

**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT BOARD ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2022, AUDITORIUM, LISMORE BASE HOSPITAL and VIA ZOOM COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM**

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**PRESENT AND APOLOGIES:**

**NNSW LHD BOARD**

**Present:** Mark Humphries (Chair), Peter Carter, Carolyn Byrne, Naree Hancock, John Griffin, Alasdair Arthur, Allan Tyson, John Moran, Thomas George, Scott Monaghan

**NNSW LHD BOARD**

**Apologies:** Susan Nancarrow, Pat Grier, Michael Carter

**Apologies:** Troy Green (General Manager, Tweed Shire Council), John Walker (General Manager, Lismore City Council), Chris Gulaptis MP (Member for Clarence), Kevin Hogan MP (Federal Member for Page), Matt Long (Director Corporate Services), Ian Hatton, (General Manager Lismore Base Hospital) Rhonda Palmer,(award recipient), Heather Hancock, (award recipient), Margaret Winkler (award recipient), Faye Moran, (award recipient),

**In Attendance:** Wayne Jones (Chief Executive), Richard Buss, Brett Skinner, Ken Hampson, Tim Williams, Vicki Rose, Dee Robinson, Katharine Duffy, Lynne Weir, Ged May, Jennifer Cleaver, Kate Greenwood, Claire Quince, Fiona Baker, Judy Larrescy

**Welcome to Country was provided by Aunty Irene Harrington.**

**Welcome and Introductions, Mr Wayne Jones, Chief Executive NNSW LHD**

Mr Jones welcomed invited guests, Board members, Executives, staff and community members. Mr Jones advised there are 50 participants online, more than in attendance in the room which was an indication of the virtual world we now live in.

Mr Jones provided an overview of the LHD outlining the footprint of the District and the numerous health facilities across the area. As of 2021, there are over 311 000 residents in the area with a projected increase in population to over 330 000 by 2036. In 2021, 25% of residents are aged 65+, with an increase to 31% of total population. By 2036, the 85 years+ population is projected to grow by 75% to nearly 18 000 people. Five out of seven LGA's are more disadvantaged than NSW average and 5.2% of population is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander compared to 3.4% for all NSW.

An outline was provided on the NNSWLHD Staff with the average age being 46 years, with 45+ years at 54% and 55+ years at 31%. The LHD has an ageing workforce which will need to be managed as employees near retirement age. Difficulties remain with workforce shortages which is a worldwide challenge, and a brief overview was provided on some of the strategies the LHD is progressing to mitigate this.

Health Challenges across the LHD include:

- Poor health behaviours
- Chronic disease and ageing related conditions
- High cancer incidence and mortality
- High rates of hospitalisation for Type 1 diabetes, intentional harm, and self-harm
- High rates of suicide

Speaking to the challenges for the District over the past year, Mr Jones spoke on how COVID significantly affected the area with local cases and hospitalisations peaking in January 2022.

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This was followed by the devastating, worst flood event on record in February and March. Mr Jones provided a summary of the Ballina District Hospital evacuation and the tireless work of staff and stakeholders in this amazing feat, whilst some of them in the face of unimaginable personal loss.

The 2021/2022 key LHD achievements include:

- Delivered more than 125,000 COVID vaccine doses
- Increased COVID double dose vaccination with Bryon LGA from 38% to 83.5% over four months
- Implemented the Virtual COVID Care Services supporting 3,713 patients
- Aboriginal Allied Health Academy - established in parentship with Indigenous Allied Health Australia
- Leadership Academy for Nursing and Midwifery Managers – first for NSW Health
- Commenced environmentally sustainable healthcare project and recruited a new manager
- Intervention based programs established for pressure injuries, falls, nutrition and hydration management, delirium, cognition, and restraint management
- Commenced specialist Palliative Care Service - an after-hours telephone service

An overview was provided on various data across the LHD which also included financial performance, emergency department data, surgeries, births, hospital admissions and NSW Ambulance arrivals.

Referring to the patient survey results, Mr Jones pointed out where NNSWLHD sits in relation to the remainder of the State, with a high percentage of patients who speak highly of their hospital experience.

Key challenges for 2023 and beyond include:

- workforce availability, including accommodation
- workforce culture and engagement
- opening the Tweed Valley Hospital
- Health Care Services Plan development
- Planning for redevelopments for Grafton Base, Ballina District and Casino and District Hospitals.

Mr Jones acknowledged the dedication and commitment of the staff over the past year and thanked them for their continued effort in providing such an excellent health service to the community in such a difficult year.

It was noted the 2021-2022 Annual Report including NNSWLHD Financial Statements are available on the following link: [Annual Report \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/annual-report)

**Board Update, Mr Mark Humphries, Board Chair, NNSW LHD**

Providing a brief overview of the 2022 Board members, Mr Humphries advised that as of 31 December 2022, he and Dr Tyson's tenure is complete after 10 years on the Board. Mr Humphries reiterated that he has enjoyed his time on the Board and watching the LHD grow over such a long period of involvement.

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During this challenging year, Mr Jones was seconded to the MOH for a lengthy period of time and Ms Lynne Weir, Director Clinical Operations was the Acting Chief Executive. Mr Humphries acknowledged the excellent and tireless work of Ms Weir during this time and thanked her for her dedication to the LHD.

Mr Humphries provided a summary of the Board Priorities which emerged from the recently endorsed Board Development Plan including:

- Workforce and Culture
- Patient Flow
- Aboriginal Health
- Environmental Sustainability and Healthcare

The Lismore Base Hospital refurbishment has now been completed after nearly 10 years of being a construction zone and a summary was given on the \$312.75M refurbishment work.

