

# Northern Exposure



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helps patients breathe  
easier

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aged care residents

# Northern EXPOSURE

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We welcome your contributions, suggestions and feedback.



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# Executive update



**Tracey Maisey – Chief Executive**

Kia Ora everyone! Hello, and thank you all so much for the kind welcome I've received since relocating from New Zealand to beautiful Northern NSW in August this year.

I'm pleased to have been able to visit the very northern, western, southern and eastern ends of our health district, and meet wonderful staff and managers who are so passionate about providing health care to their local communities.

You may be familiar with the concept of health inequity, which is where certain population groups have differences in health status or outcomes due to social, cultural or historical determinants.

Health inequity is avoidable, and I am looking forward to working with you all to continue addressing this issue in our region, to deliver more equitable access to health services, and of course, improved health outcomes for all individuals.

As you know, we are not immune from the significant workforce challenges affecting health services across Australia.

To position ourselves for a sustainable future, we are taking a broad approach to balancing the impact of external factors while ensuring we provide quality and safe care.

Over the next three years you will hear more about our LHD-wide program, *Creating a Sustainable Future Together*, which will steer this work as we partner with you, our unions, our community, and other healthcare providers.

Solutions to the present challenges include adopting more virtual care capabilities, like [North Coast Health Connect](#), more community-based services, and improving the way the health system as a whole works together through primary care and public health services to keep people well and out of hospital.

On that note, I encourage you to remind our community to [keep emergency departments for emergencies](#). There are various options for people to receive appropriate care depending on their condition.

I welcome your feedback on any aspect of our service delivery, as this is how we improve. Feedback can be on everything from ways to improve care, to how we improve value for investment, how we engage with our patients, or reduce wasted resources or time.

Don't hesitate to contact my office at [NNSWLHD-CEoffice@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NNSWLHD-CEoffice@health.nsw.gov.au)

## From the Chair



**Peter Carter – Board Chair**

Put simply, risk is 'the possibility that something bad or unpleasant will happen'.

To take this further, we can understand risk as 'future uncertainty about deviation from an expected outcome'.

In an organisation as large and complex as our health service, risks exist all around us every day, both in clinical and non-clinical settings.

These can range from patient-related risks, to risks that systems or infrastructure will fail, and even

environmental risks from external events.

Given that our core business, from the bedside to the Board room, is to deliver high quality, safe and effective care to our community, any risk we identify will immediately or eventually be a risk to patient care. The consequences of a risk becoming reality can be catastrophic. Fortunately, this is extremely rare.

In September, the NNSWLHD Board signed off on what it considers to be our top 10 risks across the organisation. The list was developed in accordance with a detailed risk matrix drawn up by risk owners at our annual Risk Forum. Over the course of the year, the LHD will monitor and finetune the list.

Alongside our top 10 risks, we also identify the mitigations that have been, are being, or will be implemented to eliminate, or at least reduce, the likelihood of the risks occurring.

An overarching risk is that we will fail to recognise strategic risks (yes, how ironic), and if they are not recognised, they cannot be mitigated. This is a dangerous position to contemplate, which is why we follow such a comprehensive process to identify and monitor risk.

I look forward to providing you with more information about our management of risk, and the important role all staff members play when dealing with risk.

The standards of care our staff provide, whether frontline or back room, are exceptional, and our performance is ranked in a cluster of high performing countries at the top of the global quality of healthcare league table.

Even so, the delivery of healthcare, by its very nature, is a risky business. We need to be eternally vigilant to ensure we make it less so.

# Virtual reality education helps patients breathe easier

Holding your breath may sound like a simple task, but when it's a crucial element of cancer treatment, it takes on a whole new level of importance.

In May this year, patients at North Coast Cancer Institute (NCCI) Lismore undergoing radiation therapy for cancer in their left breast were the first to receive education for deep breath holds through an immersive VR experience, as part of a pilot study involving up to 40 patients.

It involved simulations of radiation therapy planning and treatment sessions, as well as a coaching video and animation explaining the need for the special breathing technique.

If possible, patients with left breast cancer should hold and sustain deep breaths during treatment sessions to lower the dose of radiation reaching the heart.

Traditional education involved initial coaching, after which patients would practice the breath holds at home, without a clinician guiding them. Patients had limited understanding of what was involved and found it difficult to share their experience with family members.

This prompted Kath Dower, Radiation Therapist Educator with NCCI at Lismore Base Hospital, to develop a more comprehensive and inclusive training program to allay their patients' concerns.

*"A literature review found that patients who received virtual reality education for treatment for other cancer types had reduced fear and anxiety around their treatment," Kath said.*

*"We also knew that patients wanted to be able to share their treatment experience with their support network, and with the virtual reality sessions they can."*

Interviewing past patients on their treatment experience led to a co-design approach which considered their feedback and insights to shape the education modules and delivery platform.

