



Healthcare Helpers Newsletter

Summer 2024-25

Wow, what a year!

During 2024, our Healthcare Helpers volunteered an incredible 8,000 hours of their time, showing up 2,000 times to bring comfort and joy to patients and staff alike. It's an achievement to be proud of, and we thank you sincerely for your dedication.

As Martin Luther King Junior said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?" It's fair to say you've answered that call.

Welcome to the first edition of the Northern NSW Local Health District Healthcare Helpers Newsletter, which aims to keep you connected, informed and proud of the volunteer community across our district.

We'll publish 2 editions each year — one into winter and another in summer — and we welcome your input. If you have story ideas, event updates or pics to share, please email us at: NNSWLHD-Volunteer@health.nsw.gov.au.

Chief Executive's message

Chief Executive Tracey Maisey is extremely supportive of the Healthcare Helpers Volunteer Program and considers our volunteers a valuable part of the district's workforce. We sat down with Tracey to hear her thoughts.

Please tell us about your experience working with volunteers in healthcare.

Volunteers are used extensively in New Zealand and the United Kingdom in a wide range of capacities. I also facilitated their involvement in COVID as incident controller.

What do you expect from Healthcare Helpers across the district?

I expect our volunteers to reflect our vision and values and behave in ways that demonstrate this commitment to our patients. I would like our volunteers to get something out of their work. Evidence suggests that volunteering is good for one's health, but the work they do should also be meaningful and fulfilling.

What is your long-term vision for the Healthcare Helpers Volunteer Program?

I am committed to having a robust and sustained program across our district. Volunteers are important in the provision of health services. My expectation is that volunteers are embedded right across our district as an important part of our workforce. Our volunteers need to be considered in all aspects of our services, from planning to implementation. A



good example of this occurred during the recent move to the Tweed Valley Hospital: volunteers were integral to a smooth provision of services.

Is there any specific message you would like to give our volunteers?

I want our volunteers to know they are valued by our staff and our community. They help us better deliver compassionate care to people from every background.

It was a busy start to 2024

There was a lot of activity in the first six months of 2024, with recruiting and onboarding volunteers at the Tweed Valley, Lismore Base, Grafton Base, Maclean District and Ballina District Hospitals.

Tweed Valley Hospital hosted a successful Open Day on Saturday 16 March and received lots of interest from the community about volunteering at the new hospital.



Program Manager Jenny Cleaver talking to interested community members at the hospital's open day.



Volunteers at the open day.

New courtesy shuttle for Tweed

On 12 June, a media event was held at Tweed Valley Hospital to acknowledge the generous donation by the Kingscliff Lions Club of a six-set golf buggy that's become a courtesy shuttle to transport people around the hospital campus.

The shuttle is operated by our Healthcare Helpers.

Donning new weather jackets, our volunteer shuttle drivers are looking very fashionable.



With the introduction of the shuttle at Tweed Valley Hospital, volunteer shuttle drivers have been provided with weather jackets and are looking very fashionable in their new attire.



Kingscliff Lions Club members with the new shuttle.



Local Volunteer Coordinator Brenda Kuba (right) and Rachel Andrews (bottom left) with Kingscliff Lions Club members.



Brenda Kuba with shuttle drivers.

