

Northern Exposure



Northern EXPOSURE

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Executive update



Lynne Weir – A/Chief Executive

A common phrase throughout this pandemic has been ‘we’re all in this together’. Now, two years in, we are still seeing many gestures of community support and gratitude for people working in the health space.

Health staff, no matter your role or facility, have been at the frontline of the response, individually and collectively shouldering a huge amount of responsibility for caring, supporting, advising, adapting, planning and delivering solutions which have helped us face the challenges.

In January this year, as COVID-19 case numbers and hospital admissions rose, we saw our local community once again rally to support our health staff. From organised groups such as ‘Front up for the Frontline’, to our local politicians, to individual community members, families and patients, we’ve been inundated with gestures of thanks.

Within our health service, many people have changed roles and taken on other duties to help the COVID response. By no means an exhaustive list, some of these areas included Oral Health, BreastScreen, Surgical and Recovery wards, Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Cleaning and Food Services, and Allied Health. You may consider your contribution to have been large or small, but whatever your role, it’s been integral to keeping our community and each other as safe and as well as we possibly could.

Outside our own public health system, we have also worked closely with private hospitals to deliver some additional bed capacity and surgical services to public patients, and I want to thank our local partners for their contributions.

We’ve also been engaged with local aged care and disability facilities to support their COVID management, providing

advice and expertise on managing cases or outbreaks, as well as helping to train staff in PPE and infection control, and facilitate safe access to healthcare for their residents.

Of course, in all this, you are our greatest asset, so please continue to look out for yourself in the midst of looking after others.

If you would like more support, please do not hesitate to reach out. Check out our intranet for resources or contact one of the following:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 1300 361 008.
- NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511
- Beyond Blue Coronavirus Wellbeing Support Service via telephone 1800 512 348 or online coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au.

If you have suggestions about how we can better support staff wellbeing, please speak with your manager or send your ideas to:

NNSWLHD-COVIDStaffWellbeing@health.nsw.gov.au

From the Chair



Mark Humphries – Board Chair

In December 2021, the District Board had the pleasure of touring the Tweed Valley Hospital construction site.

The state-of-the-art facility is fast taking shape on the Cudgen plateau and is on track for completion in 2023.

We were excited to see the progress and to also see up-close where the various services will be located on the site.

The Tweed Valley Hospital is part of the significant health infrastructure investments right across the district, particularly in the past decade.

Most of our existing facilities have been, or are in the process of being, upgraded while we have also seen the development of fantastic new facilities such as the Ambulatory Care Centre at Grafton Base Hospital, the Evans Head HealthOne and the Bonalbo Multi-Purpose Service.

We’re also excited to see the soon-to-be-revealed new entrance and reception area at Lismore Base Hospital.

These developments help meet the future health needs of our community and importantly, mean people can access services closer to home, reducing the need for people to travel to the city or to Queensland for treatment.

While we are very fortunate to have such facilities, it is not bricks-and-mortar that make a health service great. It is the people.

Not only do we need to ensure we have the facilities and equipment to serve our community, we also need to ensure we have the workforce. That means we need to focus on what our future workforce needs will be, as well as supporting our current workforce, particularly as we continue to deal with the challenges of COVID.

The past two years has been difficult for health employees, and I would like to thank you all for the work you do to support the delivery of healthcare across our District. You do an incredible job!

Our hope is that 2022 will be brighter, and that we start to see more light at the end of the pandemic tunnel.

Community gratitude abounds!

Early in the new year, five members of the Mullumbimby community got together to see how they could support workers at their local hospital.

They quickly launched a GoFundMe page for donations to purchase meals and snacks for health workers who were going above and beyond in their commitment for care. Just like that, "Front up for the Frontline" was born!

Less than six weeks after calling for donations, the group has raised more than \$30,000 and received pledges for thousands more in food and product. The people power of the volunteer group has also grown rapidly, with approximately 30 community members now helping to organise, collect and deliver the food to our hospitals.

In addition to supporting their local hospital in Byron, the Front up for the Frontline group chose to extend support

to other local services directly affected by the current Omicron outbreak including selected units at Lismore Base and The Tweed Hospital.

One of the main organisers, Sarah Armstrong, said "We're so grateful to everyone who's donated money, and the businesses who have supplied food and products.

"It's been so heartening to be able to send in meals and food as an expression of the community's care and appreciation of our frontline workers. Our group is looking forward to continuing our support for local frontline workers in our hospitals".

NNSWLHD Acting Chief Executive Lynne Weir praised the kind work of the group.

"Front up for the Frontline is an excellent example of our communities' generosity and acknowledgement of our hardworking staff, particularly during this challenging time," Ms Weir said.

"I'm very proud of our amazing staff and the effort they go to in ensuring our local health district provides the best possible care. Thank you to everyone involved with this initiative."

Thank you to everyone!