*"For so long, we gave patients education from our perspective*

*only. Asking patients about their treatment gave us their side of the story."*

Initial feedback from patients using the new VR education both in the clinic and afterwards at home has been extremely positive.

*"I found the virtual experience fascinating, it certainly answered the mystery of treatment," one patient said.*

*"It gave a clear sense of what to expect, from the room and machine set-up to the breathing practice."*

NCCI is now partnering with Curtin University to survey patients' anxiety pre and post education and analyse pilot feedback.

*"We're also interested to see why some patients are still not able to breath hold even after the virtual reality education," Kath said.*

*"We are excited to know this work will help our patients and our service in the future and will have many other applications across health."*

The VR education was funded by a NNSWLHD Big Ideas grant and informed by Kath's participation in the Rural Research Capacity Building Program.

A grant from the NSW Regional Cancer Research Network will provide funding for future culturally and linguistically diverse VR sessions, as well as VR equipment to expand the pilot to include the new Tweed Valley Hospital.



Radiation therapist, Sally Rayner, and VR Education Project Lead Kath Dower

# Celebrating excellence in Allied Health

The District's Excellence in Allied Health Awards were held on Friday 13 October.

The annual awards are an opportunity to acknowledge the expertise and contribution of Allied Health professionals from over 20 different disciplines across the District, reflecting on their impact on patient experience and health outcomes.

From 21 nominations across five categories, the winners were:

- Early Career Allied Health Professional of the Year: Emily Fahey, Occupational Therapist, Grafton
- Allied Health Assistant/ Technician/Support/Person of the Year: Sandra McCall, Allied Health Assistant, Tweed
- Allied Health Leader of the Year: Emma McDonald, Physiotherapist, Richmond
- Highly commended: Rowena Prentice, Social Worker, LHD wide

- Allied Health Educator of the Year: Donna Napier, Sonographer/ Radiographer, Grafton
- Allied Health Professional of the Year: Leah Everingham, Exercise Physiologist, Tuckeroo Byron
- Highly commended: Anika Howard, Dietitian, Lismore.

It was wonderful to also welcome NSW Chief Allied Health Officer, Andrew Davison, to visit our District, meet staff, and officiate at the Awards.

*"I am inspired by the impact our allied health workforce has on patients' lives," Andrew said.*

*"I've met so many passionate, skilled people who are making a real difference."*

Allied Health workers include social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, dietitians, diversional therapists, orthotists, prosthetists,

audiologists, exercise physiologists, pharmacists, podiatrists, counsellors, radiology therapists and technology staff, and welfare workers.

NNSWLHD Chief Executive, Tracey Maisey said allied health staff are essential members of the health workforce, providing multidisciplinary care to patients of all ages.

*"Thank you to all our exceptional allied health staff for their teamwork and collaboration, not to mention their clinical expertise which is an integral aspect of our patient care," said Tracey.*

The winners of the NNSWLHD awards will be nominated for the NSW Health Excellence in Allied Health Awards, to be held in Sydney during March 2024.



Nominees and winners of the 2023 Excellence in Allied Health Awards

# Supporting mental health

‘We all have a role to play’ was this year’s Mental Health Month theme.

Annually, October is dedicated to promoting activities and ideas that can have a positive impact on our daily lives. It encourages us to think about our mental health and wellbeing, regardless of whether we may have a lived experience of mental illness or not. It also gives us the opportunity to understand the importance of good mental health in our everyday lives and encourages help seeking behaviours when needed.

The month has been marked with various events across the District.



## Putting one foot forward

On 11 October Tuckeroo Byron Sub-Acute Mental Health Unit at Byron Central Hospital launched its inaugural Family and Carer BBQ Day.

To make the event extra special, a range of fantastic guests joined us.

Tuckeroo Clinical Psychologist Dr Matt Currie interviewed renowned peer advocate Fay Jackson to a packed house of patients, their families and carers, and representatives from GROW, Open Minds, Wellways, Head to Health, Byron Community Mental Health and NNSWLHD MHAOD staff, including Tweed-Byron Network Manager Kerrie Lawrence, Partnerships Coordinator Philippa Ludwig, Nurse Unit Manager Andrew Levine and a range of Tuckeroo staff.

Byron Shire Mayor, Michael Lyon, joined the celebration, shared feeling “very inspired” by Fay’s achievements, passion and presence.



Staff and patients enjoying the first family and carer BBQ at Tuckeroo Byron Sub-Acute Mental Health Unit

## Our Healthy Clarence walk

On 18 October, Our Healthy Clarence took the mental health month theme literally by putting ‘One Foot Forward’ with a beautiful walk and talk along the new Grafton riverfront pathway.