Celebrating National Volunteer Week

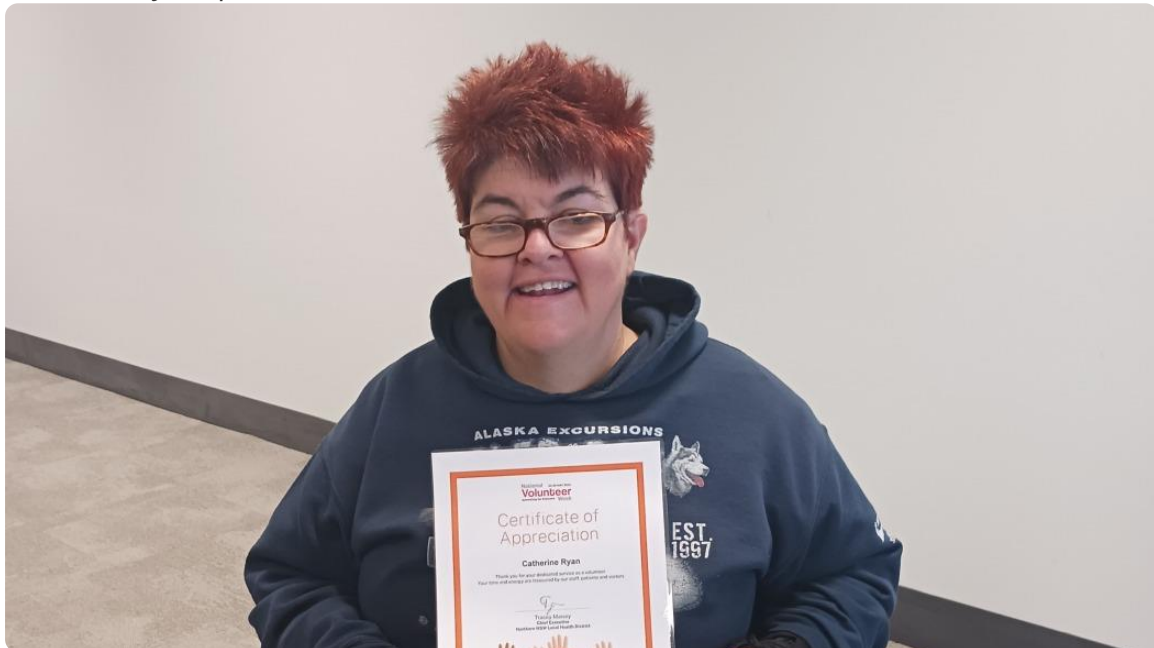
From 20 to 26 May 2024, people throughout the District celebrated National Volunteer Week. The week encouraged us to stop and thank our wonderful volunteers for their selfless work for our patients, carers, visitors and staff.

As part of the celebrations, an e-certificate signed by the Chief Executive was provided to local coordinators for their volunteers as a thank you for their great contributions. Some sites also held their own events, including daily games and treats for volunteers.

Tweed Valley Hospital hosted a belated National Volunteers Week afternoon tea on 28 June, taking the opportunity to welcome their volunteers with an official cake cutting.



Tweed Valley Hospital volunteers at their afternoon tea.



Lismore Base Hospital volunteer Catherine Ryan.



Julie Kay (right) and Kathleen Hardy.



Lismore Base Hospital volunteers Travis McMillan (left), Sue Snelgrove (right) and Rebecca Tickle.

New winter jackets for our Greet and Guide team

Despite our proximity to sunny Queensland, the days can get pretty cold on the Tweed Coast in winter.

Our Greet and Guide plus *shuttle* driver volunteers were provided some very smart and cosy winter jackets while on shift in the elements.



Healthcare Helpers proudly showing off their new winter jackets.



From left are June Kennedy, Ann Jones, Gale Langley, Pamela New, Judith Barnett, Julie Stainton and Sue-Ellen McCubben.

News from Grafton

Grafton Base Hospital held a second campaign to recruit more patient companion volunteers in the Oncology, Renal, Surgical and Medical Wards. This followed a successful initial rollout of the Healthcare Helpers Volunteer Program across Clarence Valley health facilities.

Clarence Health Service General Manager Dan Madden said staff welcome and value each volunteer's contribution to the hospital.

"We have been very pleased with the first cohort of volunteers and are encouraging more people from all walks of life to join us as Healthcare Helpers," Mr Madden said.

"We are keen for the new volunteers at Grafton Base Hospital to reflect the diversity found within our broader community to ensure all patients feel comfortable and supported."

At date of publishing this newsletter, nine volunteer applications were received from interested members of the community.

If you know someone who may be interested in applying for a volunteer role at Grafton Base Hospital, please direct them to our [volunteering webpage](#), ask them to [send us an email](#) or encourage them to call 02 6643 0355.



Grafton Base Hospital Volunteer Wendy Salter.

News from Ballina

Ballina District Hospital's new volunteers began in patient companion roles in the Day Surgery, Rehabilitation and Renal Units following an orientation on 18 July 2024.

Our thanks go to Volunteer Coordinator Rebecca Crowe and Business Manager Jan Forsythe for their work with the new volunteers.

A second orientation morning was held on 29 October for new Healthcare Helpers at Ballina and Lismore Base Hospitals.



Five minutes with our Healthcare Helpers



Meet Murielle Cook

Where do you volunteer?

