

4 Delivering great care  
is all in a day's work

12 PROFILE:  
Joel Dennis

18 Murwillumbah kids getting  
a healthy start at school

NORTHERN

# EXPOSURE





## DIDN'T GET IT DONE? JOIN THE CLUB!

*I've had a few conversations with friends recently where they brought up things they thought they 'could' have or 'should' have done this year, but didn't.*

It's as though looking back on the massive interruption of coronavirus, they see a magical space in time, uninterrupted by normal activities like work, meeting friends, kid's sport or attending appointments. All the things they could have achieved!

In my reality, though, it wasn't easy or uninterrupted at all. It was mentally taxing, stressful and exhausting.

Days were filled with anticipation of the next governmental announcement about what we couldn't do, or what we must do. We had to steer ourselves, our children, our workmates, our aging parents or grandparents, our businesses and our health service through the cloudy mist of uncertainty.

If you still had a job, maybe it was nice to wear tracksuit pants to a Skype meeting, but that's a pretty small pleasure compared to the upheavals that led to working from home, schooling at home (a fairly loose term in my house), not being able to connect with loved ones or attend events like weddings or funerals. Maybe you still had to go to work amid the chaos, like thousands of our health colleagues here and around the country. No wonder plans went out the window.

This New Year, I'm going to cut myself some slack, and take a fresh start on the next one.

I hope you enjoy this bumper Christmas edition, and have a safe and restful holiday.

## NORTHERN EXPOSURE

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Front cover: Murwillumbah District Hospital staff

Back cover: Wollumbin

# Executive Update



**Wayne Jones**  
Chief Executive

*Usually, in my last CE update for the year, I summarise the highlights and challenges, which is a cathartic process and always clears my mind for the upcoming year. But how do I describe 2020?*

It's a year that began with the worst bushfires on record off the back of years of drought, followed by a pandemic that has seen nearly 1.6 million people lose their lives, and many more millions contract the virus.

I vividly recall the palpable fear in our communities and workforce as we started our response planning for COVID-19.

This was made worse by continual reports from other countries being inundated by the tsunami of patients presenting to their hospitals and quickly overwhelming their intensive care units.

Despite this fear, our staff were just amazing, continuing to come to work and do their job in keeping our communities safe.

Clinicians and support staff of every description worked with management and lead agencies in re-engineering the ways we worked, taking on new roles and learning new skills in preparing for the ICU onslaught... all whilst supporting and caring for all our other patients as well as colleagues.

Words just fail trying to describe the pride I felt as the Chief Executive of an organisation made up of thousands of amazing, caring, professional and dedicated people.

I sincerely want to thank you all for allowing our LHD to work through the impacts of COVID as well as we did. Whilst serendipity played a part, there was also a huge amount of work, effort, skill and cooperation that supported our outcomes.

As public health order restrictions ease in preparation for the holiday period, we start to look at the opportunities for the year ahead. Personally, I hope for an effective vaccine and a successful implementation plan that will see an end to the impacts COVID has had on our lives.

Let us not forget the cost of the virus on thousands of people across Australia who have lost their jobs and still face a very uncertain future. They will need the support of our communities and governments to get through the difficult times to come.

I know from personal experience over the last year I have developed an appreciation of what is important in my life, and I have committed to spending more time with my family and friends. I wish you and your loved ones the very best for 2021.

## From the Board Chair



**Brian Pezzutti**  
Board Chair

*According to the ancient Greeks, numbers rule the universe.*

Certainly in health, numbers give us important - and at times life-saving - information about the health of our patients. At the Board and executive level, numbers help us to understand the performance of our organisation, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions.

COVID-19 has made the world even more hungry for numbers and every day we receive updates on the number of positive COVID cases, fatality rates from around the world, tests conducted, and days since the last locally acquired case.

In our own patch, the community's desire to obtain the latest COVID information has seen a 300 per cent increase in NNSWLHD's Facebook followers to more than 7500 this year. Similarly, users of our website more than doubled during the height of the pandemic.

Chief Executive Wayne Jones and his team are to be congratulated for the way they have kept the community and our staff informed about COVID during 2020.

Earlier this month, we hosted our annual general meeting – the first time as a virtual Zoom meeting – and again, numbers helped tell the story of a busy health

service in an unprecedented year.

Patient feedback data presented at the AGM showed that our services are highly regarded by our community, with NNSWLHD one of the best performing LHDs in NSW. This is something that you all contributed to, and is something we should all be proud of.

At NNSWLHD, we have a fabulous and dedicated team – including our Board, executive, and employees - who have an unwavering commitment to the people of northern NSW to provide excellent patient care for our community. It has been a privilege to be Chair of this outstanding LHD and I thank you all for your efforts in a long and difficult year.

I wish you all a happy festive season and may you have a wonderful time with your families and friends, and please remember to be kind and to stay safe.

# Delivering great care is all in a day's work

*The latest independent patient survey shows hospitals in Northern NSW are continuing to provide excellent care and experiences for our communities.*

Almost all patients across the District rated their care as either 'very good' or 'good', and more than four out of five said they 'would speak highly' of their hospital experience, in the 2019 Admitted Patient Survey released by the Bureau of Health Information in October this year.

"Our staff should be really proud of the results in this report, in which the overwhelming majority of respondents have rated both the care, and the individuals providing that care, extremely highly," Wayne Jones, Chief Executive NNSWLHD, said.

"One of the most pleasing aspects is the fact that these results build on previous years of consistently good results.

"This shows that patients in Northern NSW are regularly receiving excellent care, thanks to the expertise and compassionate care of our staff."

Three-quarters of patients said the care they received in hospital was 'very well organised', the highest result in NSW. Nearly nine out of 10 patients said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity, and the vast majority of respondents said they received the 'right amount' of information about their operation or surgical procedure before arrival at hospital.

Domestic services staff once again got a huge pat on the back, with several hospitals standing out when it came to the cleanliness of facilities: 87 per cent of respondents at Ballina District Hospital, 85 per cent at Murwillumbah District Hospital, 82 per cent at Grafton Base Hospital and 90 per cent of Byron Central Hospital respondents said the toilets and bathrooms were 'very clean'.

Murwillumbah District Hospital recorded significantly higher results than the state average for nursing care, overall collaboration between health professionals, overall care patients received, and the



Main, domestic services staff members at Grafton Base Hospital. Inset, Ballina District Hospital domestic services staff



highest result in NSW for patients who would speak highly of their experience to family and friends (92 per cent).

*"It's wonderful to see that our patients are pleased with the care they're receiving from our amazing, hard working staff," Darleen Berwick, Executive Officer/ Director of Nursing at Murwillumbah District Hospital, said.*

"Admission to hospital can be a really stressful time for patients and their family.

"Our wonderful staff work very hard to make our patients' stay comfortable, whilst delivering the best clinical care possible. We pride ourselves on teamwork here at

Murwillumbah and these consistent results demonstrate that."

Every patient who responded said staff who met them on arrival at Murwillumbah were 'always' polite and courteous, while nearly nine out of 10 (87 per cent) said the wards or rooms were 'very clean', significantly higher than the NSW result of 71 per cent.

More than nine out of 10 patients (93 per cent) rated the nurses as 'very good', significantly higher than the NSW average of 75 per cent. Overall, 84 per cent of respondents rated the care they received as 'very good', significantly higher than NSW at 67 per cent. For the full report, visit:



<https://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au>

## Across the District

- 95%** rated their care as 'very good' or 'good'
- 81%** said if asked by family and friends, they would 'speak highly' of their experience
- 97%** rated the nurses who treated them as either 'very good' or 'good'
- 95%** rated the doctors who treated them as either 'very good' or 'good'
- 75%** said the care they received was 'very well organised'
- 89%** said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity
- 95%** received the 'right amount' of information about their operation before coming to hospital.