This was an opportunity for staff to take some time out to connect and look after their own mental wellbeing.

Our Healthy Clarence encouraged everyone to think about ways they can improve their own mental wellbeing, such as enjoying a walk, getting a bit more sleep, or spending some quality time connecting with family and friends.



Top and above, Our Healthy Clarence led locals in a stroll along the banks of the Clarence River.’

# Art on the mind

An exhibition at Grafton Regional Gallery showcased artworks created by staff and clients of the Clarence Valley Community Mental Health Service.

For more than a year, Clarence Valley Community Mental Health has been running a monthly arts inclusion workshop at the Grafton Regional Art Gallery. For four hours, staff and clients dust off their paint brushes, pencils and lino carving tools and get to work.

The workshops were developed by Rachael Levett, CNS and Lachlan Wherrett, OT/clinical lead for integrated care and redesign.

*“There is generally only one rule – respect each other to create a safe, non-clinical environment. Some people walk through the door and want to chat, and others want to work in silence,” explained Lachlan.*

The idea came from a passion for supporting people with their recovery and wanting to provide more holistic care without labels and diagnoses.

*“After a few months it became a celebration of other parts of people’s identity, and you could see the confidence slowly growing in participants who would come back month after month,” said Rachel.*

*“Accessing mental health services for help can be a daunting and lonely experience. The arts inclusion project aims to continue to shine a light on hope, recovery and connection with the community.”*

Art inclusion group is every third Wednesday 10:00am-2:00pm at Grafton Regional Art Gallery.

For more information contact 0487 008 406



Pam and family



# Creating hope through action

To acknowledge World Suicide Prevention Day, Tweed Safe Haven opened their doors to our community to share their passion, stories and messages of hope.

This day is important because it challenges the stigma and stereotypes surrounding suicide. The Safe Haven team are mostly peer workers, so have a lived experience of suicidal thoughts.

‘Creating Hope Through Action’ is the triennial theme for the World Suicide Prevention Day from 2021-2023.

By creating hope through action, we can signal to people experiencing suicidal thoughts that there is hope and that we care and want to support them. It also suggests that our actions, no matter how big or small, may provide hope to those who are struggling,

The Tweed Safe Haven is an alternative to the Emergency Department for those feeling distressed or in crisis with suicidal thoughts.

Find them at 24 Minjungbal Drive, South Tweed, 7 days a week between 12:00-6:00pm.



# International doctors earn readiness tick

A group of seven internationally accredited doctors has completed the rigorous International Medical Graduates (IMG) Clinical Readiness Program at Lismore Base Hospital.

The doctors spent ten weeks honing their skills and adapting to local healthcare practices. They are now poised to contribute their expertise within the NSW Health system.

## A global convergence of medical talent

The Lismore Base Hospital IMG Clinical Readiness Program's structured curriculum bridges the gap between existing international qualifications and the requirements of the Australian healthcare system.

The seven doctors were from India, Bangladesh, Sudan, Morocco and Pakistan, some studied in China and did their medical degree as well as studying the Chinese language at the same time.

## Ten weeks of dedication and transformation

The 10-week tenure at Lismore Base Hospital is a commendable journey for the doctors as they refine their clinical skills to understand the intricacies of local healthcare policies.

## A bright future ahead

*"The achievements of these internationally accredited doctors serve as an inspiring reminder*

*of the importance of diversity in the healthcare sector," Dr Bliagh Mupunga, Director of the program said.*

*"Their journeys are a testament to the resilience and determination that characterise the medical profession and a reminder that excellence knows no borders."*

## Congratulations and best wishes

Congratulations to all the internationally accredited doctors who have successfully completed the IMG Clinical Readiness Program at Lismore Base Hospital.

*"In celebrating these doctors, we also celebrate the spirit of global collaboration and inclusivity that defines the healthcare profession. Their success is a testament to the power of embracing diversity and welcoming talent from around the world, and it underscores the bright future of healthcare in NSW," said Bliagh.*

Learn more:

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/workforce/medical/Pages/icrp.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/workforce/medical/Pages/icrp.aspx)



From left: Maryam Akbar, Arij Amribet, Syima Eva, Shaniaz Ronok, Sandie Clarke (training hub support team), Sitalnisaa Rudwan, Prapty Bakhshi, Tazin Dilruba, Casey Rucker (training hub support team)

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# Leadership Academy at the forefront of learning

Congratulations to Nursing and Midwifery Services staff for being among the 36 finalists of this year's NSW Health Awards.

