

# Northern Exposure



# Northern EXPOSURE

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# Executive update



## Wayne Jones – Chief Executive

2022 has been arguably the toughest year we have ever had in managing health needs, community needs and natural disasters.

Despite these significant personal and professional challenges, I remain so incredibly proud of each one of our staff as they continued to put the patient at the centre of everything they do.



## Mark Humphries – Board Chair

This is my final column for the Northern Exposure as I depart the Board of Northern NSW Local Health District after 10 years of continuous service.

I was appointed to the Board in January 2013, and I was also a member of the Community Engagement subcommittee and later the Finance and Performance sub-committee. It was a swift learning process under the leadership of our previous Chief Executive, Chris Crawford who retired in December 2015, and then our current CE Wayne Jones.

Major milestones during my term include the massive infrastructure investments such as the

As we see the visible reconstruction of the Northern Rivers and especially Lismore, there is progress and hope that our communities are returning to the amazing work/life environment that makes our part of the world so unique.

We still have challenges ahead as we continue to fill the vacancies created following the devastating floods and the fact that many staff have retired or reduced their hours.

Recent recruitment efforts have seen a reduction in vacancies, and I am confident we will see even more new staff join our teams in the New Year. Until then we will continue to use agency/locum clinicians to ensure we continue to provide the care that our communities need and expect.

This year saw Mark Humphries, Board Chair and Dr Allan Tyson, Grafton Base Hospital, end their Board terms after 10 years' service.

redevelopment of Lismore Base Hospital, the construction of Byron Central Hospital, opened in 2016, the Coraki Campbell HealthOne in September 2017, and the Evans Head HealthOne opened in February 2020.

We saw the opening of the Grafton Base Hospital Ambulatory Care Centre in 2020, and are now in the planning stages for a full hospital redevelopment.

The jewel in the crown project, announced in 2017, was the funding for a greenfield hospital to replace The Tweed Hospital.

The project has involved extensive consultation with health staff and the community and thanks to \$733.3M government investment, the new Tweed Valley Hospital has been described as the largest infrastructure project in regional NSW.

It is pleasing to see the progress on the site, which is due for handover from Health Infrastructure to NNSWLHD in mid-2023 and planned to be operational in late 2023.

In recent years the Board has undertaken an extensive Strategic

I wish to thank both Mark and Allan for their commitment to health services on the North Coast. Being a Board member requires commitment, hard work, the ability to work with a wide range of people and balance a complicated list of priorities; roles Allan and Mark managed brilliantly.

In closing for this year, I want to sincerely thank you all for your hard work, commitment to delivering quality no matter what role you do, all of which resulted in great care to our communities that they value and appreciate so very much.

For those getting the chance to have a break, enjoy the time with family and friends and for those working – thank you. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy, and happy New Year.

Board Development Plan to focus on improving governance and oversight and has identified four key strategic areas which it will continue to focus on during 2023:

1. Workforce
2. Patient Flow
3. Aboriginal Health
4. Environmental Sustainability and Healthcare.

I would like to salute my colleague Dr Allan Tyson who has also served this board for 10 years and Jenny Cleaver, who after 17 years working in the CE office is taking a 12-month sabbatical. Jenny has presided over some 188 Board meetings and has been a pillar of strength to two CEs and multiple board members.

It has been an honour to serve our Health District and collaborate with world class clinicians, staff and Board colleagues, as well as navigate through a pandemic, bush fires and floods.

Finally, to my wife Teddy who commenced her nursing career 50 years ago, thank you for the relentless support and understanding of my time commitment to NNSWLHD.



# Pumping with the Tweed Goorie Go Getters

A Tweed-based health and lifestyle program is celebrating more than 10 years of transforming the lives of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families.

The Tweed Goorie Go Getters (TG3) was established in 2012 to improve eating habits, social and emotional wellbeing, chronic disease self-management and prevention, physical fitness, strength and weight management.

Seventy-one-year-old Marcia Browning said the program was “my saviour”.

*“I care for my mum full time, so this is my outing and I just love it,” Marcia said.*

Marcia has been a member for more than seven years and said her health suffered last year when she didn’t keep up her attendance.

