



MEDIA RELEASE

Official Opening SCHS Redevelopment Project

22 August 2016

On Monday 22 August 2016, The Hon Sussan Ley Minister for Health and Aged Care and Minister for Sport official opened the second stage of the Sunraysia Community Health Services Redevelopment project on the corner of Thirteenth Street and Deakin Avenue in Mildura.

Simone Heald, CEO of SCHS official welcomed guests to the occasion, before handing over to the Aboriginal staff of SCHS to perform the Acknowledgment of Country and conduct an Awakening of Spirits Welcome. The Barkindji Dancers also provided a traditional dance.

“It is fitting that today is exactly 40 years to the day since our first site at Merbein was officially opened on Sunday 22 August 1976”, said Mrs Heald. “In January of this year, all services were finally re-located to our new site, just before I commenced as CEO in February. It is an honour to have such a fantastic facility for staff to be able to service our clients.”

Mrs Heald also acknowledged that none of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our previous CEO Craig Stanbridge and our Executive Manager Service Support, Gary Simpson who coordinated the build project and the Board of SCHS, who have been involved with the redevelopment since the start.

As the original Manager Jeff Pay says in SCHS’s 40th celebrations anniversary booklet, “Great oaks from little acorns grow”. And that is definitely the case of SCHS.

Over 40 years ago the local Merbein community had the foresight to see the need for it’s own health centre. Since then the service has grown over the past 40 years from: three employees to 150, five health programs to 55 and from an annual turnover of \$36,000 to \$13 million.

Mrs Leonie Burrows, Chair of the SCHS Board, provided an overview of the history of the redevelopment project which has successfully taken surplus state government land at the corner of Thirteenth Street and Deakin Avenue, and turned it into a multi-disciplined, state-of-the-art health facility.

“The land was declared surplus, with the relocation of the Mildura Base Hospital to its current location on Ontario Avenue, so in 1999, the Board began negotiations to secure the land, at the old Mildura Base Hospital site”, said Mrs Burrows. “These negotiations were successful and, in 2008, stage one of the building project began.”

The first stage of the development was completed in 2010 and included our revised Dental facility, which would not have been possible without our partnership with Dental Health Services Victoria and La Trobe University



The following year the federal government announced it would provide \$15 million to fund the second stage of the redevelopment and plans were drawn up in 2012. Four years later, SCHS has now moved the majority of its services to the new site to achieve the Board's goal of developing a modern, purpose-built community health services centre, combining three different locations into a single facility, has been achieved.

"The new facility is the culmination of many years of planning and saving", said Mrs Burrows. "It has only been possible due to the hard work and dedication of many people over the past 18 years including the support of strong Boards over the years, skilled and committed CEOs, dedicated staff and selfless volunteers."

This new facility will take SCHS into the rapidly and positively evolving future of community health. Delivering a service that is in line with customer choice, market focussed and competitive in a growingly competitive service sector. It allows SCHS a strong basis to continue to focus on quality, innovative and responsive delivery of services, based on individual and community needs.

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