The team were selected in the People and Culture award category for their development of the Nursing and Midwifery Unit Manager Leadership Academy.

NNSWLHD Chief Executive Tracey Maisey praised the initiative which is a first for NSW Health.

*"The Nursing and Midwifery Unit Manager Leadership Academy is a unique and creative way to provide a sustainable, interactive one-stop shop for leadership development and networking support," Tracey said.*

*"It successfully addresses several issues, including the sustainability of learning programs, the amount of information unit managers need to access from multiple sources, and the impact of isolation from peers across the District."*

Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Katharine Duffy, said the Unit Manager Leadership Academy team were highly deserving finalists due

to their outstanding contribution, skill, passion and commitment to supporting our unit managers.

The Academy was developed in collaboration with the Digital Health team.

The Academy is:

- for use by unit managers
- available off-site or at home
- suitable for all experience levels.



To access, unit managers can simply email: [NNSWLHD-unitmanagerleadershipacademy@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NNSWLHD-unitmanagerleadershipacademy@health.nsw.gov.au)

From left: Katharine Duffy, Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Samantha Miller, Web Manager, Debra Hayhoe, Nurse Manager Nursing and Midwifery Education and Professional Development, Rae Rafferty, Associate Director, Nursing and Midwifery Leadership, Culture and Research, Louise Thurston, Project Lead Leadership Academy, and NNSWLHD Chief Executive Tracey Maisey

# Green light for Tweed Valley Hospital helipad

The first helicopter test flight at the Tweed Valley Hospital rooftop helipad has occurred.

The Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service carried out the tests as part of operational commissioning activities being undertaken.

*"The helipad has a dedicated elevator providing direct access from the rooftop to the Emergency Department and operating theatres to ensure patient transfers can take place safely and efficiently," General Manager for The Tweed Hospital, Joe McDonald said.*

*"Currently, most emergency transfers in the Tweed Valley region are undertaken by road. When there was an operational helipad at the existing Tweed*

*Hospital there was an average of two helicopter transfers per week.*

*"When the Tweed Valley Hospital opens next year, the helipad will provide additional capacity for helicopter retrievals and transfers, to support the needs of our growing region," Joe said.*

Some of the most critically ill or injured patients, for example those requiring specialist treatment for burns or neurological conditions, will continue to be transferred to major hospitals that provide the highest level of care for these very unwell patients.

For more information and updates on the Tweed Valley Hospital, please visit the project website at [tweedvalleyhospital.health.nsw.gov.au](https://tweedvalleyhospital.health.nsw.gov.au)

[Watch the video here](#)





# PROFILE

# Bob Bishell

If you work across the Lismore Base Hospital campus, there's every chance you've come across Bob Bishell!

Bob is part of the amazing domestic services team who maintain our facilities in tip-top condition.

*"We're responsible for keeping the hospital clean from floor to ceiling," Bob said.*

And yes, Bob loves getting his hands dirty – usually in the name of a worthy cause.

*"Basically, I make things and give them away," he smiled. "I have a passion for supporting people, especially kids, and for woodwork."*

The spark was ignited after Bob became involved in the East Arnhem Blues Society in Nhulunbuy in the Gove Peninsula – the local musos organised an annual toy drive and gala charity auction for the school and playground equipment in town.

But first, let's wind this story back, way back!

*"I had been a carpenter for 45 years before taking up building tables for charity. But that was many years after I left school. I had to try many things before discovering my passion," Bob said.*

Bob worked as a shearer and drover on sheep and cattle stations, he even worked on a mushroom farm at one point.

*"One Sunday morning in 2001 I was sitting around having a cup of tea and a yarn with my mum when I saw a job advert for a carpenter at Nhulunbuy. We both wondered aloud, where's Nhulunbuy?, and I pulled out an atlas to check – this was long before all the answers were at the end of our fingertips.*

*Mum's tears started rolling and she said, 'you aren't going all the way up there up you?' Six weeks later I got off the plane in East Arnhem Land, about a nine-hour drive from Katherine."*

Because the Gove Peninsula is so isolated, people connect through their interests, and in Bob's case this was music. He joined the East Arnhem Blues Society, playing the harmonica. This is also how he became involved in the annual charity auction.

*"My contribution was handmade coffee tables. In the 15 years I was in Nhulunbuy, I made nine tables that made over \$67,000 in the charity auctions. The tables were all crafted from recycled western Australian jarrah doors from the Walkabout Tavern.*

*"The timber was absolutely beautiful!" Bob exclaimed.*

To create something even more beautiful with his coffee tables, Bob would buy artworks from local award-winning painter Lesley Nawirridj and insert them into the tables.