# NCCI: A decade of care

Lismore's North Coast Cancer Institute (NCCI) is marking 10 years of operation this year, providing residents in Northern NSW with state-of-the-art cancer care.

Before the NCCI opened in July 2010, there was no radiation oncology service between Tugun on the Gold Coast, and Coffs Harbour in NSW. Patients who needed radiation oncology had to travel a long way, pay out of pocket expenses, or even elect to not have the treatment.

Now, with co-located radiation oncology, medical oncology and haematology, the NCCI has grown to meet the demand for cancer services in the region.

There are three on-site radiation oncologists, 20 radiation therapists, five medical physicists, five nurses and three allied health staff, all ably supported by the NCCI administration team to deliver over 700 courses of radiation therapy annually. Over the decade, that's more than 5100 courses of radiation therapy.



Top, from left, University of Newcastle student Daniel Lowe, NCCI Chief Radiation Therapist Stephen Manley, Radiation Therapist Patrick Magee and Radiation Oncologist Dr Shreya Armstrong with the new Surface Guided Radiation Therapy System. Bottom, construction of the NCCI, and installation of the LINAC in 2010

*“The North Coast Cancer Institute is an integral part of our health network and the calibre of our staff is second-to-none,” Lynne Weir, Director Clinical Operations, said.*

“Our staff take pride in providing an excellent standard of care to patients, and furthering their knowledge through research and innovation, contributing to peer-reviewed journal publications, local and international conferences, and receiving international recognition.”

The NCCI staff receive support from an army of volunteers who are dedicated to improving patients' experience of care and journey through cancer diagnosis and treatment.

“From the Cancer Council of NSW, to palliative care volunteers, Delta therapy dogs, local charity organisations, church groups, Rotary clubs, sporting events, individual community members, and many more, we are incredibly fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers giving their time and efforts to help others,” Ms Weir said.

This year, to keep staff and patients safe during the pandemic, the team at NCCI implemented a range of measures to minimise risk of COVID-19 transmission, including rotating team members in separate work cohorts.

A new Surface Guided Radiation Therapy system was installed in July, with NCCI being the first cancer treatment centre in NSW to have this technology.

Radiation Oncologist, Dr Julian Amalaseelan, said the new system was a great advancement from usual methods.

*“It uses a combination of projected light and cameras to provide a three-dimensional image of the patient's body surface, instead of using ionising radiation as other imaging methods do,” Dr Amalaseelan said.*

“When we use the surface guided camera during a patient's radiotherapy treatment, we can measure breathing cycles and improve positioning, which reduces radiation to critical parts of the body, such

as the heart, when treating early stage breast cancer.”

The most common cancers treated at NCCI are breast, prostate, lung and skin cancer, but the staff, expertise and technology improvements allow for most radiation therapy services to be delivered in Lismore, with very few people now needing to travel away to receive high quality care.

Radiation Oncology will be available as a public service at the new Tweed Valley Hospital Cancer Centre, and the Lismore team are looking forward to bringing all of their expertise to support the communities of the Tweed and Byron Shires.

More than **60%** of patients are from the local area, including Lismore, Alstonville, Casino and Ballina, with the Clarence Valley residents the next largest cohort.

In 2021, almost **2,550** people in Northern NSW are expected to be told they have cancer, which equates to around seven new diagnoses every day.

# It's a wrap for design

More than two years since the design process got underway, the final stage of design for the new Tweed Valley Hospital is coming to a close.

Clinicians, staff and community members have worked closely with the project team to design each space of the hospital, from where a service will sit within the hospital building right down to where the power points and light switches will go.

Northern NSW Local Health District Chief Executive Wayne Jones said the driving force behind the hospital design is the desire to deliver the best clinical outcomes for patients.

*"By designing the hospital from scratch, we have had the opportunity to really look at the best way of delivering health care, without being constrained by existing facilities," Mr Jones said.*

"It also offers us a wonderful opportunity to seek new ways of delivering health care into the future."

Hospital staff and clinicians, along with community representatives, have attended



A standard patient bedroom design and layout for Tweed Valley Hospital

over 485 planning meetings to progress the design of the hospital from concepts through to detailed design. Health Infrastructure Chief Executive Rebecca Wark said that the work to deliver a project like the Tweed Valley Hospital is phenomenal and deserves to be recognised.

"The local health district and the community have worked together seamlessly to plan and design this new hospital," Ms Wark said.

"We've also had valuable input from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Community Working Group and our panel of community representatives.

*"Finalising design is a significant step; we are excited now to see the designs come to life as the buildings start to take shape."*

You can find out more about the design of the new hospital in a fact sheet on the project website, please visit:



<http://www.tweedvalleyhospital.health.nsw.gov.au/>

## New Parkinson's specialist nurse joins the team

Rebecca Manners is the new Parkinson's CNC for the Northern NSW Local Health District, coming on board in October this year.

Rebecca moved from New Zealand for the new role, where she previously worked at Auckland City Hospital as the Movement Disorder Nurse Specialist.

Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurological condition in Australia, and the number of Australians affected is expected to continue to increase as the population ages. People living with Parkinson's disease have more frequent

hospital admissions, with limited care and support in the community being a key factor.

The service will support people with Parkinson's, their families and carers who reside in the Tweed, Byron and Ballina clinical networks, and is co-funded by Parkinson's NSW and the NNSWLHD.

*"I am looking forward to getting to know people who are living locally with Parkinson's and being an advocate for them," Rebecca said.*

"Having a nurse in their community will ensure better access to care and services for both patients and their families. I also feel very fortunate to have moved to such a beautiful part of Australia!"

The position is based at Ballina District Hospital, working across a variety of settings in the Tweed/Byron/Ballina region including



Rebecca Manners, Parkinson's CNC

outpatient clinics, home visits and hospitals. December will see the first referrals to the service.

Please contact the service on (02) 6620 6361 or Rebecca on 0429 013 996 for more information or to refer a patient.

# Good things growing out of COVID

*Like many people around the world, residents of the Nimbin Multi-Purpose Service found themselves in lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Luckily, they had a solution that not only gave everyone something to do, but also provided fresh produce!*

As part of the NSW public health orders, aged-care residents were not allowed to leave their facilities or see visitors on site for a number of months earlier this year.

Nimbin MPS Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator Kim Bray, who is also an avid gardener, kickstarted the project which saw a tired courtyard turned into a lush and productive garden. She also provided many flowers, plants, and did some of the planting.

*“I thought it would greatly benefit the residents to have a sensory garden to enjoy, incorporating smell sight and touch,” Kim said.*



Nimbin MPS Assistant in Nursing, Susan Lacy, with aged care residents

“I also thought many of the residents might like to grow their own fruit and vegetables while we were at it.

“It has become a place for social interaction, some of our residents did not really converse with one another, and they are now friends.”

The local community also got right behind the project with Lismore Bunnings donating not only mulch and other garden supplies, but also hours of their time helping do the heavy lifting.

The hospital Auxiliary donated the plants and other items such as the vertical wall garden, table and chairs, additional shade sail, solar lights and more mulch.

Nimbin Farmers Market gave a donation in memory of Mr Peter Smith from the All Natural Meat Company, and this money was used to commission the mosaic art installation by local artist Suzanne McGauley.

There is now also a plaque beside the mosaic for Mr Smith, titled Living the Dream.