As well as Front up for the Frontline, there are many other people looking out for our health staff throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

People are regularly dropping into our hospitals with hampers of food, chocolates, and even containers of vitamins. Cards of thanks and comments on social media demonstrate that our frontline workers are in the hearts and minds of our community.

"It shows the community are thinking of us," said a doctor from Lismore Base Hospital ICU.

As our community fundraising program evolves, initiatives such as this are expected to become more common, easier to implement and broader reaching. The Volunteering and Fundraising Manager for NNSWLHD, Claire Quince is working on improving how we connect with community and businesses to raise and allocate funding and in-kind donations across all of our services. For more information or to share feedback about fundraising, please contact Claire via claire.quince@health.nsw.gov.au.

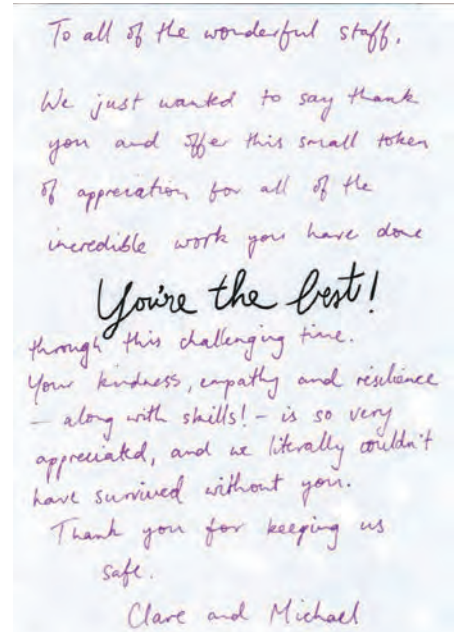
Fundraising enquiries relating to paediatric services can still be directed to Rebekka Battista at Our Kids NNSWLHD-OurKids@health.nsw.gov.au



Tearoom tables in ED, ICU, Women's Care, Fever Clinics and wards caring for COVID patients have been laden with delicious goodies made possible thanks to donations from the community



Byron Central Hospital staff were very appreciative of the donations made possible by the efforts of Front up for the Frontline fundraising efforts.



This heart-felt message from Claire and Michael was delivered with a box of goodies for Lismore Base Hospital ICU staff.

Grateful thanks

On behalf of our family, I would like to sincerely thank all the doctors and nurses who helped look after Sylvia Campbell.

The staff that cared for our mother were wonderful, caring, and kept us regularly up to date.

We understand these are tough times, and how busy and mentally tiring it must be for all health staff, and we are truly grateful for the time spent with her considering her mental illness.

Sylvia was a nurse in the '60s-'80s, and she did her training at Lismore Base before working in Casino Hospital and becoming acting Matron. This was before she was diagnosed with her mental illness.

Please pass on our thanks and appreciation for all that you and the staff have done for our mother and other patients, especially during these difficult times.

Thanks so much, and we sincerely hope that our simple thanks and gratitude brings peace and love to all staff. You are all true heroes.

Thanks, Nicole and John Campbell

Published with permission from the Campbell family

WINNERS: Inaugural NNSWLHD Allied Health Awards

At the end of 2021, NNSWLHD staff were invited to nominate an Allied Health colleague who had excelled in their field, to be considered as part of our first ever Allied Health Awards.

The awards acknowledge the critical contribution that Allied Health professionals make to our health services, and we're thrilled to honour and recognise our colleagues' commitment to excellent patient care.

The winners and finalists announced:

1. Allied Health Professional of the Year:

Monique Wilson-Stott, Podiatrist in the High Risk Foot Clinic, Lismore.

Finalists:

Natasha Mann, Evie Boven, Tiphonie Lloyd, Luke Terrill, Amanda Berry, Amanda Tutty, Holly Thomason

2. Aboriginal Allied Health Professional of the Year:

Leonie Jefferson, Counsellor in the Alcohol and Other Drugs Service.

3. Early Career Allied Health Professional of the Year:

no nominees.

4. Allied Health Assistant/Technician/Support Person of the Year:

Jacqueline Osmetti, Allied Health Assistant in the Occupational Therapy Department, Ballina Rehabilitation.

Finalist:

Robert Castle.

5. Allied Health Researcher/Educator of the Year:

Lisa Thorpy, Social Worker in the Mental Health Service.

Finalists:

Shelley Barlow, Ashley Handy.

6. Allied Health Leader of the Year:

Carol Agnew, Counsellor in the Alcohol and Other Drugs Service.

Finalists:

Robyn Muller, Rebecca Wright.

The winners of these awards will be nominated for the NSW State Excellence in Health, Allied Health Awards.

Congratulations and well done!



Medical Interns - Class of 2022

Northern NSW Local Health District has welcomed new medical interns who are starting their careers at our hospitals this year, after finishing their medical degrees.

The new doctors starting their internships will enter a training program in the networked hospitals in Northern NSW, rotating through different units including medicine, surgery, and emergency.