*"Usually, when Aboriginal artwork is resold, it is protocol to return some of the profit to the artist. Lesley knew his artwork was supporting his local community and didn't want any extra money. His proceeds were his contribution," Bob explained.*

All the tables were unique and took at least six months to complete.

*"For me, it's about putting more into society, giving rather than taking, and I want to encourage other people to do the same."*

So how did Bob end up here in Northern NSW, a 58-hour drive from Nhulunbuy? Remember the East Arnhem Blues Society? Turns out Bob had a musician friend who had moved to the Northern Rivers, and after several reconnaissance trips, Bob moved here, too.

*"In 2015, I drove around the area before settling on a beautiful farm right on the Goolmangar Creek on the outskirts of Nimbin.*

*It was the perfect spot – water running past and neighbours not too close," he smiled.*

Bob has a large workshop in which to make all his masterpieces that are exhibited and sold through local galleries and shops. He uses local recycled and registered salvaged timber to create gifts for kids, trinket boxes, urns, quirky furniture, clocks and much more.

*"My vision is that one day we'll have an art exhibition in the hospital, displaying works created by all the craftspeople and artisans who work in the District."*

In his spare time Bob also makes moccasin shoes, vests and saddle bags from Australian leather. He also engraves glass and raises bonsai trees.

And if that's not enough, he repairs local tractors and farm equipment, sharpening hay baling and slasher blades.

*"I love doing anything to do with my hands! Back at home my passion is my three lovely dogs!"*



# Family fun day commemorates Childrens' Day

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Childrens' Day is dedicated to celebrating the strengths and culture of our First Nations children.

It is an opportunity to show our support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as learn about the crucial impact that culture, family, and community play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.

Larisa Johnson, Aboriginal Family Health Coordinator, worked in partnership with Gummyaney Aboriginal preschool and Gummyaney Play N Yarn group to deliver a family fun day for the children and their families. It was also supported by Karen Duroux, Aboriginal Family Support Worker and Carl Daley, Senior Aboriginal Health Worker.

The day included a petting zoo, ice cream truck, face painter, showbags and BBQ. It was also an opportunity for children to share stories about their families and being connected to country by engaging in a cut and paste yarning activity.

Childrens' Day is an initiative of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children and has been celebrated since 1988. The date of 4 August was historically used to communally celebrate the birthdays of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were taken from their families at a young age without knowing their birthday – the Stolen Generations.



From left: Larisa Johnson, Karen Duroux, Carl Daley



Gift bags



## Offering or seeking a home within the NNSWLHD footprint?

The new staff intranet noticeboard lets you share your needs with other health workers!

- ✓ list your spare room / vacant house / granny flat / caravan...
- ✓ request accommodation needed



Feedback is welcome  
[nswlhd-housingnoticeboard@health.nsw.gov.au](https://nswlhd-housingnoticeboard@health.nsw.gov.au)  
**Scan QR Code to learn more or make a listing**

## Allied health alliance

Five allied health students have been learning from our best over the past two months!



From left: Simone Singleton, Emma Tavendale, and Shania Mull-Mathers (Southern Cross University allied health students) with Katrina Scott (Rural Spinal Cord Injury Service Coordinator)

Southern Cross University students have completed their fourth-year clinical placements with Northern Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service (NBIRS) and with Northern NSW Rural Spinal Cord Injury Service at Ballina District Hospital.

The occupational therapy and speech pathology students' placement focused on health promotion. They worked with staff to develop resources for people living with traumatic and acquired brain injury, and for people living with spinal cord injury.

Kadison Saxby and William Podmore developed carer materials for better self-management. This includes how to access resources when caring for someone with life changing injury and disability. It aims to empower people to sustain their carer role whilst managing their own life balance and needs.

The other three students developed a laynard card to support people at

risk of autonomic dysreflexia—a life-threatening condition that can occur for some people living with spinal cord injury. The card will outline the clinical process for identifying and managing this condition.

The students developed a better understanding of issues patients and their carers face. It also provided staff with the opportunity to support future allied health colleagues, promote the varied work we do in public health, and demonstrate the difference allied health workers can make to people's lives.



From left: Kadison and William at Northern NSW Rural Spinal Cord Injury Service

## Lismore Liver Clinic returns

After the devastating floods of 2022 forced the closure the Northern NSW Liver Clinic at Lismore, the service is now back up and running in the town centre.

Staff from HIV and Related Programs (HARP) unit had relocated the service six times during the interim period, but they're thrilled to be back in their permanent site in Molesworth Street.

An opening ceremony on 1 August was officiated by special guest Mandy Nolan with a warm Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony provided by Uncle Gilbert, words of encouragement from Hepatitis NSW CEO Steven Drew and insightful first-person perspective from local journalist Digby Hildreth.