*“My blood pressure always comes down when I exercise, and I do it for my mental health.*

*“There are so many positives from coming here. I get to exercise regularly and I’m much more conscious of diet and the proper things to eat. I’ve been introduced to quinoa and couscous and now they’re a family favourite.”*

Founded by the Tweed Aboriginal Health Unit, the NNSWLHD Aboriginal Chronic Care service and Momentum Collective, the program uses weekly health challenges, a supportive and safe environment and continual evaluation to keep participants engaged week after week, year after year.

NNSWLHD Aboriginal Chronic Care Officer Anthony Franks, a facilitator and TG3 team leader, said participants really benefit from the social aspect of participating in a health challenge with other community members.

*“Everyone is encouraging and supporting each other to reach their health goals,” Anthony said.*

*“We learn different strategies of behaviour change, goal setting, reflection, understanding feelings and moods, and we also*

*have a chronic disease specialist, nutritionist and other service providers who give education and information sessions to help participants with their health journey.”*

Rackell Sussyer, a mother of five and a grandmother, said the social aspects and the motivation and support provided by the program have helped to transform her life.

*“I love that I get taught so much that I can take home and role model for my kids and change my whole lifestyle,” Rackell said.*

Rackell is a foundation member of TG3 and said the program has helped her to overcome challenges with depression and weight gain. She has so far lost over 30kg.

*“It has been so important to have the support, motivation and the knowledge to help me live a happier lifestyle. If we didn’t have this program, I wouldn’t do it.*

*“It’s also helped my kids. One of my daughter’s has totally changed her lifestyle - she has lost over 10kg by changing the way she eats because I bring this knowledge home.”*

Marcia and Rackell encouraged others to join.

*“It’s a bit daunting and anxiety kicks in at the start but we’re all very welcoming and supportive so come along and check it out,” Rackell said.*

*“Just bite the bullet and do it. The group is very supportive and there’s no pressure. You only get positives from it,” Marcia said.*

TG3 is open to Aboriginal people aged 18 and over, and to 16-17 year olds with their caregiver’s consent, as well as non-Aboriginal family members.



To find out more contact Tammy Johnson, Aboriginal Engagement Specialist

**Tammy.Johnson@MyMomentum.org.au**  
(07) 5601 2339 or 0419 153 672  
or [mymomentum.org.au](http://mymomentum.org.au)



Marcia Browning (left) and Rackell Sussyer combining laughter and exercise

## Allies in excellence

The NNSWLHD Excellence in Allied Health Awards promote and recognise the high-quality work of allied health professionals within the District, as the ‘heart and hands’ of the health system.

Congratulations to the winners for 2022, we honour the achievements of our wonderful allied health staff!

### Allied Health Professional of the Year

Angie D’Elboux (Senior Occupational Therapist, Mental Health, Tuckeroo Inpatient Unit – Byron Central Hospital)

### Aboriginal Allied Health Professional of the Year

Kelly Hyde (Aboriginal Counsellor, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service – Lismore)

### Early Career Allied Health Professional of the Year

Luca Georgiou (Dietitian, Community Health – Tweed)

### Allied Health Assistant/Technician/Support Person of the Year

Rebecca Heininger (Allied Health Assistant, Occupational Therapy – Murwillumbah Rehabilitation Unit)

### Allied Health Leader of the Year

Sharon Brodie (Social Worker, IPARVAN – Richmond)

*“It was a great honour to announce these winners, as it recognises the hard work, dedication, professionalism and*

*innovative work that the Allied Health Professional contribute to providing patient centred care and building the capacity and capability of the NNSWLHD workforce,” Vicki Rose, Director of Integrated Care and Allied Health Services said.*

*“Our Allied Health staff provide an essential contribution to our health care teams, and most importantly, our patients and community.*

*“Please join me in congratulating the 2022 Excellence in Allied Health Award winners”.*



From left: Rebecca Heininger, Angie D’Elboux, Sharon Brodie, Kelly Hyde and Luca Georgiou.

## Variety of victuals

We recently surveyed more than 500 staff across The Tweed Hospital about their food and drink preferences, and it’s no surprise what came out on top...

Good coffee was number one, as well as the need for a variety of healthy and affordable food options, and support for ‘pop-up’ or mobile food providers at the new Tweed Valley Hospital.