While some of the 33 interns had already undertaken placements in the region, two are real locals, including Carolyn Condon, who grew up in Lennox Head and Carl Ashworth, who grew up in Bangalow and Byron Bay. Both have moved home to the region after studying in other cities.

Carolyn, who has been studying medicine at Griffith University, was previously a midwife at Lismore Base Hospital and says she “feels like she never really left”.

Carl, who was born at Lismore Base Hospital has been studying medicine in Newcastle, with his family still living in Coorabel.

“Not being able to see family and friends, particularly during COVID, was rough, so it’s nice to come home,” Carl said.

Dr Tim Williams, NNSWLHD Executive Director Medical Services, said the interns have been essential to the pandemic response.

“We owe a debt of gratitude to the intern class of 2022, many of whom have already worked as Assistants in Medicine as part of the COVID-19 workforce response across NSW,” Dr Williams said.

“Our interns are a core component of our medical teams across many departments within our hospitals and will continue to play a vital role as we navigate the challenges of this unprecedented, world-wide pandemic.”

This cohort are part of more than 1,000 medical interns starting this year in NSW, a record number in Australia.



Top: Carl Ashworth and Carolyn Condon
Middle: Interns - Lismore 2022
Bottom: Interns - Tweed 2022

Board checks in at new Tweed Valley Hospital

Northern NSW Local Health District Board members donned hard hats and high-vis vests in December to check out the progress of construction works at the new Tweed Valley Hospital site.

Joined by members of the Health Infrastructure leadership team, Lendlease took the group on a tour of the hospital's lower levels, standing in the hospital's main foyer, viewing the medical imaging suite where the new PET scanner will be located, and pausing to take in the hinterland views

from the expansive perioperative suite on level one.

The tour was rounded out with a walk through the new mental health area, which will accommodate 40 inpatient beds as well as community mental health services.

Despite the challenges of COVID restrictions, construction and fit out of the new hospital is powering ahead, with the hospital on track to open to patients in 2023.



Board members and Tweed Valley Hospital project staff on site.



Murals commemorate Bundjalung stories

An idea to refresh the carpark wall at the Goonellabah Child and Family Health Centre (CAFH) quickly grew into an opportunity to celebrate culture and strengthen partnerships with local groups.

The murals acknowledge the Aboriginal community of the Widjabul Wia-Bul and surrounding clans of the Bundjalung Nation by expressing culture through art.

They use the Bundjalung nation's symbols for land and sea animals, and tell stories about food gathered and eaten. The central panels represent "The Three Brothers", a local legend about the coastal areas of the northern rivers and southern Queensland areas.

The murals were created by Aboriginal youth of the Lismore community, with local artist Sonya Breckenridge working in partnership with Goonellabah CAFH, Rekindling the Spirit Health Service and Goonellabah YWCA.

"We thank and appreciate the art that proudly showcases the Bundjalung nation's culture at the entrance and carpark areas of the health building," said Miranda Van Gramberg, Acting Manager, Child and Family Health.



Pictured with the murals are a mix of people from the YWCA, Rekindling the Spirit, young artists, CAFH Aboriginal health worker, Jackie Cook and artist Sonya Breckenridge.

Hampers of love for the Winsome

Lismore Community Health and Carroll Centre staff brought Christmas spirit and generosity to the Winsome Hotel and Soup Kitchen with a donation of hampers.

The Winsome is a 'pub with no beer' that provides services to disadvantaged people in the Lismore area.

Jan Dent, Acting Lismore Community and Allied Health Manager, said her team donated items which were most in need by the residents and clients of the Winsome, after careful consultation with the hotel.

Some of the items included undies, socks, thongs, and supermarket gift cards, as well as plenty of treats.

"It was lovely to be a part of this donation drive, and I want to thank our colleagues for their generosity in helping bring this together," Jan said.



From Left: President of the Winsome, Meike Bell on the left and volunteers with one of the donated Christmas hampers

A cracking Christmas feast at Urbenville

A fantastic buffet featuring pork and ham cold-cuts, prawn salad, roast pumpkin with feta cheese and baby spinach salad, potato salad, and much more were in the spread at Urbenville Multi-Purpose Service last Christmas.

The main course was followed by a selection of fabulous desserts including blueberry pavlova, trifle and pudding.

This was all washed down with a beer for residents, or non-alcoholic bubbly for staff.

Santa and her naughty elf made a visit to the dining room after lunch, and residents who had been good throughout the year were rewarded with a lolly bag - which was everyone, of course!

The lunch was capped off with Christmas carols, dancing, Christmas cracker jokes, and a debate about whether there are actually penguins in the arctic.

Thank you to the fabulous Sharyn for organising the feast that utilised produce and ingredients provided by generous donors, and served up with love and attentiveness by our kind and friendly HealthShare staff.



Left: HealthShare staff member April. Top right: Santa, the elf and staff take to the floor to entertain the residents. Bottom right: Aged care resident Doreen leading the 'Follow the Leader'.