Timed perfectly after Hepatitis Awareness Week, the relaunch of the Liver Clinic included a visit from the HEP CURED mobile mural and Hepatitis NSW support staff, who also visited Tweed Heads and Grafton. The HEP CURED mobile mural spreads the message that Hepatitis C can be cured and provides information about how to access support and treatment.

The HARP team supported the visit by providing outreach information

and the latest point of care testing (PoCT), with a diagnosis turnaround time of one hour.

Timely Hepatitis C treatment is important to prevent liver damage and further spread. Curable in 95% of cases, Hepatitis C requires a pill to be taken each day for 8 to 12 weeks, has minimal side effects and is covered by Medicare.



Front row from left: MC Mandy Nolan with Jenny Heslop (Manager, North Coast HIV and Related Programs) presenting thanks and flowers to Wayne Bagnall (Administration Officer, Liver Clinic) and Krista Zohrab (Clinical Nurse Consultant, Liver Clinic) for their tireless work keeping the Liver Clinic operations running during the 2022 floods. Background, left to right: Kate Salisbury (Nursing Unit Manager, NNSW Liver Clinic) and Deb Woodbridge (Harm Reduction Officer, HARP)



What a crew! The Northern NSW Liver Clinic at Lismore team along with other North Coast Population and Public Health and HARP team members, and staff and peer workers from Hepatitis NSW with the HEP CURED Mobile Mural

# Donors help create a homey space for aged care residents

Aged care residents at Kyogle Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) are set to benefit from a generous community donation that will help residents feel more comfortable in their new purpose-built residents' lounge.

Kyogle Tidy Towns presented Kyogle MPS with a \$5,000 donation to purchase furniture and fittings for the soon-to-be completed lounge.

Nancy Martin, Executive Officer/Director of Nursing, MPS Network (Bonalbo, Kyogle, Nimbin, Urbenville) thanked the community for their generosity.

*"The local community has been very supportive of the works, with local charities, organisations*

*and individuals writing letters of support for the original 2021 grant application, and now with fundraising for furnishings.*

*"The residents' lounge improves the aged care service environment and supports activities of daily living to provide a more homelike, comfortable environment that promotes residents' independence, dignity, and choice."*



From left: Nicole Ellevsen, Nurse Manager, Kyogle MPS, Tom FitzGerald, Kyogle MPS advocate and supporter, Nancy Martin, Executive Officer/Director of Nursing, MPS Network, Anne Reardon, Vice Chair, Kyogle Tidy Towns Committee, Grace Dwyer, Member, Kyogle Tidy Towns Committee and Robert Cullen, Chairman, Kyogle Tidy Towns Committee and Councillor, Kyogle Council

# Gateway to direct ideas and find project support

The Change and Innovation portal helps staff bring about transformation and cultivate originality across our District.

The People Matter Employee Survey results reported that we needed to improve the way we engage clinicians and staff in change and innovation.

The 2022 results revealed only 26% of staff 'feel that change is managed well in my organisation' and 39% felt the 'organisation is making improvements to meet future challenges'.

Lynn Hopkinson, Manager Service Redesign, said we needed to understand the barriers and develop a novel approach to service improvement and change management.

*"Staff were telling us they wanted to know the key roles or people who can support change, and a convenient place to access information to implement change, such as tools and resources," explained Lynn.*

*"We have taken this feedback and created a one stop shop."*

Created by the NNSWLHD Change and Innovation Network, the portal:

- brings together existing resources
- provides links to local change leaders who can help you with your ideas and projects
- contains information on various change methodologies and useful templates such as project management plans.

*"We encourage everyone to have a click around the portal to either help with something they are currently working on or get inspired for a new idea or project."*

The [NNSWLHD Change and Innovation Portal](#) link is on the Intranet, under Staff Picks within Work Support Apps.

For more information: [NNSWLHD-innovation@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NNSWLHD-innovation@health.nsw.gov.au)



# Spread the word about volunteering

We welcomed our first 30 Healthcare Helpers to Lismore, Grafton and Maclean hospitals in June and now the program is expanding.

Volunteering and Fundraising Manager, Claire Quince said new roles were being added to the existing meet and greet roles.

*"We're introducing patient companion roles to help care for patients undergoing surgical procedures, cancer treatment and dialysis, rehabilitation, new mothers, and special projects such as gardening, arts and craft," Claire said.*

*"Our MPS residential aged care facilities are also recruiting companion volunteers to provide social support and outings assistance."*

All ages and walks of life are welcome, and no previous experience is necessary – volunteers receive orientation and training.