Nimbin Rainbow Power Company donated a solar pump and solar panel, while Lismore Garden Centre sourced the water feature trough at a substantial discount.

“It gives the residents a sense of pride and ownership, a sense of belonging in a time of uncertainty. I am really proud of what we have achieved,” said Kim.

## GREAT CARE REFLECTED IN PATIENT STORIES

*The 2020 Value Based Healthcare Forum - held virtually this November - featured case studies from across NSW Health focussing on delivering value across the patient journey.*

This year, the value of excellent healthcare in Northern NSW was shown in living proof by 73-year-old Warren Ainsworth, who survived COVID-19 after spending two weeks intubated in the Lismore Base Hospital Intensive Care Unit.

Mr Ainsworth, from Ballina, shared his story as part of a session on what value based healthcare means to consumers, being cared for by a team of well-prepared and compassionate health professionals who were totally committed to his recovery and wellbeing.

Lismore Base Hospital Specialist and Intensive Care Nurse, Chris Markey, also spoke about his experience as a staff member caring for Warren.

*“Prior to any cases of COVID-19 entering our hospital, Lismore Base Hospital made a huge effort to put plans, equipment and training in place to meet any possibility,” said Chris.*

“When Warren was received to ICU everyone was feeling very prepared and eager to give him the very best care. We were determined to see him through this difficult journey.

“We felt very prepared and quite excited to put our training into practice.



Front left, Warren Ainsworth addresses the forum

“Fortunately we had a ready-to-go brand new ICU available to use for all COVID-19 ventilated patients within the District.

“Every time I went home (and I’m sure others did too) I had to stop myself ringing up to find out how Warren was progressing. We were so excited when he was able to be extubated and even more so when he was well enough to leave the ICU.”

# Success at the 2020 Rural Research Capacity Building Program

*The 2020 intake of the Rural Research Capacity Building Program (RRCBP) once again saw our District put in a strong showing, with seven new candidates successfully joining the program.*

The highly competitive program is designed for health professionals wanting to develop knowledge and skills in rural health care evaluation and research, and is run by the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI).

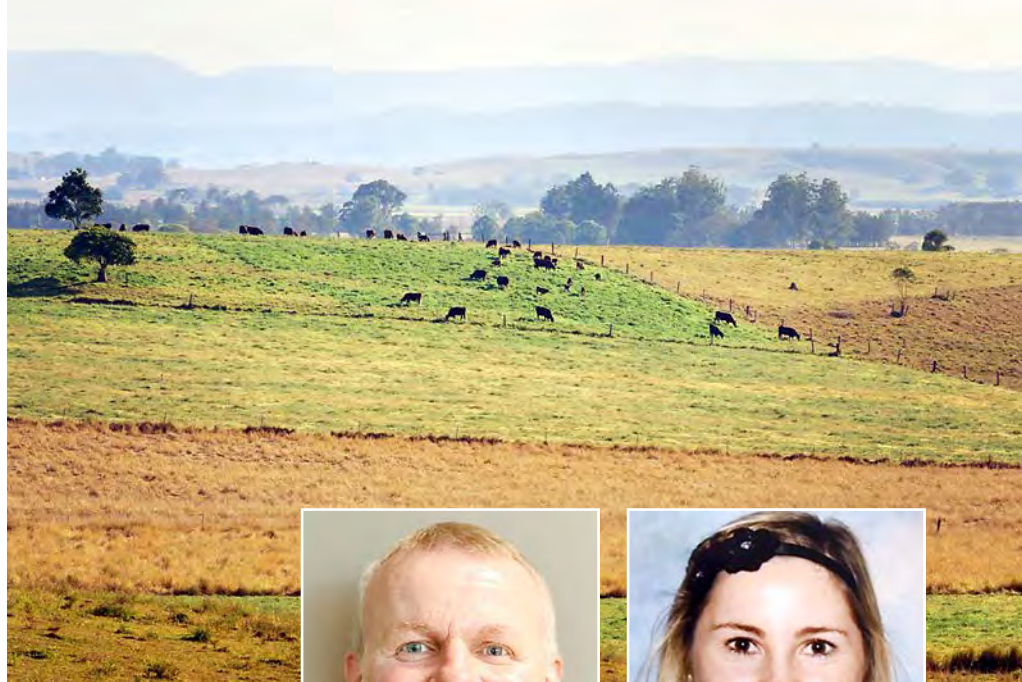
Candidates learn about research in the context of rural clinical and health services, and develop skills in designing, conducting, translating and communicating research. Candidates also get the opportunity to develop and undertake their own research project as part of the program.

The program, which is only open to rurally-based NSW Health staff, runs for 22 months and is usually taught via a combination of face-to-face workshops, small group video link-up, and teleconferencing.

*“It’s an outstanding achievement that Northern NSW Local Health District had seven applicants accepted into the program, from a field of 45 submissions and only 18 people accepted overall,” Alex Stephens, NNSWLHD Director of Research said.*

The seven successful applicants are:

- Britney McMullen, Health Promotion Officer, Healthy Eating and Active Living Team
- Bronwyn Browne, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Pressure Injury Prevention
- Cassandra Porter, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Mental Health



Above, Richmond Valley  
Left, Jonathan Magill  
Right, Britney McMullen



- Jane Linton, Physiotherapist and Knee and Hip Arthritis Service Coordinator
- Jonathan Magill, Nurse Manager, Professional Development and Education
- Kath Dower, Radiation Therapist Tutor
- Peta Crawford, Nurse Manager, Community and Patient Care Initiatives

## Britney McMullen:

“I am so excited and feel very privileged to be a part of this program. I recently graduated from university and am only just embarking on my career as a Health Promotion Officer. To have been accepted into this program so early in my career is an amazing opportunity for me. I am looking forward to developing and improving my research skills with the support and guidance provided by the program.

My research aims to better understand the barriers and enablers to uptake of NSW Health’s ‘Get Healthy Coaching Service – Diabetes Prevention’ program for patients with prediabetes. This research will build local insight into the barriers and enablers of enrolment into Get Healthy in the Northern Rivers, which will be used to shape local enrolment approaches. I am excited to help better understand how we can lift engagement with Get Healthy for people with prediabetes.”

## Jonathan Magill:

“I was surprised, to be honest, when the notification came through as I’m aware of how competitive the program is across the state. It’s fantastic that we have several staff from NNSWLHD participating this year which will enhance the learning, especially in light of the COVID restrictions.

My focus for applying to the program was to refresh my knowledge around research and take the lead for a piece of work relevant to my current role. I’m also considering blending this with a Masters by Research/ PhD.

My research question is: ‘How prepared are regional and rural New Graduate Nurses for practice?’. I’ll be investigating through a prospective cohort study utilising a mixed-methods design, how the senior nurses view new graduate readiness in conjunction with the new graduates on the 2021 program. I’ll be evaluating the graduates’ retention to remain in the District following on from their program, and what the program needs to contain to enable them to succeed.”

We wish our candidates all the best for their next two years in the program, and eagerly await the outcomes of their research projects!

# Preparing for the Surge

Earlier this year, 80 nurses from sites across the District participated in the ED surge orientation training pathway as part of COVID-19 preparedness. Cardiac Assessment Nurse, Rebecca Tate shares her reflection of the education program at The Tweed Hospital.

## Rebecca Tate:

I have always had a passion for health and have been a registered nurse for 10 years. Now, more than ever as clinicians we have another driver towards the importance of being prepared. Our Australian Health System is responding successfully to COVID-19 by swiftly approving funding to upskill and provide more cross training to our nursing staff.

