

GPs letter to Lyndoch raises serious staff health concerns



More than a dozen local GPs have signed a letter to the Lyndoch Living board, calling for action on the health impacts to current and former staff. Image: Dreamstime

Exclusive. Carol Altmann – The Terrier.

More than a dozen local GPs have signed a powerful letter to the Lyndoch Living board, calling for action on the “detrimental” impact to the health of current and former staff.

In an unprecedented move, GPs from across at least three separate Warrnambool clinics have asked the board to deal with the “serious situation” affecting both residential care and staff wellbeing.

To protect the individuals, I am not going to disclose the names of the signatories, but they include extremely

experienced and respected GPs.

Here is the letter in full:

"We the undersigned general practitioners have taken the extraordinary step to write this letter to you to voice our concerns about the current situation at Lyndoch Living.

Over a period of many years Lyndoch has provided high level care to our residents and in large part this has been due to the input of the very dedicated, skilful long-term staff members.

We are aware that a large number of experienced staff, in both clinical and non-clinical areas have resigned and left Lyndoch in the last number of months. This includes several experienced unit managers and the previous Director of Nursing.

We are aware that a number of these ex-staff members have attended GPs for issues relating to their previous workplace experience.

We have also noted that the loss of so many experienced long-term staff has created extra pressure on the remaining staff and has negatively affected the level of patient care at Lyndoch.

We write as a group of local GP's very concerned about the effects of this on the existing residents and remaining staff but also with significant concerns about detrimental health issues that have arisen in some of the staff members that have left.

We would ask you direct your attention to this serious situation as soon as timely possible."

The letter was delivered to the Lyndoch Living board yesterday, after being circulated among local clinics in recent weeks to gather signatures.

The letter pulls no punches and forces the board to look at a critical and shocking part of this whole crisis: staff trauma.

While residents' care is quite rightly a priority, so many staff have also suffered terribly at Lyndoch these past seven years.

As the GPs now make clear, they have been treating former and current Lyndoch staff for "detrimental health issues" directly connected to their working at Lyndoch Living.

I know these stories, because I have spoken to so many of these people – literally dozens over these past four years – including those who felt suicidal, those who suffer severe anxiety, or panic attacks, those who have been unable to work since, and those who still require medication to sleep, due to the trauma they experienced.

This is shameful.

What is unforgivable, however, is that the board knew staff were suffering.

They knew, and they continued to back the "on-leave" CEO Doreen Power until the very last.

The board knew, because it saw the staff survey results from January 2020 – more than two years ago – that contained this damning paragraph:

"A small sample of around 10-15 respondents stated that the CEO's culture of intimidation, manipulation and bullying greatly impacted their safety, health and wellbeing.

"They said they witnessed her bullying others and making decisions in regard to her own self-interests and not the organisation as a whole."

The board read it and did nothing.

The board knew because it read exit interviews and letters from some of these former staff, but, until three weeks ago, continued to back the former CEO.

This is absolutely shameful.

More than 200 staff, including so many experienced hands, have poured out of Lyndoch these past two years and the flow-on has been catastrophic.

Survivors of abuse will understand that trauma is compounded by not being believed, by being ignored, and by having nowhere to turn other than to the abuser.

This is the Lyndoch story under Ms Power, who has a track record in this appalling behaviour, and who the board chose to believe above the poor, suffering staff.

Lyndoch needs to heal and this cannot happen under a board which has overseen so much pain.

At the very least, the Chair should accept full responsibility and resign.

The rest of the board must follow. Open up general memberships, call for board nominations, and, to quote Oliver Cromwell: " In the name of God, go."

[The petition to remove the Lyndoch board is open until 31 August. <https://tinyurl.com/3nwac5nc> You can download a physical copy here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9xd8x7>]