Spread the word amongst family and friends

[www.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering](http://www.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering)

or contact Claire on [nswlhd-volunteer@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nswlhd-volunteer@health.nsw.gov.au) or 0459 953 520

## Meet one of our wonderful volunteers

Pat, 72, is a Dialysis Companion in Lismore Base Hospital's Renal Dialysis Unit.

*"I thought 'I'm only sitting around at home,' so I decided to volunteer. I am very happy I did! It makes me feel young again.*

*"On the first day I was feeling a little overwhelmed. A patient needed extra nurse support and I was tasked with keeping him awake with conversation. We now have a special bond, and he calls me 'have a chat Pat' due to my proven conversational skills."*

Pat's advice for potential volunteers is "ensure you have a desire to bring a bit of happiness to patients and make them smile."

When not volunteering, Pat likes to knit and cross-stitch, and look after her four great-granddaughters.



Pat and the patient she met on her first day volunteering

# Team effort clears the way for smokefree sites

Clinical staff have been collaborating with the Health Promotion team to create smokefree environments and to help our community quit smoking and vaping.

Acting Director, Integrated Care and Allied Health Services, Kathryn Watson said this collaboration is having an impact in our facilities and our communities across the District.

*"I would like to thank all the staff participating in the Smokefree Working Groups, the Mental Health Working Party, Reducing Smoking and Vaping in Pregnancy Policy Implementation, as well as our smokefree workplace groups and our smokefree champions," Kathryn said.*

The last smokefree Ministry of Health site audits showed Byron and Tweed hospitals at 99% compliance and Lismore at 94% compliance. The facility and clinical audits demonstrate how individual units are tracking with smoke and vape specific healthcare policy.

*"Thank you to those sites and wards that have completed these audits to inform how we support you."*

Health Promotion have conducted 36 smoke and vape free related training sessions to 285 staff since the start of 2023.

*"So many staff have engaged with the training because it is flexible and can be tailored to each department's needs. It can be offered in-service or online. Health Promotion have done an excellent job in meeting the needs of the clinical teams in designing and delivering training," Kathryn said.*

**No Smoking**  
**means**  
**No Vaping**



For support to quit, visit [iCanQuit.com.au](https://www.icanquit.com.au) or call Quitline on 13 7848 today.

Staff are welcome to place this poster next to existing 'No Smoking' signage

To book your smoke and vape free training, please email: [NNSWLHD-SmokeFree@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NNSWLHD-SmokeFree@health.nsw.gov.au) or call our training coordinator Rebecca Smith on 02 6674 9515.

# Lights switched off on COVID results portal

At the end of October, a major milestone was reached in the NSW response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

People in NSW will now require a pathology referral to obtain a PCR test, and patients will receive their results from their treating GP or requesting clinician. This takes us back to the process that was in place before the pandemic.

## What does this mean for patients?

- results are no longer provided direct to the patient; clinicians are now responsible for informing them
- patients who've used the [Results Portal](#) can access their historical results until 31 December 2023.



# Making the early years count

'How We Start Matters' was the theme of this year's Child Protection Week.

Sites across the District observed this important event, with activities to acknowledge what we do well and how we can continually improve support of children and their families.

Ballina Community Health Services enjoyed an afternoon tea party with laughter, bubble blowing and sweet treats.

Mental health staff's joint morning tea featured a child protection quiz that was both fun and highly competitive.

The maternity and paediatric team at Murwillumbah District Hospital shared a morning tea whilst deep diving into The First 2000 Days framework. They shared what they do well and ways to grow and continue to support women, children and families to thrive.

Staff from New Street shared photos from their early years and many childhood memories surrounding activities, families, traditions and food.

Yamba Community Health staff shared photos of a safe person or

place from their childhood. They also played a modern game of pass-the-parcel, where everyone got a prize. Child protection questions throughout the parcel prompted group discussion, education and information sharing on child protection matters.

The Lismore Clinical Information Department team played 'Guess Who?'. Their baby photos were also prompted discussion everyone's different upbringing, and how children today face very different issues.



Yamba Community Health



New Street Team



Mental health team including Kamala IPU, CAMHS outpatient service, Safeguards, Whole Family Team and CAMHS consultation liaison

 Mid and North Coast  
**HEALTHPATHWAYS**



[manc.communityhealthpathways.org](https://manc.communityhealthpathways.org)  
Username: **manchealth**  
Password: **conn3ct3d**

## Review your service information

- To guide the user to appropriately refer a patient
- It's important that LHD services information is correct
- Send us updates using the [Send Feedback](#) button
- Our team will action updates ASAP

## Third time's a charm

After nearly thirty years of service and two earlier retirement attempts, John Morgan has hung up his tool belt (again).

John started working for the District as an air conditioning refrigeration mechanic before transferring to general maintenance at Lismore and Richmond facilities.