*I was motivated by the fact that we are forced into 'expecting the unexpected'. The best way to be as useful and efficient as possible is to dive in, learn more of what we don't know or are less exposed to in our daily nursing practice.*

I am proud to be amongst the large group of nursing staff nominating themselves to do this, and greatly appreciate the Tweed



From left, ED CNC Andrea Thawley, ED NUM3 Timothy Bishop and ED CNS2 Rebecca Tate

Emergency Department staff for their time, effort and patience with us all. I particularly enjoyed the sense of community, collaboration and teamwork that came out of combining nurses from many areas of the hospital, who all came together with the same intention; to improve our skillset, quality of nursing care and, more importantly, our confidence.

In my opinion, having the opportunity to 'try out the shoes of the emergency nurse' has many benefits. The tunnel vision of your area of speciality or understanding has the potential to block out critical thinking, impacting our nursing assessment.

The words 'teamwork' and 'collaboration' come to mind here, and it appears in the Emergency Department they do this well.

The communication between all levels of staff is a culture that I hope all COVID-prepared surge nurses can take back to their areas and emphasise the benefits of collaborative care.

In a week, we gained knowledge and awareness of valuable clinical tools in the Emergency Department and we will continue to advance these skills in all areas of our nursing.

I think this program confirms how interested staff are to explore other areas for their future nursing careers. I believe it places emphasis on the benefit of doing programs like this across all areas of the hospital, enhancing the clinician's skill and confidence, to improve our patients' quality of care and outcomes.

# THIRD TIME'S A CHARM FOR THESE IDEAS

Winners of the third round of the Big Ideas innovation challenge have shared in \$50,000 prize money to get projects underway in the new year.

While this round of the Big Ideas lacked the thunderous applause of previous audience-friendly events, it certainly delivered in innovative and useful ideas. Even with the distractions of COVID-19 this year, the judging panel still received 44 submissions which they had to narrow down to just four finalists who presented their ideas on 3 December.

Judges were looking for ideas that will improve:

- the way we do things
- the health and wellbeing of our patients, clients, community or staff, or



From left, Chief Executive Wayne Jones, Emma McDonald, Kathryn Fry, Michelle Gray, Kath Dower and Kate Dougherty

- the experience of our patients or staff.

Following the presentations, the judges deliberated for 15 minutes before concluding that all four projects would receive support.

### The winning projects were:

- Health Communication Toolkit – Michelle Gray, Specialist Clinician Intellectual Disability

- Staying Fit for Life After Hospital – Kathryn Fry and Emma McDonald from Casino Community and Allied Health
- Keeping Patients Abreast with Virtual Reality – Kath Dower, Radiation Therapist Tutor, North Coast Cancer Institute
- CASPA Café – Kate Dougherty, Out of Home Care Case Manager

# Co-designing Health Services: a new chapter for the NNSWLHD

*Health services invest a lot in expertise, and there's no doubt that has benefited the development of our health system. But there is a growing recognition that experts are not experts in everything, and participants in the health system bring a unique type of knowledge to the table.*

Frontline clinicians, patients and carers are all specialists in their own experience, and their knowledge is essential to ensuring the success of the services we offer.

Manager Patient Experience, Co-design and Inclusion, Ken Lee, said co-design can be an effective way to make sure this knowledge is captured.

*“Co-design is an approach to service development in which decisions about the services we provide are informed by input from representatives of all key stakeholder groups,” Ken said.*

“This creates a more balanced approach to building the foundations of a business case for change.

“It is quite distinct from ‘consultation’, which is a process for gauging the level of approval for an existing proposal or plan.”

COVID-19 provided a unique opportunity to implement a large scale co-design approach.



From left, Clinical Nurse Specialist Fiona Hassey and Exercise Physiologist Tiphonie Lloyd doing Cardiac Rehab with a client over Skype

The rapid uptake of virtual care raised many questions for clinicians and administrators about when it was most suitable and when to avoid it.

Rather than proceed with a model of virtual care that was based on a ‘best guess’ approach, we knew there was a lot to be learned from the end-user (clinician, client and carer) experience.

With large sections of the LHD workforce being available due to COVID-19 restrictions and service changes, it was possible to involve a number of virtual care stakeholder cohorts from a wide range of services.

Nine Health Promotion staff members assisted with over 100 lengthy interviews with clinicians and patients from 19 different services including chronic disease, mental health, antenatal, child and family and radiation oncology.

“The interview data is qualitative and unequivocal and is helping our project teams

to develop their service models and find the best fit for all stakeholders; clinicians, patients, carers and administrators,” Ken said.

“Being involved in a co-design activity elevates a person’s experience from being a passive participant, to being actively involved. It helps clinicians to feel more of an investment in their work and it helps patients and carers to feel valued and respected as community members.”

“The co-design approach can be tailored to suit the conditions and resources available in any situation. The only premise is a willingness to learn from the experience of others. While most input is practical and can be readily applied, some things may be unrealistic. However, what is unrealistic today may be viable in the future.”

Access the full report on the intranet.



<https://bit.ly/telemnswlhd>

## COVID-19

# Celebrate safely this summer

Host your gatherings outdoors if you can. If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, self-isolate and get tested immediately.

For tips on celebrating safely, visit [www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19](http://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19)

# Overcoming Domestic Violence

*Creating better links between emergency medical care and violence, abuse and neglect services is key to helping women out of domestic violence.*

As part of the Clinical Leadership Program, Sharon Brodie, Safety Action Meeting Coordinator for Richmond Network, has been leading a project to improve the referral rates from the Lismore Base Hospital Emergency Department to the Safety Action Meeting by 25%.

In 2019, before the project began, there were two referrals from Lismore Base Hospital. Since the project began in March this year, there have been 10 referrals, an increase of 500%.

Domestic Violence makes up 5.1% of the burden of disease for women between the ages of 18-44, which is higher than any other risk factor such as alcohol, tobacco use, illicit drugs or obesity.



Above, Sharon Brodie, Safety Action Meeting Coordinator for Richmond Network

*“Anything that we can do to prevent domestic violence and resource women to access safety and support services will make an impact on reducing the health consequences of domestic violence,” Sharon said.*

Sharon has linked in with the ED Training Coordinator to establish regular monthly training sessions for nursing staff about the Safety Action Meeting and how they can best refer clients.

“We have also improved the information that Emergency Department staff can access about Violence Abuse and Neglect (VAN) Services by introducing Information tiles to the Emergency Department Intranet site.”

“It’s been an interesting and challenging project, and I’ve learnt an enormous amount about myself, my leader style and how to manage a project,” Sharon said.

The Domestic Violence Hotline is: **1800 732 732.**

# THE CODE OF CONDUCT, MORE THAN A POLICY

*An initiative by the Human Resources Team is bringing a fresh approach to ethical and professional conduct.*

Everyone working for Northern NSW Local Health District will be familiar with the ‘NSW Health Code of Conduct’.

The Code of Conduct defines our standards of ethical and professional conduct at work, but it is much more than a policy.

The Code outlines how we take care of each other, promotes ethical day-to-day decisions and behaviours and promotes a positive workplace culture which is built on our CORE values of Collaboration, Openness, Respect and Empowerment.



The Code of Conduct is designed to be an overarching statement for guidance and support but it does not provide for every scenario in the workplace.

*Human Resources has started an initiative to raise awareness and provide resources to assist managers and staff to better understand their obligations in the workplace as it relates to conduct and behaviour.*

The initiative is called ‘The Code of Conduct. More than a policy.’ Starting in January, and with a focus topic on Sexual Harassment, thought provoking posters and screensavers will be displayed and associated resources will be made available on the intranet.