Congratulations Big Ideas winners

The winning project in the 2021 Round 2 Big Ideas innovation challenge have walked away with \$50,000 prize money to get their idea underway in 2022.



Big Idea finalists. Back row L to R: Brodie Fumberger, Andrew Hume, Kim McKenzie, Judith Dierkes, Chief Executive Wayne Jones. Front row L to R: Emma Willmott, Sharni Bellato, Janet Rose

Even with the challenges of COVID-19, the Big Ideas judging panel received a large volume of applicants for the second round in 2021.

Narrowing it down, three finalists presented their ideas on 8 December 2021, with the ceremony broadcast to staff across the District.

The finalists were:

Play, Move, Connect: Family Centred Fun

Brodie Fumberger, Physiotherapist; Sharni Bellato, Speech Pathologist; Janet Rose, Occupational Therapist; and Andrew Hume, Psychologist from Goonellabah Child and Family Health Service.

Wall of Fame

Dr Judith Dierkes, Rehabilitation Consultant, Ballina Rehabilitation Unit.

Promoting Capacity and Kindness for People with an Intellectual Disability in the Acute Mental Health Unit

Kim McKenzie, RN, Tallowood Mental Health Unit.

Whilst all projects were supported by the judges and will be progressed utilising NNSWLHD resources, the winners of the \$50,000 Big Ideas funds were **Play, Move, Connect: Family Centred Fun**.

Their Big Idea is to construct a functional, interactive and therapeutic outdoor play space to be used by clinicians, children and families accessing the Child and Family Health Centre in Goonellabah.

We look forward to seeing how they transform the outdoor environment to support functional assessment and therapy intervention.

PROFILE

Ken Hampson

In this edition we introduce our new Director of Clinical Governance, Ken Hampson, and hear about his passion for equity and placing patients at the “centre of our universe”.

After immigrating from the United Kingdom at the age of six, Ken says his family were regular ‘Western Sydney battlers’, and this is where his strong sense of social justice began to arise.

However, it was volunteering as a member of the St John’s Ambulance and becoming a Grand Prior Cadet, and later Australian Champion, at the age of 16, which cemented Ken going into health.

“I actually wanted to be a sixth-grade teacher, but I decided to choose health because, coming from a family that didn’t have much, I didn’t think I could afford to go to university,” Ken recalls.

“I also think we need to look after the most vulnerable in our community, so health was a good option.”

Despite originally not knowing if study was going to be right for him, Ken now has two university degrees and five other nursing qualifications.

Starting his career, Ken trained and worked at Blacktown Hospital and at Mt Druitt Hospital where he ended up staying for about 15 years.

Following this, Ken worked rurally for another 20 years, including in the then Mid North Coast Area Health Service (AHS), Hunter New England AHS and Great Southern AHS, and was later the inaugural Director of Clinical Governance for Murrumbidgee Local Health District.

“What I love about working in rural health is fighting for people to have equal access to facilities and services, just as good as the cities,” Ken says.

“I’ve seen many things change and many things not change in my time. But for me, it is about flying the flag to keep improving.”

After moving back to Western Sydney in 2017, Ken found himself at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Living through COVID in South Western and Western Sydney Local Health Districts, I am just in awe of how the system has responded,” he says.

“I don’t think there is a lot we could have done better, and I think we’re coming out of it fairly well thanks

to wonderful commitment and leadership in NSW Health, and the great ongoing commitment from our wonderful staff.”

“I have also seen this first-hand in Northern NSW as I met with some staff in the COVID Intensive Care Unit at Lismore recently.”

Now in a new role in Northern NSW, Ken has a clear focus – the patient.

“The patient is the centre of our universe, and that is why we work in health, and I like to remind people of that,” Ken says.

“From the smiling face, to someone who brings a cup of coffee, right to the person who sees the last offices of life administered, we leave an impression.

“Patients will always remember those that treated them well. I like to think that the care we provide should pass the test – ‘would we be happy if mum or dad received this care?’”



REVERSE the risk of developing type 2 diabetes

Six out of 10 people with elevated blood sugar (pre-diabetes) can avoid developing type 2 diabetes by making healthy changes to their diet and level of physical activity.

The Northern NSW Health Promotion team has created REVERSE: SMS – a free service for people living with pre-diabetes.

Participants will receive six SMS messages a week for four months, focusing on modifiable risk factors. The messages will also support participants to set goals, eat better and to move more.

“Our team identified a gap in local referral options for people living with pre-diabetes,” said Dr Avigdor Zask Manager of Health Promotion.

“REVERSE: SMS can be a gateway to and complement other Health Promotion programs like the Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service, Healthy and Active for Life Online and CHEGS exercise classes.

“Supporting people earlier to prevent progression from pre-diabetes to type 2 diabetes has immense benefits for the individual and the health system. Phase one of REVERSE: SMS was trialled last year, and feedback was positive. We have made some improvements and are now expanding to offer REVERSE: SMS to more people,” said Avigdor.