The integrated project team is now aligning this feedback with the opportunities available at the new hospital and seeking expressions of interest from local food retailers.

General Manager of The Tweed Hospital, Joe McDonald, said it’s a great opportunity for local providers to throw their hat in the ring and be part of the hospital community.

*“We’ve heard loud and clear from our staff that good coffee is a must-have, and we are looking forward to having that on offer at*

*the new hospital, as well as a mix of quality food options,” Joe said.*

*“Whether you’re looking for a quick healthy bite, or a more relaxed meal to take some time out away from the clinical environment, we’re aiming to provide a mix of food options with something for everyone.”*

Vending machines are also in the mix, as they provide after-hours options for the Emergency Department and night shift staff. Some of the considerations include the usual snacks and drinks, as well as hot meals and retail offerings like toiletries, tech, books, and toys.



The EOJ process is being managed by Colliers and is open between 30 January – 1 March 2023.

For information, contact Ryan Chandler at 07 5588 0234 [Ryan.Chandler@colliers.com](mailto:Ryan.Chandler@colliers.com)



# Turning the tide on disability employment

The health system's perception of disability has been built on the 'Medical Model of Disability,' which focuses on medical interventions to correct 'deficits' and improve quality of life.

However, when we consider the health workforce, the 'Social Model of Disability' helps us to identify and remove physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers that could limit a staff member reaching their full potential.

Through this lens, we focus on the person, their skills and attributes and not the disability.

As our NNSWLHD workforce becomes increasingly diverse,

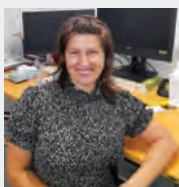
conversations about barriers to participation will become more prevalent.

Our people (staff and managers) may need support and advice about the options available, as well as how best to navigate and resolve these often sensitive and unique sets of circumstances.

The Disability Employment Working Group was established to guide the NNSWLHD through these

conversations and adjustments and help us on our path towards being a more inclusive employer.

This group is made up of staff member representatives, manager representatives, key workforce directorate representatives and other relevant stakeholders. Some of our members identify as having disability.



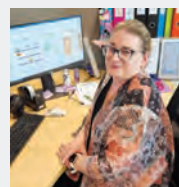
Boza



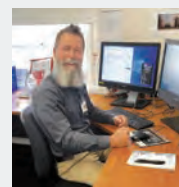
Cameron



Fiona



Jane



Ken



Kerry



Lara



Nerida



Richard



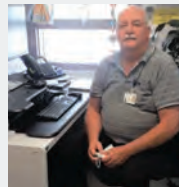
Ross



Samantha



Solange



Stuart



Susan



Vivienne

We are excited to launch two new Work Support Apps on the LHD intranet. The apps include key information and tips for staff and managers on inclusive workforce topics, resources, guides, funding and legislation.



**Staff Members with Disability**



**Disability Inclusion for Managers**

## Dr Angie Nilsson elected to national council

A big congratulations to Dr Angie Nilsson, Clinical Director of Oral Health for Northern NSW, who has been elected to the Australia Dental Association's Federal Executive Council.

The Australian Dental Association is the peak national body for dentists, electing five federal executive councillors to achieve the purpose of the organisation, which is to encourage the improvement of the oral and general health of the public and promotion of the ethics, art and science of dentistry.

Through her seven years of membership with the Association,

Angie has been a voice for public oral health.

*"It is unusual for the public sector to be represented in the Association. My nomination enables me to be a voice for, and support to, public dentists, as well as provide diversity around insights into public dental health issues," said Angie.*

Angie joined Northern NSW Local Health District in 2022, and has an interest in special care dentistry, using her current PhD research to advocate for the needs of frail and care-dependent older people.

Congratulations Angie!



# Meeting adjourned: farewell to hard working Board members

On 30 November we farewelled Board Chair Mark Humphries and Board Member Dr Allan Tyson, both stepping down in December after 10 years on the NNSWLHD Board.

Mark and Allan have been exceptional advocates for health services and staff in Northern NSW, and have contributed to many significant projects and achievements throughout the past decade.

Mark first joined the Board on 1 January 2013, and was appointed Deputy Chair in 2019 and Board Chair in June 2021.