Future topics in 2021 will include the Bystander Effect and Confidentiality.

For more information about this initiative, please contact your local Human Resources Manager.

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*In this edition of Northern Exposure, we chat with Joel Dennis about his role in Alcohol and Other Drugs Community Engagement and why he loves helping and advocating for the people he meets in the community.*

## Joel Dennis

*There was no clear defining moment to lead him there, but Joel says he always wanted to help people; his mother never judged anyone and that rubbed off on him.*

“When I was in High School, the only subject I really engaged with was called ‘health’, and through that subject I was able to get a scholarship to go to university, otherwise I don’t know if I would have gone,” says Joel.

That scholarship led Joel to studying Public Health at Griffith University, though he found the only subject he really enjoyed was social work, and after one semester he changed to a Bachelor of Social Work.

*“It was a social work counselling subject and it felt like the only thing I would be able to use to actually help people. I thought I could help people in my personal life as well as make a career out of it,” Joel recalls.*

While studying at university, Joel also got a six-month New Colombo Grant Scholarship to work on a social enterprise project in Indonesia, helping disadvantaged women.

After graduating, Joel got a casual job with the Northern NSW Local Health District, which became a part-time counselling position at Casino, before his current role with the Alcohol and Other Drugs team at Tweed came up in early 2019.

“Going from regular social work to Alcohol and Other Drugs was a big change, it’s different,” says Joel.

“I had to learn about all the different illicit drugs and how they affect people

differently in the community, including medications, other drugs, and withdrawals.

“As well, I had to learn about coordinating with the rehab centers, helping with NDIS packages and reducing barriers that might impact on individuals getting treatment.”

Being part of the Community Engagement team, Joel mostly works in an intensive mobile case management counselling role, often contacting people in the community who require specialised assistance.

*“I work with people who have severe substance use disorders and might not be able to engage with hospitals or other traditional services,” he says.*

“A lot of people I have worked with can’t come to the hospital for counselling, many are homeless, so I go out into the community to meet them.

“I drop into the local homeless centres weekly to try and link people into services like GPs, housing, or other medical based assistance, or I can do the counselling there and then as well.

“Most of the people I work with generally don’t get treated very well because of their substance use issues. I am working with people who have fallen through the gaps and feel they have never been listened to or advocated for.”

While Joel said he and the team have had plenty of touching stories, one recent case stands out.

The client had never successfully attended counselling sessions or rehabilitation, and had presented many times to hospital with falls while intoxicated or having made an attempt to end their life.

*Starting with phone counselling during COVID, Joel built up enough of a rapport to start seeing the client in sessions outside their home.*

“After I got to know him a bit better, he started telling me that he often had stomach pain, so I linked him in with a GP,” Joel said.

“We found out he had cancer. He also had a background of PTSD, so I was able to link him in with NDIS support.

“He had also lost contact with his ex-wife and his kids, who had now grown up, but through the process of contacting them he built up a good enough relationship to move back with them and he abstained from alcohol for six months, the longest time he’d spent sober in his life.

“During this process he was made palliative, but he was able to spend his last part of life with his family.

“After he passed away his family all called to say thank you. In a way it was one of the most rewarding moments of my career. Even though it was sad that he passed away, we were able to see him link back up with his family, during his final stages of life.”

# An inspiring legacy

Cancer patients at sites across the LHD will now have a more comfortable treatment journey thanks to a generous donation from a local charity.

Jodie's Inspiration, a Lismore-based charity, recently donated \$80,000 to the Northern NSW Local Health District to help cancer patients have a better experience during their treatment.

The funds have helped purchase additional medical equipment, furnishings and artwork for Lismore Base Hospital, Ballina District Hospital, the four Multi-Purpose Services and Richmond Community Palliative Care Service. The donations include:

- recliner chairs to provide patients with another option aside from a bed or wheelchair, and which can also be moved around easily or used by family members when they visit;
- portable, foldable beds for family members visiting their loved ones in hospital;
- portable syringe pumps to deliver medication without the need of an IV pole which can limit a patient's freedom of movement;



Jodie's Inspiration members Jake McRae, Kaela McRae, Jesse Smith, Betty Anne Durheim and Jenny Cook with LBH Deputy Director of Nursing Melanie Allan-Male, Palliative Care Community Nurse Joanne Cooper and A/NUM Oncology Laura Dunne (seated)

- printed photographic artworks and music players to improve the hospital environment; and
- home mobility equipment and custom designed beds for patients being cared for at home.

*"This will see our loved ones who require palliative care gain access to new equipment that will aid in the treatment process," Chairman for Jodie's Inspiration, Jesse Smith, said.*

"This money has been raised and donated through the efforts of our volunteers holding functions and events which have been strongly supported by the local community."

St Vincent's Private Hospital in Lismore also received a \$20,000 donation from the foundation, bringing the total raised by the charity since 2015 to over \$260,000.

Thank you to the incredible Jodie's Inspiration team!

# Rotary donation a life-giver!

The Ballina-on-Richmond Rotary Club's annual bare foot bowls day once again raised funds for Ballina District Hospital.

This year, the charity event raised funds to purchase a \$2,500 Entonox Analgesic Delivery System to help patients where fast acting pain relief is required.

This system allows staff in the emergency department to supply a fast acting pain relief gas which only lasts for a short time when the person stops using the Entonox (laughing gas).

The effects wear off very quickly, making it safer to use than other strong pain relief, and the patient returns to normal levels of alertness and function much quicker when the treatment is finished.



*"Thank you to all the amazing members at the Rotary Club, who give their time so generously to support us, and thanks to our community for being a part of this cause," Denise McCall, Deputy Director of Nursing, Ballina District Hospital, said.*

Members of the Ballina-on-Richmond Rotary Club with Ballina Hospital Emergency Department NUM Wayne Smith and EO/DON Peter Jeffree

"This equipment is greatly appreciated by all the emergency team and will likely be used extensively over the upcoming school and Christmas holiday period."

# Finding peace and calm during COVID

*When your ward gets re-purposed during a global pandemic, it's inevitable that stress levels will rise. For the Surgical 1 team at The Tweed Hospital, a little mindfulness went a long way.*

In March this year, staff on Surgical 1 ward at The Tweed Hospital found out they would be required to accommodate patients who had been swabbed for the Sars-Cov-2 virus and were too unwell to be discharged home to await their results.

Clinical Nurse Specialist, Sue Gibbs, saw staff having to adapt to the changed environment and the unknown factors of the pandemic, and set about finding out what the level of stress was like for nursing staff and if anything could be done to help.

"Initially, the 30-bed general surgery ward was reduced to 14 beds in order to meet infection control requirements," Sue said.

"Staff took on intensive education, and additional equipment and supplies were obtained. We all became experts in 'donning' and 'doffing!'"



From left, Tweed Registered Nurses Ping Xia, Olivia Barber-Hays, Sue Gibbs and Victoria Cross

With urgent surgical patients being cared for in the orthopaedic ward, nursing staff moved across to that ward, and some orthopaedic nurses also took shifts in the new COVID ward.

*"An informal discussion during an in-service session highlighted to me that work-related stress was of concern to all the nurses present," Sue said.*

"I decided to trial calm and mindfulness sessions for staff, using an app."

Each staff member attended one session, and completed a brief anonymous survey

prior to the session and towards the end of the evening shift following the session.

"Overwhelmingly, there was a positive response to the sessions, with comments such as 'very enjoyable, let's do it again', and 'enjoyment x 10,000!'" Sue said.