Tweed Valley Hospital site works continue with planned opening at the end of 2023. An update was provided on the progression of the build with an overview of the environmental sustainability measures in place to ensure the hospital has a green rating. This is a \$723.3M NSW Government investment and will provide outstanding services to the wider community.

Mr Humphries provided the update on the future of The Tweed Hospital. It will no longer operate as a hospital when the Tweed Valley Hospital is commissioned and planning is underway to determine the range of health services that will continue to be provided at this site.

Referring to the importance of volunteering, Mr Humphries advised this plays a vital role in building strong, inclusive, and resilient communities. NNSWLHD will launch a new volunteer program called Healthcare Helpers in 2023. An overview was provided on the diverse range of new volunteer roles.

**Special Presentation: Development of a Virtual COVID Care Service in Northern NSW  
Ms Lisa Beasley, General Manager, Community and Allied Health and Mr Roger Revill,  
Nurse Educator**

The Virtual COVID Care Service (VCCS) was a telephone support and practical assistance program for COVID positive people and their families. This was managed by a team of health professionals with a service partnership framework. It was operated through a 1800 number 24/7 and covered an area from the Queensland border to Grafton.

The aim of the service was to prevent hospitalisation of COVID patients, support General Practice and provide in home support for patients.

Mr Revill spoke on the Strategic Partners that were included in the program to provide a seamless service to patients in their time of need.

Some of the service challenges included:

- Maintaining skilled staffing levels with fluctuating COVID numbers
- Monitoring the changing public health and MOH guidelines and policy in the management of COVID
- Accessing the internet

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- Managing communication of messages across agencies, services, and departments
- Supporting aboriginal populations

Mr Revill outlined the service benefits which included increased efficiency of care delivery, reduce potentially preventable hospitalisations, strengthened collaborations between various stakeholders and access real time data/clinical information.

Ms Beasley presented a case study on an Indigenous father who was COVID positive and had a young son who was a close contact. Ms Beasley spoke on the challenges around social, environmental, drug and alcohol and mental health issues.

A survey was conducted on 78 participants in the VCCS between 7 September – 2 November 2021. This feedback helped to develop additional factsheets, co-ordinate contact with multiple patients isolating in the same home environment and reassure health-workers that they were delivering an excellent service.

A formal evaluation of the service will be conducted by the MOH on ten key areas across process, impact and outcome evaluations.

The Chief Executive thanked Ms Beasley and Mr Revill for their time in presenting to the Annual Public meeting today.

**Presentations of 45+ Years Long Service Awards to NNSWLHD Staff.**

- Ms Geraldine Heckel
- Ms Faye Moran (apology)
- Rhonda Palmer (apology)
- Margaret Winkler (apology)
- Heather Hancock (apology)

**Questions and Answers (submitted via email and online) – Mr Humphries and Mr Jones**

**1) What is being done to address staff shortages and burnout, particularly in midwifery?**

Mr Jones advised that staff burnout and shortages is across the board. Nursing and Midwifery has implemented a significant wellbeing and support program that have been in place for several years and has been strengthened over the past few years. The MOH has introduced a number of targeted initiatives to support the workforce and are being rollout across the District.

Mr Jones provided an overview of the range of wellness programs across the LHD to support staff.

**2) Mother and baby report form last year showed that one-third of women experience birth related trauma and a high rate of intervention. How can we reduce this locally?**

NNSWLHD has the highest rate of normal vaginal births in NSW (62%) hence a lower rate of intervention in that regard. The LHD also has the lowest caesarean rate (28%). In relation to trauma, the midwifery staff work closely with pregnant women to provide them

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information and options. Mr Jones reassured the group that the LHD is monitoring this closely and will continue to review the data regularly.

**3) How can people access abortion services in northern NSW?**

Residents of NSW have accessed termination of pregnancy services through a range of options. Mr Jones encouraged those listening that if they would like to know more, please call the NSW Health Pregnancy Choices Healthline on 1800 008 463.

**4) How can the LHD maintain the momentum of stakeholder engagement and partnership that was developed through COVID?**

A lot was learnt through COVID, whilst challenges has opened up a lot of opportunities especially around collaboration with partners. Mr Jones reiterated that these discussions with partners are continuing, and framework will be designed that encourages and continues this momentum.

**5) Due to the challenges with COVID and peoples' resilience waning, are there any plans in place to implement trauma informed care?**

A broad range of Trauma Informed health strategies have been introduced across the LHD for staff and patients. They are being rolled-out across the ED and other departments. Numerous staff are at burnout level and supporting them is an LHD commitment and priority.

**6) A query was raised on the service availability in NNSWLHD on pregnancy terminations past 9 weeks?**

Mr Jones advised he will follow up and provide further information around this request. The Chief Executive's Office will organise a time for Mr Jones to respond to this query.

**7) More women are requesting non-conventional births. How can the LHD support this?**

The NNSWLHD is one of only 5 LHDs who offer alternative midwife birthing practices including home births and a range of other services. The LHD recognises the need to implement further work around this and partner with these alternative models of delivery.

**Close by Mr Mark Humphries, Board Chair**

Mr Jones thanked the Board, Executive, community members and stakeholders for attending the NNSWLHD Annual General Meeting. He reiterated his thoughts on acknowledging the excellent work of the NNSWLHD staff for providing value based healthcare in such challenging times.

As there was no further business the meeting was closed at 3.22pm.

Signed .....

Mr Mark Humphries

Chair, Northern NSW Local Health District

Date 22/02/2022 .....