John tried to retire twice, but came back after a short period, with his most recent return to work last year after the 2022 flood so he could help and support his colleagues.

John's retirement plans are to go fishing and crabbing, and travel to Germany to see family.

*"We wish him well in his retirement and sincerely thank him for his hard work and contribution to our organisation over the many years," said Sandra Vidler, Acting Executive Officer/Director of Nursing, Casino and District Memorial Hospital.*



John with some of his Casino colleagues. Standing from left: Darren Skinner (DDON), Jessica Deacon, Karen Davison, Rosemary Newman (all Domestic Services), Isobel George (Maintenance Admin), Jason Whitton (Operational Services Coordinator), Louise Merkel (NUM Surgical Services), Sharon Millard (Admin Manager), Kirsty Lamb (CSO – standing to John's left shoulder) John Morgan – seated

## Long-standing consumer rep stands down

Well-respected health advocate and Northern Rivers resident, George Thompson will stand down as a consumer representative later this year, after more than ten years serving on a wide range of NNSWLHD committees and projects.

Throughout his long history with local health services, George has participated in the:

- Community Partnerships Advisory Council
- Coraki and District Health Reference Group Planning Committee for the Coraki Health One
- Opioid Medication Working Group
- Health Literacy Program Reference Group
- Value Based Healthcare Reference Group
- Health Care Quality Committee, among many others.

NNSWLHD Board Chair Peter Carter thanked George for volunteering his time and energy to enhance healthcare services in the region.

*"We have sincerely appreciated George's willingness to share his*

*knowledge, expertise and service. His insights, input and community perspective, have been extremely valuable in contributing to our discussions, planning and improvements," Peter said.*

*"He has played an integral part in improving patient safety and the governance of our services."*

George said he had enjoyed his time as a community representative and encouraged other members of the community to share their experiences and insights as a consumer advisor.

*"I have found my work as a consumer and community representative very satisfying, particularly my involvement in the Health Care Quality Committee during the past five years," George said.*



Peter Carter, NNSWLHD Board Chair congratulates George Thompson on his contribution to local health services

If you would like to learn more about our community participation initiatives, check out the community engagement page or contact Gerald May, NNSWLHD Community Engagement Manager, on 0438 882 817.

# Bringing HOPE into the eMR

A collaboration across several agencies has culminated in the integration of Patient Reported Measures (PRM) with eMR.

This is a large piece of work launched early November involved the LHD PRM and ICT teams and statewide partners at eHealth and the ACI.

Since 2021 the PRM program has given patients and carers in Northern NSW the opportunity to provide direct, timely feedback about their health conditions and experiences of care.

PRMs are captured electronically, enabling patients (or their families/ carers) to report on their healthcare experiences and outcomes at the point of care.

Health Outcomes and Patient Experience (HOPE) is a purpose-built IT platform that enables consumers and clinicians to access real-time PRMs. This helps health staff understand what matters to patients and improves shared decision making about care, treatment and health interventions.

Staff can now access PRM surveys directly within the patient's eMR, and review survey results, assign

new surveys, complete surveys and more. It will save valuable clinician time, enhance the clinical experience and enhance patient care across our services.

What our patients say about HOPE:

*"As someone who struggled with depression, I can really see the value in being able to openly discuss normally difficult topics with clinicians through the use of the surveys."*

*"It was amazing to see how much I have improved given how sick I was.... It was helpful to be able to see improvements in my answers."*



For more information about PRMs and eMR integration, head to the intranet and select the <Patient Supported Measures> tile in the work support apps.



## Thinking about offering services via Telehealth or Virtual Care?

NNSWLHD now offers three platforms to conduct your virtual consults

PEXIP, myVirtualCare, and MS Teams all offer options with various functionalities.

Did you know:

- you can SMS an invitation to patients or clients using PEXIP and myVirtualCare
- there are many rooms already set up in myVirtualCare for most LHD outpatient services

- wound care can be offered via Telehealth. This includes assessment and management as well as education
- the new clinical workstations are Telehealth compliant. (Hint: you can tell by the word WAMEE at the bottom of the screen)
- we now offer interpreter services (including AUSLAN) via Telehealth and the intranet.



Virtual Care-  
Telehealth

For questions, process review or planned education,

reach out via [NNSWLHD-VirtualCare@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:VirtualCare@health.nsw.gov.au) or call 0447 233 890

# *Northern* Exposure

Issue 6, 2023 November



#### **Front cover**

Tuckeroo Clinical Psychologist Dr Matt Currie, Peer Support Worker Leisa Brandon, Fay Jackson, Byron Shire Mayor Michael Lyon, and Occupational Therapist Angie D'Elboux

#### **Back cover**

Byron Bay coastline