75% felt that calm sessions at the beginning of their shift made a positive difference to the way they felt during their shift.

"Fortunately, we have not had a positive case of COVID-19 pass through the ward, though we have all obtained new and improved skills, especially in infection control, orthopaedics and medical nursing."

## FOOTY LEGEND SHARES HIS SELF-CARE SUCCESSES

*Staff had an opportunity to get some advice on self-care and the importance of healthy eating, while being inspired by a high profile sportsman who kindly shared his journey recovering from injury.*

The pilot session, hosted by NRL legend Anthony 'Mini' Minichiello, was a collaborative partnership with Northern NSW Local Health District, QBE and The Changeroom Program.

As a professional athlete, Mini suffered serious spinal injuries on the field. He was told by doctors he'd never play again.



Anthony 'Mini' Minichiello presenting in Lismore

Determined to find a solution and extend his playing career, Mini developed groundbreaking nutrition and exercise techniques to repair his injuries. He played a further 300 games for the NRL, taking his team, the Sydney Roosters, to Premiership victory in 2013.

Next year the District's Work Health and Safety team are looking at running a larger event.

Contact Yvette Mansfield on [Yvette.Mansfield@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Yvette.Mansfield@health.nsw.gov.au) to find out more.

# Leading healthy, active lives as we age is only a click away!

The successful 'Healthy and Active for Life' program has moved online in response to COVID-19.

Anyone aged over 60 with access to a computer or tablet and the internet can join the program, which uses evidence based approaches to help people build the knowledge and confidence they need to lead healthier lifestyles, focussing on healthy eating, physical activity and falls prevention.

Participants are supported with:

- Weekly online healthy lifestyle modules and two online exercise programs
- Weekly handouts and an exercise manual
- Telephone support to keep participants motivated
- Ongoing access to the online modules and exercise programs for 12 months



Stock image

*Many participants report benefiting from the one on one support and interaction with their personal telephone 'coach', and the online exercises are a great preparation and confidence builder for joining community classes.*

enrolments are now open. To make sure your patients don't miss out contact Liz Patterson from Health Promotion for promotional resources: Call (02) 6674 9515 or email Elizabeth.Patterson1@health.nsw.gov.au

Direct patients to the online enrolment at the link below. Participants will need to have their GP details handy.

Help your patients take action now! The next program begins January 25th and



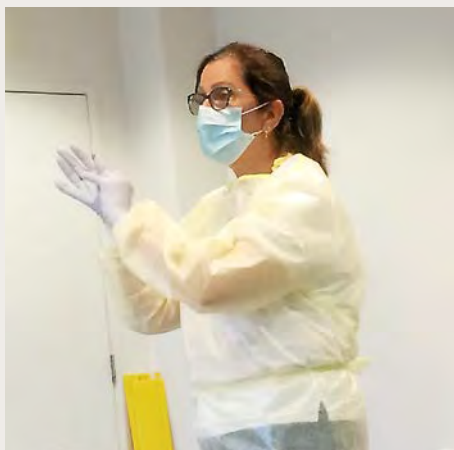
<https://bit.ly/healthyactiveonline>

# The finer points of donning and doffing

Oral Health staff have helped train around 1000 Residential Aged Care Facility team members in how to correctly wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Dental Assistant Professional Team Leader, Julie Macdonald, and Oral Health Relief Quality Manager, Denise Harrison have been running Donning and Doffing training to ensure Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) staff across the region have the skills they need to stay safe during the pandemic.

All privately run facilities in Northern NSW Local Health District have been offered the training as part of our collaborative work with the Commonwealth Department of Health in the aged care sector.



Julie Macdonald in training mode, and with a COVID safe elf

*Across the District, 100% of facilities in the Clarence Valley and 85% of those in Richmond have participated, as well as many of the Tweed/Byron facilities.*

This practical component supports the online training RACF staff have previously received from their own providers, and

gives them the hands-on experience of donning and doffing PPE correctly.

To date, more than 900 staff members have attended the sessions, and the feedback has been very positive.

When the sessions finish in late December, it is expected that over 1000 aged care personnel will have taken part.

# Digital Dose:

## GOT A PROJECT? NEED HELP? CHECK THE NEW APP!

**A newly created work support app now means staff can find all Quality Improvement or Practice Development Projects in one place.**

The new Projects Register and Search app on the intranet will connect people to projects across the District, by having one place to find and access databases on current projects and innovative work.

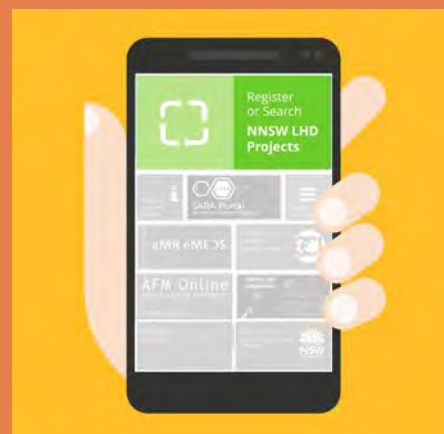
The SharePoint site now includes all projects underway and has been developed in conjunction with the Change and Innovation Portal, where staff can find information and support for ideas, changes and innovations not yet formalised.

"We want to help staff support each other, share and celebrate the good work being done," Matt Peterkin, NNSWLHD Practice Development Consultant, said.

The SharePoint site identifies the Project Leads, Project Aims, Timeframes, Phase, Key Support people, Management Sponsors and more. It automatically sends email reminders to key people to check on each other and the project's progress. The site also allows for all work streams, from Nursing and Midwifery, to Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, to Quality or Operational Teams, to gather the reportable data.

*"The site has links to a number of project resources, information and helpful documents, including links for formal research activity," Matt said.*

The projects register will be optional for formal research projects, which will still be supported directly by the LHD research department.



"If you are thinking of starting a project, looking for inspiration, or are simply interested in what is happening in other facilities across the district, check the project register portal out!"



<https://sharedapps.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/innovation/projects-register/SitePages/Dashboard.aspx>

or on the Top Apps in the Work Support Centre.

## DID YOU TAKE YOUR EMEDS?

**A recent survey at Murwillumbah looked at completion rates of a patient's eMEDS, and here is what they found.**

Part of any safe admission to hospital is a comprehensive medication history, ideally taken within 24 hours of admission.

To see the rate at which this was happening, the team at Murwillumbah Hospital pharmacy department conducted an audit of eMEDS history reports from January to June 2020.

The audit found the department had been able to sustain the highest completion rate of any site across the LHD, with 54 per cent of patients having their eMEDS done within the 24-hour timeframe.

The site also led the way outside the timeframe, with 79 per cent of all patients admitted to the hospital having an eMEDS medication history taken at some stage.

Pharmacy staff at Murwillumbah have recently commenced new strategies to ensure medication histories are not just completed, but completed early within a patient's admission and accurately.



Pharmacy Manager Ashley Handy with 'patient' Pharmacist David Murray

Pharmacy manager Ashley Handy said the results demonstrate Pharmacy team's commitment to providing exceptional patient care.

*"The results reinforce the department's new strategies and dedication to completing medication histories early in an effort to improve patient care," Ashley said.*

"We are looking forward to improving on this result even further over the next six months."

## WHAT IS CYBER-SECURITY?

**Cybersecurity is security as it is applied to Information Technology.**

This includes all information technology such as computers, networks, and all devices connected to networks, such as routers and switches. Cybersecurity is a major endeavour because it has such potential for damage and loss if security is breached.