In the level 1 subacute ward and rehab unit. I also do a daily check-in with level 2 to bring activities and resources and to do a ward tidy.

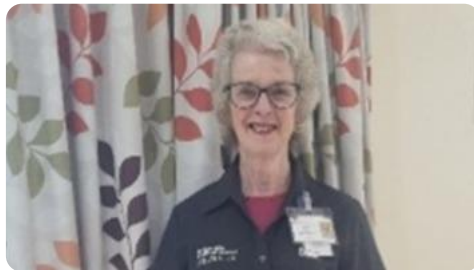
What do you like to do when not volunteering?

I enjoy caring for my family, helping an elderly friend and recreational activities such as bush walking, and walking my dogs. I also love watching movies.

What is the best part of volunteering?

To be able give assistance to patients and staff is so rewarding. To feel a part of the healthcare community makes me so happy. I feel so appreciated in my role with smiles from the patients.

Being a volunteer is so fulfilling and rewarding and I am glad I get to be at Maclean.



Meet Ellie Walsh

Where do you volunteer?

I volunteer mostly on the subacute ward and rehab unit. I occasionally venture up to level 2 to tidy bedside tables and bring resources to patients when needed.

What do you like to do when not volunteering?

I love being outdoors, bike riding, walking the wall and beaches, body surfing in summer, and going on weekends away with a group in the Clarence Valley. Table tennis and aerobics are my unmissable weekly exercises. I also belong to a special book club with wonderful friends. My indoor time is consumed by reading. Life in Yamba is good!

What is the best part of volunteering?

Having the opportunity to try to relieve the burden and hard-working staff while supporting patients during their stay and recuperation is a privilege. Seeing a patient

smile in recognition, to laugh with them, listen to their stories and help time pass more quickly, enriches my life.

New Greet and Guide desks

New volunteer desks are now in place at the Tweed Valley and Lismore Base Hospitals.

Greet and Guide volunteers are now well spotted at their desks, which are situated in each hospital's foyer.

Tweed Valley Hospital has placed an additional volunteer desk opposite ED, just inside the west entry.



Volunteer survey results are out

Twelve months after introducing the Healthcare Helpers Volunteer Program, we conducted a survey of volunteers, local management and local volunteer coordinators.

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey: you've provided us with valuable feedback.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. We've featured some of the statistics you may find interesting:

- 100% feel safe in the workplace.
- 100% recommend volunteering to a friend.
- 95% feel adequate training has been provided.
- 98% feel enough direction and support from their supervisor has been provided.
- 98% are intending to volunteer with us for as long as they are able.

When asked why you volunteer:

- 59% want to give back to the community
- 18% want to remain engaged after career in health
- 10% have experience in volunteering in health and responded to our request
- 5% have recently retired and are looking for post-retirement activities
- 5% said it's because volunteering is close to home
- 3% are inspired by a personal experience in healthcare.

The Healthcare Helpers Volunteer Program has been well received by our volunteers and is making a positive difference to our services.

There are signs the program will go from strength to strength with the continued support of our general managers, EOs/DONs and local coordinators.

However, there is room for improvement around:

- recruitment processes, especially with OS&V
- allocating coordination tasks to admin staff.

Surveys will continue to be conducted annually to gauge how the program is tracking and opportunities for continuous improvement.



Jonathan likes being a volunteer because he finds it rewarding. He likes meeting people and feels like he's doing something useful. He also enjoys the flexible hours, and not being tied down to a rigid schedule.

Surviving the silly season

The thought of the fast-approaching Christmas season can send fear into some of us as the *to do* list can grow to where it becomes overwhelming.

Here are a few tips to help you get through and hopefully enjoy all that Christmas can offer.

1. Decide what type of Christmas you will have this year: traditional, Aussie or maybe beach?
2. Write lists for jobs, shopping and gifts to buy.
3. Share the tasks. Allocate some of the cooking to other family members.
4. Remember to take some *me time* before the big day to recharge your batteries.



Here's cheers for Christmas and the end of the year

End-of-year Christmas events are in full swing across the district to thank our Healthcare Helpers for their unwavering support. We've compiled a montage of photos from some of the events that have already happened. Season's greetings everyone

Connected community

Do you have a friend or family member who would like be a Healthcare Helper? Please tell your family and friends about our [Healthcare Helpers Volunteer Program](#) and suggest they may like to become a volunteer too.