

Covid doesn't stop digging into Lyndoch's finances and future



As another year begins, the questions over the direction and culture of Lyndoch Living aged care still linger.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Righto, off we go. Let's pick up right where we left off, because after all I am like a dog with a bone, and so tonight I am gnawing on the many things that we still need to know about Lyndoch Living – our community owned aged care home.

If any readers hoped that I might be moving on to another issue, look away now, because I am not finished with what has been a three-year investigation into how Lyndoch has changed, who has been involved, why and whether we can soon rest easy.

I am seeing this through – it will remain the focus of The Terrier for now – and I hope you will too.

Ah but hang on, there is one issue we need to address first and that is Covid.

Covidcovidcovidcovid.

Covid, as we know, is still disrupting aged care homes right across Australia with lockdowns, Covid outbreaks, visitation restrictions, and worsening staff shortages, and all of this is having a terrible impact on those who are isolated from their loved ones.

I am sure we all understand this, but Covid is not and cannot be a reason to stop asking the hard questions of Lyndoch that still remain unanswered.

In my view, it is even *more* of a reason to probe deeply into our publicly owned aged care home, because the local community are the custodians and caretakers of Lyndoch and we want to know that it is operating at the very highest standards of care, trust, accountability and transparency.

This has been the battle for the past three years – longer for those who work there – and it is not over yet.

Let's begin with the AGM that was held just over a month ago.

At that time, Chair Susan Cassidy said during the livestream that any questions from members would be taken on notice.

Were there any questions from members taken on notice? If so, what were these questions?

What were the answers?

I asked Ms Cassidy this in an email last week and, so far, have not had a reply.

If there were no questions from members, then Lyndoch – a \$100 million publicly owned organisation – held its AGM without a SINGLE question being asked.

Not one.

Perhaps I am wrong and Ms Cassidy will be in touch shortly with the list of rigorous questions and answers.

Such as:

Why has Lyndoch's equity (assets minus liabilities) progressively fallen by a staggering \$28 million in just six years?

In 2015, Lyndoch's net assets were \$69 million.

Last year, they had fallen to \$41 million.

We will learn more about the Lyndoch figures at the end of this month, when it reports to the charities commission, so I will write more fulsomely on this then.

For now, however, we know a big slice of Lyndoch's spending goes on staff costs and that it has also borrowed big time to fund its \$22m medical clinic.

So, how is staffing? What are the bed numbers and staff ratios?

We see shift shortages being leaked to this page all the time – so why, in this climate, is Lyndoch bleeding so many experienced staff? Has the board asked questions and read the exit interviews?

And is it correct that Lyndoch is poised to hire a bunch of nurses trained overseas in order to fill the gaps?

What about the accreditation of Lyndoch due next month – is it on track to address all of the failings exposed by the aged care commission and pass with flying colours?

My sense is that Covid will see this accreditation delayed, but that doesn't change the need for reassurance that Lyndoch has addressed ALL of the failings in Warrnambool and at its

May Noonan Hostel in Terang.

And how is the \$22 million medical clinic shaping up? Is it on budget?

And are all the GPs who are currently contracted with Lyndoch until April intending to stay on or will they follow Dr Phil Hall if, as reported, he re-opens a clinic at the existing Liebig St site?

What if the GPs don't renew their contracts? How will Lyndoch fill its ginormous, three-level medical centre and not create another Sam's Warehouse scenario?

Another whole pile of questions also come from the surprise announcement at the AGM that consultant Robert Lane had been hired to sort out how board appointments, and I assume general membership to Lyndoch, will be handled from here.

Mr Lane said there would be an advisory committee, chaired by himself and made up of two current board members (Mr Kane Grant and Ms Lorraine Mielnik), who would assist the board with its decisions on memberships which, to date, have made no sense to anyone.

I will also be learning more about that whole process this week, so stay tuned.

So many questions...I hope you are well rested and ready.

On we go.

[Thanks for reading, and if you would like to buy Jock a juicy bone as a thankyou, you can visit the Tip Jar here: <https://tinyurl.com/yckzankb>]