### What can I do to be more cyber-secure?

The main things you can do to reduce the security threat are:

- do not share your password
- don't click on links in suspect emails, and
- do not leave an unattended computer logged in and unlocked.

If you want more help, check out:



<https://www.cyber.gov.au/>

# Murwillumbah kids getting a healthy start at school

*Paediatric Nurse, Wendy White is helping Murwillumbah students access health and social supports inside the school gates, in a pilot program about to be expanded across NSW.*

As the Wellbeing and Health In-Reach Nurse (WHIN), Wendy White has become part of the school communities at Murwillumbah East Public School and Murwillumbah High School, providing a school-based health service which students can access for assessment or referrals for physical and mental health needs.

But the flow on effect reaches far beyond the students, providing early intervention and linking families with the community-based supports they may need.

*“The WHIN role provides a service to the whole school community; students, staff, and families, not just the enrolled student,” Wendy says.*

“I aim to link students with services which will provide treatment and care to improve their ability to engage in their education and achieve educational goals, and initiate referrals for students who disclose or are displaying behaviours or symptoms which are negatively affecting their everyday functioning.”

The WHIN role links care givers with community services for positive parenting programs, drug and alcohol treatment services, and early childhood services such as speech therapy, audiology and ophthalmology and Occupational Therapy services.

With 21 years’ experience in paediatric nursing and adolescent health, Wendy jumped at the chance to be involved in setting up this service model for Northern NSW Local Health District in January this year as part of a NSW



Wellbeing and Health In-Reach Nurse, Wendy White

government pilot program in six locations around the state.

*“The strength of the program has been the collaborative partnership between the LHD and the Department of Education, with the aim of learning together about how to provide the best service to the students and families of the community,” Wendy says.*

“It’s also opened doors for future partnerships around other issues like domestic and family violence, and teenage pregnancy.”

“We’ve developed a local Youth Network of youth workers, counsellors, Mental

Health nurses, private and government agencies, and Headspace, which meets on a monthly basis to share local knowledge and information about youth and family services and local projects and initiatives.”

During the pandemic, Wendy has continued to provide support to students and the school community through telephone consults and online modes when appropriate.

“It was really important that the school community was supported at a time of increased vulnerability,” Wendy says.

In November this year, the NSW government announced \$46.8 million to expand the successful program to embed 100 new nurses in schools around the state.

# Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Adults



Mid & North Coast of NSW

*A new Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Adults HealthPathway is now live to help assist GPs and Clinicians to accurately identify and appropriately manage PTSD.*

At the beginning of the HealthPathway is a Red Flag list followed by some background information about the disorder. A Red Flag signals the most serious clinical risks that are easily missed.

The assessment section describes:

- Principles of trauma-informed care
- When to be alert for PTSD
- Diagnostic criteria for PTSD and when to consider complex PTSD
- Common associated co-morbidities and differential diagnoses to consider

The Management section provides information about:

- Safety planning
- Stepped care and e-mental health
- Resources for health lifestyle support
- Options for accessing psychological therapy

- Pharmacotherapy guidelines
- Referral indications for psychiatric assessment
- E-mental health tools

The referral section provides links to the Non-acute Mental Health Assessment, counselling and psychology therapy, drug and alcohol counselling and support services HealthPathways.

There is a suite of eleven COVID-19 HealthPathways to provide the latest clinical information for Health Professionals about guidance in the community, aged care, local service impacts, virtual care and the latest Federal, State and local advice.

There is also a Heat Related Illness pathway for GPs and clinicians treating patients.

Feedback on HealthPathways is always welcome, so don't forget to click the speech bubble symbol at the bottom of



Stock image

the page to recommend changes or tell us about new pathways you would like to see.

For further information contact kerrie. keyte@health.nsw.gov.au

For a list of all localised pathways see:

Mid and North Coast HealthPathways

- Username: manchealth
- Password: conn3ct3d



<https://manc.communityhealthpathways.org/>

## BE DEADLY IN YOUR CAREER

*The NSW Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Cadetship Program and Scholarships are open for applications from 11 to 31 January.*

The scholarships and cadetship program provide support and financial assistance to Aboriginal people studying or planning to study a nursing or midwifery degree at university.

*They support NSW Health's commitment to increase the Aboriginal nursing and midwifery workforce and provide a culturally safe healthcare service.*

Be deadly in your  
**CAREER**  
NSW Health Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship  
Apply 11 - 31 Jan 2021

Applications for the 2021 Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Cadetship and Scholarship Program will open on 11 January 2021 and close on 31 January 2021.

For general enquiries about the Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Cadetship Program,

please call 1800 155 325 or email [MOH-AboriginalNursing@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-AboriginalNursing@health.nsw.gov.au). For more information, and how to apply, visit:



<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing/scholarship/Pages/aboriginal-cadetships.aspx>

# When good friends become neighbours

*An office reshuffle at The Tweed Hospital has seen several aged care services become neighbours, bringing together related services in the one place.*

To create more clinical spaces on levels 2 and 3, the Transition Care Program (TCP previously known as TACS) the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT), Aged Care Aged-Related Care Services (AARCS) and Dementia Outreach are now located alongside each other on Level 4 of the Tower building.

These additional clinical spaces will support increasing demand for clinical rooms and enable better provision of services to new programs that have come on board in recent years, such as the Diabetes High Risk Foot Service.

Now, instead of being split across two floors and throughout numerous departments, the Transition Care Program team members are enjoying the benefits of working together as a unit and being close to other services such as ACAT.

“The benefits for patient care include improved collaboration within the team on



TCP and ACAT members, from left, Stacey Wilkinson, Leanne Brian, Eva Huddleston, Jo Craig, Diane Lyons, Tracey Beringen, Sue Cameron, Rhonda Field and Natasha Winning

a daily basis, more efficient communication systems across units and improved ease of access to others in the patient’s journey through the aged care programs,” Armalie Muller, Acting Manager Tweed Allied Health and Hospital Alternatives, said.

*“It is anticipated that this improved collaboration and communication will allow patients to experience seamless care.”*

TCP helps people regain or optimise their independence after a hospital stay with a goal focused, client centred, low intensity

rehabilitation program for up to 12 weeks.

The multidisciplinary team, together with support services, facilitate patients being able to return to living the life they choose to live, the way they choose to live it.

Referral processes and contact numbers will stay the same.

Reception areas on level 2 and 3 will continue to support these teams and remain the first port of call for patients making enquiries.

Phone: (07) 5506 7541

## Get ready for Christmas!



### Follow these simple steps for a safe and healthy Christmas.

- Do you have enough scripts and medications to get you through the public holidays?
- If you are going away, do you have an up to date list of your medications?
- Christmas can be stressful or lonely. The Mental Health Line can offer support: **1800 011 511**
- If you have a health concern but your GP is closed, you can call Health Direct for trustworthy health advice: **1800 022 222**
- Avoid hurting yourself or others, drink safely this Christmas. Visit <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/managing-your-alcohol-intake> for information on managing your alcohol intake
- Using Dr Google? These tips will help you understand if you are reading reliable information:
  - Is it clear who wrote the material? e.g. is the author a government organisations or qualified health professional?
  - Is the site trying to sell a product or is sponsored by a product? Information may be biased
  - Is the information current? When was it last reviewed?
  - Is the site Australian? Information from other countries may not be relevant here



Download a printable copy for clients or patients here:  
<https://bit.ly/healthyxmaslist>



# Staff appreciation awards are back!

Lismore Base Hospital held their first Staff Appreciation Awards for 2020 on 24 November.

Congratulations to all 26 nominees and a huge thanks to Summerland Credit Union for their continued support. From a great field of quality nominations, these were the winners!

Hand Hygiene Award:

- Cycle 1 Nov 2019 – Mar 2020 - Endoscopy Unit
- Cycle 2 April – June 2020 – E9
- Cycle 3 July – Oct 2020 – E10

Individual Award Winners:

- Sophie Gustaffson and Jenny Siddle

Team Award Winners:

- Domestic Services

LBH General Manager, Ian Hatton, also presented Gold Awards to some staff and teams in recognition of their efforts in taking on new roles as part of the COVID response.

While there have been countless staff who've worked incredibly hard this year, these awards acknowledged people for rising to the challenge with great grace and care, responding quickly and calmly to do what needed to be done.



Top, left to right, Ian Hatton, Jenny Siddle, Sophie Gustaffson and Graeme Hearne from Summerland Credit Union. Bottom, Domestic Services staff Sharon Lee and Manager Sharee Flanagan with the winner's trophy

Congratulations to Matthew Grimson for coordinating PPE, Sharee Flanagan for coordinating extra cleaners on wards as they opened or closed, the temperature checkers screening people on entry, the Fever Clinic

team for putting together the clinic in three hours and continually adjusting the way they work, and Customer services for dealing with the public and the myriad changes to visiting practices and hygiene measures.

# ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING A VIRTUAL SUCCESS

In a year of many firsts, Northern NSW Local Health District held its first virtual Annual Public Meeting on 1 December, welcoming participants from right across the region.

From Clarence up to the Queensland border, 55 staff and community members joined the Chief Executive and Board Chair to hear about our achievements and milestones for 2019-20.

Throughout the year, NNSWLHD received 208,694 emergency presentations, which was 6918 fewer than the year before, and 29,134 elective surgeries were performed, compared to 30,423 in 2018-19.

These drops in activity can be largely

attributed to the reduction in people coming to emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic during the first two quarters of 2020, and to the Federal Government's direction to cease non-urgent elective surgery for a period from March to April.

*"This has been a difficult and unusual year for our health services, but staff have risen to the challenges in front of them, and delivered exceptional care to our communities," Chief Executive Wayne Jones said.*

"It was great to be able to share some of the achievements of the past year, such as opening the new Evans Head HealthOne, progress on the Tweed Valley Hospital,



success stories of caring for our patients, adapting quickly to deal with COVID, and the great collaboration with our primary health and Aboriginal Medical Service partners and others."

"I also acknowledged the outstanding commitment of our Board Chair, Brian Pezzutti, who has led our health service through many changes, and has been a fantastic champion for public health in our region."

# Thankyou for putting children first!

From morning and afternoon teas, to photo guessing competitions, a stop motion animation, children's art and a Teddy Bear Health Clinic, groups around the District celebrated Child Protection Week in their own, COVID-safe style.

The Bonalbo MPS Food and Patient Support service team reviewed the National Association of Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect resources and discussed the importance of keeping children safe, and the language we use.

The Got It! team based at Yamba Community Health hosted a Mad Hatter's afternoon tea party, using paper plates and craft items to make puppet faces expressing a particular feeling.

*Asking children to identify how they are feeling, and why, creates a space where children feel safe to learn about their experiences and emotions, and that these are valued and respected by the adults around them.*

The Richmond Violence, Abuse and Neglect Baby Photo Guessing Competition generated a lot of enthusiasm and discussion, and Rowena Prentice, Child Protection Counselling Service Clinical Lead, guessed 10 correct babies!

Iluka Community Health hosted the very first teddy bear health clinic, with the enthusiastic young parents bringing in their teddies for health checks. The event was a



Top, Richmond Violence, Abuse and Neglect team. Bottom: Staff from Bonalbo MPS Food and Patient Support services

great success, and the teddies of Iluka will now be much healthier!

Children from the Murwillumbah/Pottsville region created artwork about what safety and well-being means to them. Children as young as four years old placed value on safety as having a stable home and family to feel loved by. Other children depicted their ideas through the importance of family, feeling safe and loved whilst treasuring joyful moments with one another.

"To fully embrace the theme of Child Protection Week and put children's needs first and for them to thrive, we need to listen and value their ideas and opinions whilst working collaboratively to effectively make change," Ursula Adams, Child and Family Counsellor, said.

Congratulations to quiz winner, Wendy Brown from Oral Health, and thank you to the Child Protection Week Committee!

## Where's the van?

The BreastScreen mobile unit is visiting these locations in 2021 (Please note, dates may be subject to change)

- Ballina:** 1 Dec 2020 – 21 Jan 2021
- Murwillumbah:** 25 Jan – 4 Feb 2021
- Mullumbimby:** 8 – 16 Feb 2021
- Ocean Shores:** 17 – 25 Feb 2021



For more details, or to book your free mammogram, visit [www.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.nsw.gov.au)



# Farewell David Townend

*Dr David Townend retired in December, after 35 years as a General Surgeon at Lismore Base Hospital.*

During his time at Lismore, Dr Townend has made an outstanding contribution to the health service.

*With his ethical, dedicated and calm approach to the practice of surgery, Dr Townend earned the respect of his colleagues and trust of his patients.*

He also contributed to the hospital and advocated for patients through his involvement with the Medical Staff Council and in his role as Director of Surgery.



Dr David Townend with Board Chair Brian Pezzutti

His support for trainees as a teacher, mentor and examiner for the Royal Australian College of Surgeons ensured that the generations of surgeons to come will be well prepared for the challenges they will face.

Hospital staff farewelled Dr Townend on his last day in theatre earlier this month, and the NNSWLHD Board presented Dr Townend with a certificate of appreciation. Best wishes for a prosperous retirement!

# Farewell Sharon Cook

*Sharon Cook was farewelled on 29 October, having worked in Health for over 30 years.*

During her time with Northern NSW Local Health District, Sharon had multiple roles, including Aboriginal Health Education Officer at Coraki Campbell Hospital, and roles in Health Promotion.

In 2009 Sharon was appointed as the inaugural Box Ridge Centre Coordinator with the role of coordinating health and other services provided from the newly opened Box Ridge Community Centre. Sharon held this role until her retirement.

Sharon has played a pivotal role in ensuring that a wide variety of health and other support services are provided on site at Box Ridge. She is passionate about closing the gap for the community and improving health outcomes.

*Sharon's commitment to providing high quality health services to the Aboriginal communities in the District has been outstanding. She is highly regarded by community members and by the many health professionals she has worked alongside over the last three decades.*

Sharon will be greatly missed by Box Ridge and other Aboriginal communities



across the North Coast and by the health professionals she has supported. She is planning a long and very well earned retirement. All the best, Sharon!

# Farewell Sue Cross

*Radiographer, Sue Cross has finished up after twenty six years with the BreastScreen program, and is now commencing her long awaited retirement plans.*

Sue has worked as a Radiographer with the BreastScreen program on the North Coast since its inception in 1993, and has clocked many kilometres travelling for work up and down the highway and on rural roads to give all women access to the BreastScreen service.

*"Sue has made a great contribution to the BreastScreen program on the North Coast and across the State, participating in the implementation of numerous enhancements to the program," Jane Walsh, Director BreastScreen NSW North Coast said.*

"Sue's dedication to her role, her hard work over many years and readily embracing the many changes that she has seen is to be commended."



Left, Sue Cross with Jane Walsh

Many people regard Sue as the 'face' of the service and she had met the same women in the course of her role over the years, she will be missed by many.



NORTHERN

# EXPOSURE