REVERSE: SMS is a great service because it's easily accessible to people who need it, and COVID safe. It's free and all participants need is a mobile phone.

How to refer your patients to REVERSE: SMS

REVERSE: SMS is for people who have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes

- people can self-register by texting the word REVERSE to 0481 070 655
- to download or print information for patients, go to healthupnorth.info/refer

Please contact Maxine Molyneux on (02) 6639 9142 or maxine.molyneux@health.nsw.gov.au if you have any questions.

When your teen asks... are methylated spirits safe to drink?

Teenagers have a lot of questions about alcohol and drugs, so it's important they get honest and reliable answers. And Doctor Google is not the best option.

That's why the Health Promotion team has collated two years of student questions to provide evidence based, easy to understand questions and answers about alcohol and other drugs on the recently launched healthupnorth.info/teens

In late 2020 and 2021, Year 11 students across Northern NSW attended the annual 'Reduce Risk, Increase Student Knowledge' (RRISK) online workshop delivered by the NNSWLHD Health Promotion team. During the workshop, students asked anonymous questions via audience interaction technology Slido.

Students asked a fantastic and wide range of questions on everything from vaping, sobering up and looking after friends, through to "Are sniffing salts a drug?".

“Answering teenagers' questions in an honest and evidence-based way is a really important part of harm reduction,” said Dr Avigdor Zask, Acting Manager, Health Promotion, Northern NSW Local Health District.

“Our website has the answers teens are looking for, along with a great range of links and resources for parents, teenagers, teachers and health professionals working with young people,” said Dr Zask.

Find evidence based questions and answers about alcohol and other drugs here:

Healthupnorth.info/teens



Fresh faces for the Clarence

Five junior doctors have joined the medical team in the Clarence Valley, taking up positions in both Grafton Base and Maclean District hospitals.

They'll bring skills ranging from generalist, paediatric and orthopaedic, and were welcomed to their positions by Clarence Nationals MP Chris Gulaptis.

"Junior doctors, resident medical officers and registrars taking up positions with the Clarence Health Service is the best possible news in these still worrying times," Mr Gulaptis said.

"These five young people have chosen a great place to progress their careers and hopefully their families here in the beautiful dynamic Clarence Valley."

Welcome to:

- Dr Jon Quin from Lismore Base Hospital is working with Rural Generalists in the Maclean Emergency Department on a 10 week rotation, which will provide him with the opportunity to experience the important role of Rural Generalists in rural communities.
- Dr Vanessa Hewitt is a Paediatric Registrar and is continuing her final year of training at GBH with the intention of settling in the region. Vanessa was named as joint winner of GP Synergy's North Coast Registrar of the Year last year, recognising her commitment to quality general practice education and training.
- Dr Wesley Soh will take up a trainee post with the orthopaedic specialists in Grafton who have built an excellent reputation for joint replacement procedures with short recovery times.
- Dr Myra Pritchett is a third year Registrar who lives in Yamba with her family and is commencing 24 months Core Generalist Training at Maclean District Hospital.
- Dr Alex Lee, a Lismore Base Hospital resident medical officer will be completing a 10-week rural site rotation at Grafton Emergency Department.



Pictured from left: Dr Jon Quin, Dr Vanessa Hewitt, Clarence MP Chris Gulaptis, Dr Wesley Soh, Dr Myra Pritchett and Dr Alex Lee.

Local politicians show their appreciation

The four State Members of Parliament for the electorates of Ballina, Clarence, Lismore and Tweed came together on social media to deliver a message to health workers on behalf of their communities.

View: MP thank you video to health staff in NNSWLHD (vimeo.com)

Here's a transcript of their messages:

Janelle Saffin MP, Member for Lismore:

To all our health workers, we owe you our deep appreciation and gratitude.

Day in and day out, through all the stages of this pandemic, you have shown great professionalism and great care.

To all of you on behalf of my community, I want to thank you for all you are doing to keep our community safe.

Tamara Smith MP, Member for Ballina:

Thank you to everyone working in our health care sector for your ongoing sacrifices and dedication to people in your care.

Words cannot express the debt of gratitude that we owe you for your service and perseverance under such difficult circumstances.

You deserve more than thank you ... for now on behalf of everyone in the Ballina electorate – thank you!

Geoff Provest MP, Member for Tweed:

At this busy time you may feel that work is a thankless task, and you are overworked and underappreciated, but you are amazing! Words are inadequate, but the hospital thanks you, your community thanks you and I thank you. For all you do, thank you!!

Chris Gulaptis MP, Member for Clarence:

COVID came quite late to the Clarence and Richmond Valleys and has been

managed very well, thanks mainly to the nurses, doctors, cleaners and everyone else who makes our health system the best in the world. Your work is just as heroic as the lifesaving efforts of our firefighters in the Black Summer. Thank you all.



The four local state MPs, clockwise from top left, Janelle Saffin, Geoff Provest, Chris Gulaptis and Tamara Smith.

