



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Member for Kurrajong

Open Letter to Health Workers at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce

I know the past few weeks have been an uncertain and anxious time for staff at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce and the announcement was a surprise to many of you. Bringing together our health services to become one, integrated public health system ensures we can support the health of the ACT community into the future and supports you in the best environment we can provide.

I have been meeting with team members over the last couple of weeks and would like to thank you for sharing your concerns, fears, hopes and ideas with me. I can assure you the ACT Government is listening.

I understand you would like more information about what this decision means for your jobs and your teams. I heard many of you want to know why this decision was made and why we could not speak with you first.

Overwhelmingly, I have heard how much you value the culture of your hospital – a culture you built – and how important it is that this feeling of community does not change.

Our commitment is to work with you throughout the next steps, to listen to your feedback and respond to your concerns. To the greatest extent possible, your current managers and team leaders will be there to support you, and there will be no change to the way you do things. Where teams themselves decide that changes are needed, nothing will happen without speaking to you first and providing you with the information you need to feel informed and assured.

We expect the legislation to be passed by the ACT Legislative Assembly on 31 May to enable the ACT Government to bring ownership of the Calvary Public Hospital Bruce into public hands and terminate our current public hospital arrangements with Calvary in early July. After the legislation has passed, the ACT Government will work with Calvary to begin the transition of services, and Canberra Health Services will be working to provide you with as much information, advice and support as possible.

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Same job, same team, same managers

Your work is incredibly important, the treatment and care you provide to the ACT community each day is essential. This decision was not made to change the way you provide care to patients, carers and families. We want to support you to continue to do this work as part of one, integrated public health system. Your jobs will not change as a result of the transition.

Our commitment is that you will be able to continue doing the same job, in the same team, with the same manager on the same pay and conditions. All of your employment entitlements will be kept. No-one will be asked to move to another hospital or community-based service unless they wish to.

Our goal during the transition period is to provide continuity of services for staff and patients. Most services will continue as they are, and no changes will be made without consulting your teams.

Working together

I know this decision caught many of you by surprise and you want more information on how it was made. I've also heard that many of you thought a single hospital network was inevitable, but the timing and process is a shock.

The ACT Government has been working with Calvary Health Care for many years to try to better integrate services and plan for the development of a new northside hospital.

In early 2022, the ACT Government began formal negotiations with Calvary Health Care ACT to reach an agreed position that would enable the ACT Government to own the land on which the new northside hospital is to be built and to ensure it would operate under a modern contract to better support the needs of the ACT community into the future.

In April 2022, the ACT Government advised Calvary that if we were unable to reach an agreement, we would consider legislation to acquire the land needed to build the new hospital. While these negotiations were underway, the ACT Government was unable to consult directly with staff because ultimately, you are employed by the private provider we were negotiating with. I acknowledge this has left many of you feeling as though you had no say in the future of your hospital. As you know, we were unable to agree a pathway forward with Calvary.

Your voices will be crucial as we embark on the next steps to building an integrated public health system for the ACT and investing in a new hospital. We need your experience, expertise and knowledge to continue delivering care for patients and the community and to make the best decisions in developing the new hospital.

Our commitment is to engage with you, listen to your feedback and incorporate your ideas as we work through the transition. Your voices will be heard and consultation with you is a priority.

We are organising for your expertise to be included in the transition team, to stand up a Clinical Advisory Group that will guide this process and to ensure wherever possible that your leaders remain the leaders of the northside public hospital.

Your hospital

I know how much you value the culture at your hospital. For many of you it is the reason you work at the public hospital in Bruce.

Our commitment to you is to respect the culture you have built. No changes will be made in the first 12 months unless they are requested and led by teams on the ground. Our aim is to support you and provide you with more opportunities.

We know there are some teams that want to start the process of bringing together services sooner. We will absolutely support you to do that, but if your teams don't want to make changes, that is okay too.

I am making these commitments to assure you that you will have the same job in the same team with the same manager, that we will work with you to make sure your voices are heard, and that you will work in the same hospital with your values.

We will continue to work with all of you, and to consult with you and your representatives to make these commitments explicit and that we can be accountable for them.

Your safety and security, and the safety of your patients is our priority. I look forward to working closely with you all as we work together for the future of our community's public health services.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA