, we are writing to sincerely apologise, to reflect on our learnings, and to commit to doing better.

We take accountability.

Over many months, we have taken time as a Board to listen, reflect, and deeply understand the impact of what occurred.

We are sending you this message today, to acknowledge what we heard, and to make it clear that we take accountability.

There are things we did not do in the right way.

We are deeply sorry.**Consultation was not good enough.**

We heard that many of you felt excluded from decisions that would have a profound impact on you and the clients and communities you care for.

We take accountability for not being more transparent earlier about the broader challenges facing our organisation.

Before announcing proposed service changes, we should have drawn on the collective knowledge, expertise and insights of our coworkers, clients and communities in exploring how these challenges could be addressed.

Engaging earlier and more meaningfully may have helped us better understand the impacts of our proposals and identify possible alternative pathways forward.

We cannot change what has happened, but we can learn from it.

From here on, we will do our best to share information earlier, communicate more openly about what we do and do not yet know, and involve people sooner in conversations about decisions that may affect them and the communities they care for.

Timing of the proposed closure

We take accountability for not allowing sufficient time between the announcement and the proposed closure date of the services.

We heard that there was not enough time to consult, understand the impact, or put appropriate supports and alternative pathways in place for clients.

We recognise that announcing this decision near the end of the year and close to the festive season significantly increased the impact during an already difficult period.

We should have better anticipated and understood the widespread impact such a decision to close the services would have on you, our clients and our communities and better prepared for this.

Communication and support during the process

We heard that we did not do enough to inform, reassure and support you through a period of significant uncertainty.

We recognise this made some staff feel uncertain about their own future at cohealth.

We are sincerely sorry for this and that many of you have had to carry the consequences of a decision that was not yours, while continuing to care for and support clients through their own fear, uncertainty, and distress.

Our learning is to be guided by the needs and experiences of clients, many whom are in vulnerable circumstances, and to ensure the right supports are in place for clients and coworkers to understand and respond to decisions that may affect them.

Our commitment

We have learnt that we need to make our oversight and governance arrangements better, while drawing more deeply on the experience of clinicians, staff and clients.

We know this period has led to trust being damaged.

That matters deeply to us, and it is our responsibility to repair it.

We recognise there is significant work ahead of us and we are committed to doing that work and being accountable.

We have written individually to each of our clients to make the same commitment.

Our commitment to you will be reflected in practical actions over the next 12 months, which the Executive Team will carry forward alongside you.

To guide this work, we have prioritised initiatives focused on psychosocial and cultural safety, strengthening organisational culture, and being guided by the lived and living experience of our coworkers and clients.

As a Board, we will be taking and applying our learnings, so you can feel a stronger sense of transparency, understanding and support at cohealth.

This matters to us, and we know it matters to you.

With respect,

The cohealth Board