Vaccination team in for the long haul

Providing opportunities for all members of our community to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is an ongoing task for our vaccination implementation team.

Since the beginning of the vaccination rollout in March 2021, the team has coordinated over 100,000 vaccinations to staff and community members in hospitals, shopping centres, parks, community centres, private homes, care facilities and even a surf club.

"We would like to recognise the contribution that all the vaccination staff have made to this outstanding achievement," Matt Long, Vaccination Program Coordinator said.

This work continues, with booster vaccinations and children's vaccinations being delivered around the District.

In the weeks before school returned, vaccination clinics put on extra staff and opened for extended hours to provide vaccinations to children aged 5-11, which required the team to adapt both the design of the clinics and their processes.

"It's important to make both the environment and the experience child friendly to reduce the stress of having

an injection," Joel Organ, Clinical lead, Vaccination Implementation team, said.

The clinics in Tweed, Lismore and Grafton have provided increasing numbers of booster vaccinations as the eligibility was brought forward and expanded to people aged 16.

In February, we provided staff booster vaccinations through the MPS facilities and District hospitals, with several pop up clinics also bringing vaccinations to community members in some areas.

To book any first, second or booster vaccinations, go to <https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/booking>.

NNSWLHD Vaccination clinic locations

- Grafton – Link Arcade, Prince Street end
- Lismore – 138 Molesworth Street
- Tweed Heads – Shop 23, Tweed Mall, Wharf Street



"I got my vaccine so I can visit my grandparents and great-grandparents, and feel more safe going back to school," this young visitor to the Lismore vaccination clinic said, pictured here with Nurse Immuniser Megan Thomas

Awarded for excellence in GP training

Over the previous two years, rural generalist trainee Dr Vanessa Hewitt's commitment to rural health has earned her respect amongst her colleagues and supervisors in Grafton.



Becoming a rural generalist GP requires years of hard work and dedication. Vanessa's determination to excel has been recognised with her being named as joint winner of GP Synergy's North Coast Registrar of the Year. This award acknowledges her commitment to quality general practice education and training.

Originally from Sydney, Vanessa has been a rural generalist trainee with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) at the Clarence Health Service since 2020.

She is learning a mix of general practice and other skills to be able to provide the full spectrum of healthcare

in rural general practice and emergency settings.

Her interest in quality and healthcare improvement has seen her play an active role in clinical governance and medical education. She's also part of the NNSWLHD GP COVID-19 response working group.

Vanessa loves teaching University of Wollongong students attached to the Clarence Health Service and is looking forward to spending the next 12 months in a new role completing advanced skills training working in the Paediatric Department at Grafton Base Hospital to complete her training.

"There is a long wait list to see a Paediatrician in Grafton, so with these additional skills I hope I can better contribute to my community," Vanessa said.

Georgina van de Water, CEO of local general practice education and training provider GP Synergy, said "With more than 200 registrars currently training in accredited general practices across the North Coast region, Dr Hewitt's achievement is certainly something to be proud of."

Congratulations Vanessa!

Passion for regional health wins Dr Vanessa Hewitt award for GP Registrar of the Year. Photo credit: GP Synergy.

Virtual Care/Telehealth updates

Virtual Care/Telehealth continues to be a critical option in providing safe, quality care to our communities, particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 environment.

Software training available for clinical staff

The Virtual Care/Telehealth project team is running daily online sessions during February to demonstrate myVirtualCare and Pexip platforms.

This training is available to all clinical staff within NNSWLHD who need to connect to their patients remotely. In the current COVID climate this is particularly relevant for both clinicians and patients in order to socially distance and receive ongoing patient-centred healthcare.

Facelift for patient website page

The public facing web page has undergone improvements to simplify patient access to materials.

The site now provides easy access to:

- myVirtualCare for patients/relatives/carers/friends/other service providers
- resources on virtual care provided by ACI and NSW Health

- Skype/Pexip for those people who have been provided with the Skype conference ID or a Pexip Virtual Meeting Room (VMR) Number
- help guides for both patients and clinicians
- Telestroke information

Check out the revamped page: nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/virtual-care-telehealth/

Your questions answered

If you want more information about the updated website or the training sessions contact the Virtual Care Team:

NNSWLHD-VirtualCare@health.nsw.gov.au



Healthpathways: updated advice for testing pregnant women

New medical advice recommends women at increased risk be tested for syphilis twice during pregnancy.



The updated guidance comes as rates of the sexually transmitted infection are on the rise. Between 2015 and 2020, the notification of infectious syphilis cases rose 90% Australia-wide.

“What we have always done is test all pregnant women at their first antenatal visit as part of their routine blood screening,” Dr Kate Allan, HealthPathways Clinical Editor said.

“The advice now is that women who are at a higher risk need to be tested again at 24 to 28 weeks.

“Not everyone with syphilis has symptoms, so they may not realise they have an infection. That’s why

it’s important for those people in the high-risk groups to get tested regularly.”

