

Memorandum

To: All Staff

From: Russell Harrison, Chief Executive

Date: Monday, 25 October 2021

Subject: New Footscray Hospital and EMR Phase 2 projects – COVID update

Victoria's current COVID-19 wave is placing significant pressure on all health services across Melbourne, including Western Health. We have taken a number of measures, in line with Department of Health guidelines, to accommodate large numbers of COVID patients and higher-than-usual demand for our services. These measures have included the pausing of non-essential projects and some non-urgent services, carrying out only urgent elective surgeries, and the redeployment of staff to positions of the highest priority for patient safety. These include frontline roles in our emergency departments, wards and intensive care units. As a major metropolitan health service, it has become necessary to focus our collective efforts on our COVID-19 response in support of our community and the wider Victorian community.

There are however two large and very complex projects that are continuing at the moment – the New Footscray Hospital (NFH) Project and EMR Phase 2. These projects are vitally important to the future of Western Health and the communities we serve, and they are also subject to commercial contracts. I have informed the teams behind both projects that they have my support in moving ahead, however with some changes.

Given both projects rely heavily on the input of clinicians, there will be some changes to the way the NFH and EMR teams conduct their meetings and achieve their objectives over the coming weeks (and possibly months) of this COVID surge period. Clinicians will not be expected to attend meetings and workshops during the current COVID surge, freeing frontline staff to focus on clinical care. If clinicians still wish to participate, their input would of course be welcomed by the NFH and EMR teams, but it's important to understand there is no obligation at this time to do so. As is always the case at Western Health, patient safety and the provision of quality care are the absolute priorities.

In the meantime, the NFH and EMR project teams will continue meeting with their respective project partners – the NFH team with Project Co and the Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA), and the EMR team with vendor Cerner – as scheduled, using their insight and expertise to make appropriate decisions. For critical decisions that cannot be made by the project teams, there are provisions in place to escalate those matters. Both project teams have the right processes in place to navigate this period.

Reducing clinician input over the short term will impact each project differently. For the NFH project, the design stage 2 (DS2) meeting schedule is more staggered than in Design Stage 1 (DS1). User groups are scheduled to meet once every five weeks, meaning only a limited number of departments have held DS2 meetings recently. A flexible approach to issues resolution has been adopted, with the project team reaching out to user group members offline to discuss critical issues as they arise in the design process.

For EMR Phase 2, the project team is now working with a 'COVID Surge Clinical Governance Framework' in place. The EMR Sprint 4 design workshops, scheduled for late November to mid-December, will proceed as planned and be attended by the EMR Phase 2 project team, including our Digital Health clinical informatics leaders.

I have full confidence in the NFH and EMR Phase 2 project teams and would like to reassure staff that these two important Western Health projects will not be adversely affected by any COVID-related disruptions. I want to thank NFH Project Director Robert Rothnie and EMR Phase 2 Program Director Lily Liu for their leadership in these challenging times.

I also want to thank the many hundreds of Western Health staff, including our frontline clinicians, who have already contributed so much to the NFH and EMR projects, and who will also contribute again in the future.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the project teams directly at nfh@wh.org.au and digitalhealth@wh.org.au

Regards

Russell