Dr Allan said the symptoms of syphilis were often not severe and could be non-specific.

“The first signs are usually sores or ulcers and they can be either on the genitals or in the mouth,” Dr Allan said. “Over time, in secondary or late syphilis, you can get non-specific symptoms like rashes or swollen lymph nodes, joint aches, headaches, and they can be symptoms you’d get in a variety of other illnesses.

“It’s easily treated with antibiotics. That’s why it’s important that we detect cases early.”

If not treated, the infection may remain latent for life or progress to tertiary syphilis 5 to 35 years after first infection. Tertiary syphilis can involve the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, spinal cord, liver, skin, bones and joints.

For more information on assessment, management and referral

visit Syphilis HealthPathway at manc.communityhealthpathways.org

Username: manchealth
Password: conn3ct3d

Electronic Medical Record survey results delivered

In early 2021, health clinicians across NSW were surveyed on their satisfaction and experience using the electronic medical record (eMR) system. Topics covered included eMR's efficiency, functionality, impact on care, governance, training, and tools and technology.

Nearly 6,000 clinicians responded, providing their experiences to help identify how to improve eMR satisfaction and usability.

NSW Health net eMR experience score



Key takeaways and insights

1. Nursing and midwifery have the highest satisfaction score compared to other clinical groups. Conversely, consultants and staff specialists have some way to go to realise the full potential of eMR.
2. Clinicians report relatively high efficiency at closing charts/encounters in a timely manner.

3. Clinicians reported frustration and dissatisfaction with eMR response time.
4. NSW is performing relatively well in terms of eMR training satisfaction against other health organisations. However, clinicians reported low utilisation of personalisation tools and the majority reported they could benefit from more eMR training.
5. There was low or mixed agreement in response to items related to organisational support (governance, response to change requests, communication of changes, etc). Across all clinicians surveyed, less than a quarter reported that they had a 'voice' in eMR changes.
6. On average, less than half of clinicians surveyed agreed that the eMR provides the expected integration.

Demographic breakdown (% of total respondents):

- 11% medical practitioner: consultant/ staff specialist
- 7% medical practitioner: JMO/ resident/registrar
- 1% nurse practitioner
- 48% nurse and midwifery
- 25% pharmacist and allied health professional
- 9% other*

* Includes a variety of non-clinical roles such as manager, admin officer, coordinator, etc.

What next?

The survey is expected to be delivered on an ongoing cycle (frequency yet to be determined) to learn actionable insights for improvement and track satisfaction over time.

Coming Soon: Enhancing the eMR Phase 3

The Enhancing the eMR Project Team is preparing for Phase 3 of the project which will be introduced from 28 March 2022. Here is what's included...

Advance Care Planning (ACP)

- enables appropriate planning, transfer, intervention and communication of advanced care decisions
- supports clinicians to document a patient's advance care needs and to discuss those needs with the patient and their family/carer
- includes resuscitation plans, advance care planning documentation (advance care directive and/or enduring guardianship) and the amber care bundle.

End of Life Care Solutions (EoLC)

- supports clinicians' documentation of a patient's palliative and end of life needs using electronic palliative care clinical assessment forms, tools and reporting
- includes palliative care consults and assessments, a palliative care service wide patient list, a palliative management view and SNAP and PCOC data management.

Prescription Output version 2 (POV2)

- an enhancement of version 1 non-PBS, PBS and S100 drugs (including Trastuzumab) can be generated electronically, along with authority and streamline approval numbers as needed and requirements for all applicable sub clauses.

For more information contact:
NNSWLHD Enhancing the eMR Project Manager Chanelle Stowers:
chanelle.stowers@health.nsw.gov.au

Saving more lives

The team from Northern NSW Local Health District have saved more than 1,000 lives last year through blood, plasma and platelet donations.

That's more than 330 donations, including 170 whole blood, 173 plasma, and 13 platelets – the last of which can only be done with a special device at Robina.

Scott Morrison from LifeBlood Northern NSW said the NNSWLHD team was making a significant difference to the lives of patients across our region.

"We're proud of the NNSWLHD team members who support our community through vital blood donations, and this goes a long way to supporting those patients in the Northern Rivers," Mr Morrison said.

Despite this great local effort, the Red Cross LifeBlood Service has put the call

Thank you
Northern NSW Local Health District

In 2021, your Lifeblood Team made **356** donations

That's up to 1,050 lives saved	116 people gave life 29 of them gave for the first time
This is a 5% increase on the 338 donations made by your team in 2020.	47.7% were blood 48.6% were plasma 3.7% were platelets

Imagine how many lives we can save together in **2022!**

Australian Red Cross Lifeblood

out for current and new donors to jump in and roll up their sleeves, particularly with Omicron sidelining an estimated 100,000 donors.

"The need for blood is constant in Australia, with Lifeblood needing to collect 33,000 donations a week to ensure some of the most vulnerable patients in Australia get the treatment they need," Mr Morrison said.

Anyone can join the NNSWLHD group to donate as part of the Lifeblood Team. Donations are tracked online, allowing groups to track how many lives they have saved.

To donate blood, phone 13 14 95, download the app or visit www.lifeblood.com.au

NSW Health is changing its banking partner

NSW Health is changing its banking partner from Westpac to ANZ in March 2022. As a result of this change, your pay may appear in your bank account at a different time of day to what you are accustomed to.

Please note, there is no change to your pay day, but there may be differences in bank processing times.

Please visit the frequently asked questions page for more information. <https://nswhealth.sharepoint.com/sites/MOH-CTP/SitePages/NSW-Health-is-changing-its-banking-partner.aspx>

If you have questions that have not been answered, please email the Cash Transformation team MOH-CashTransformation@health.nsw.gov.au



Celebrating 50 years in nursing

After 50 years in nursing, with 33 of those at Lismore, Paule Diprose has decided to call it a day.

Paule commenced her nursing career in Melbourne and quickly moved into the Mental Health space. In 1979 Paule started casual work in Northern NSW and has held various roles along the way, the latest being Patient Flow Coordinator for Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs.

Those who know Paule say she never sits still for long, and may even be back working with the service at some stage in the future.

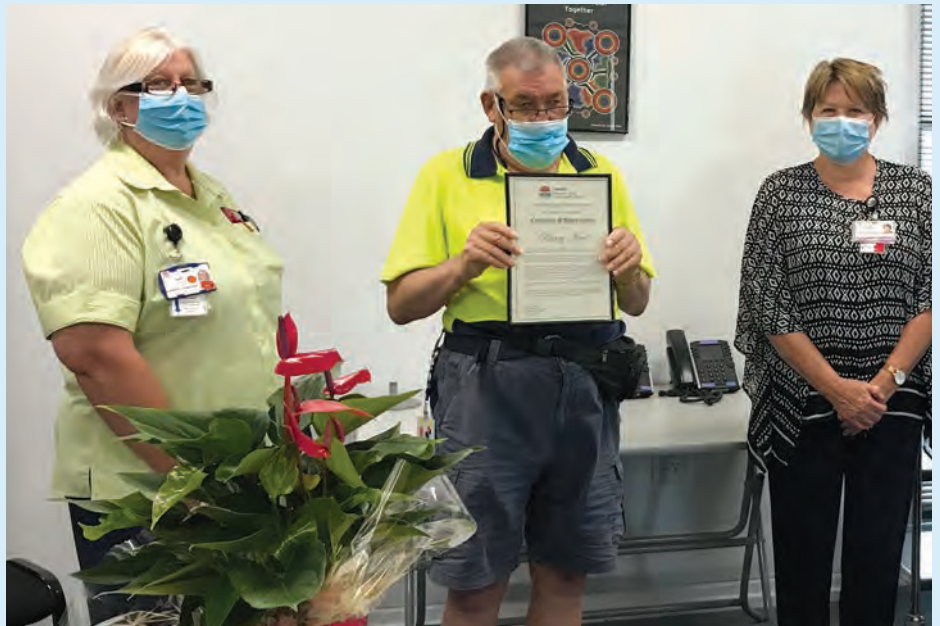
Thank you Paule for your contribution to the NNSWLHD, we wish you all the best for the future!



From left, Leanne Friis Manager Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Tamahra Manson Manager Mental Health Richmond Clarence, Denise Jack, Director of Nursing MHAOD and Paule Diprose.

All sorted! Bidding farewell to Barry's dedicated recycling

Goodbye and thank you to Barry Nicol for 30 plus years of dedicated service coordinating the Lismore Base Hospital's massive recycling program.



Barry at his farewell with, at left, Beth Colley, Cleaning Services and Narelle Gleeson (right), Acting General Manager Lismore Base Hospital.



Left: Barry's first staff ID photo from the late 1970s

Barry joined the team as a fresh-faced and keen young man supported by Lismore Challenge. He later became a member of the business services crew at Multitask Lismore. As the hospital grew, so did Barry's responsibilities. Barry used a colour coding system with his teammates, in place of written instructions.

Barry was always a great role model who provided supervision and training to many personnel from Multitask when they joined the Lismore Base Hospital recycling crew.

He was instrumental in the hospital hitting recycling and waste management targets, and his eye for detail ensured proper processes and Work, Health and Safety requirements were adhered to, guaranteeing a safe work environment for staff.

Always dedicated and thorough in his role, Barry was committed to training his replacement. He was a valued and highly regarded team member and will be greatly missed by all hospital staff.

We wish Barry all the best in retirement!

Northern **Exposure**

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Front cover

Byron Central Hospital staff, L-R: RN James Parkinson, RN Rosi Williams, Dr Cat Quinn, Dr Matt Johnson, Dr Ameera Alsaady, A/NUM Cate Cunningham, RN Ray Arthur

Back Cover

Ballina lighthouse.