The past 10 years have been a period of major investment in health infrastructure, including the redevelopment of Lismore Base Hospital, and development of the Grafton Base Hospital Ambulatory Care Centre, Bonalbo Multi-Purpose Service, and Evans Head HealthOne. The announcement of funding for a

new hospital for the Tweed-Byron region in June 2017 was a major milestone.

Mark has served the Board with a collaborative and community-minded approach, ever passionate about the wonderful people and programs that make up NNSWLHD.

Allan also joined the Board on 1 January 2013, and has been an active Board member, providing valuable contributions including membership on Board subcommittees.

Allan is highly engaged with the local community and has delivered strong advocacy for local hospital development, which led to a new theatre and emergency department,

kitchen and Ambulatory Care Centre at Grafton Base Hospital.

Allan has been a lead voice and a key contributor in garnering a commitment to fully redevelop the hospital to meet the health needs of the Clarence Valley community now and into the future.

An experienced and dedicated clinician, Allan has provided the Board with valuable insights and feedback on health staff engagement.

Congratulations and best wishes to both Mark and Allan.



Mark Humphries cuts the farewell cake as Dr Allan Tyson looks on

# SWISH reaches milestone

1 December marked 20 years since the introduction of the Statewide Infant Screening –Hearing (SWISH) program in NSW.

SWISH aims to identify all babies born in NSW with significant permanent bilateral hearing loss by three months of age, and for those children to be given appropriate intervention by six months of age.

Since the program launched over 100,000 babies have been born on the north coast, and 98% have been screened. During this time, just under 100 babies have been diagnosed with hearing loss in one or both ears.

## How the SWISH program works

SWISH is a 2-step process to screen all newborns whilst still in hospital, using Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR) technology. Gentle sounds are played into the newborn's ears

via earmuffs, creating automatic responses within the brain. If the newborn does not pass the first result, a second test is repeated a couple of weeks later. From there, if newborns do not pass hearing screening, they are referred for further diagnostic audiological assessment, and possible intervention services if required.

Early identification is important because research suggests that starting intervention by six months of age may result in optimal speech and language development and minimise the need for ongoing special education.

Top: Anthony Knight screening a baby with Algo 5 equipment. Bottom: Baby being screened with Easyscreen





# Thanks for dropping the jargon!

The Drop the Jargon Competition for Health Literacy Month in October had 21 entries from teams across the District.

If you'd like to try this activity or have a health literacy workshop for your service, email the Health Literacy Team at [NNSWLHD-HealthLiteracy@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NNSWLHD-HealthLiteracy@health.nsw.gov.au)

The winner was chosen randomly from the entries.

Congratulations to the Murwillumbah District Hospital Operating Theatre staff who plan to celebrate with a morning tea and a health literacy workshop.

Thank you to all staff who participated in this competition. We received some great feedback on staff members' experiences of this activity.

Using plain language instead of jargon is the most effective thing we can do to improve our communication of health information.

Some example word swaps from all the entries included:

| Jargon                    | Plain language                     |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ECG                       | Electrical picture of your heart   |
| PRN                       | When needed                        |
| Supine                    | On back                            |
| Sats                      | Oxygen in blood                    |
| Restoration               | Filling                            |
| Febrile                   | High temperature                   |
| Gait                      | Walking pattern                    |
| Bilateral                 | Both sides                         |
| Abstain                   | Don't do                           |
| UF goal                   | How much fluid we want to take off |
| Primary health assessment | Health check with GP               |
| Prophylactic              | To prevent                         |
| QID                       | 4 times a day                      |
| AF (atrial fibrillation)  | Heart flutter/irregular heart rate |
| Nil by mouth              | Nothing to eat or drink            |

# Evidence-based practice knowledge explosion

Over 300 staff recently completed a five-week evidence-based practice seminar series conducted by the NNSWLHD Research Office.

Participants gained knowledge and skills to undertake the 5 steps of evidence-based practice with the opportunity to learn about and apply the core skills:

1. ASK a well-defined and answerable question
2. ACQUIRE the best evidence to answer your question
3. APPRAISE the evidence in terms of its believability and usefulness of the evidence
4. APPLY and interpret research findings and their significance
5. ASSESS ways to implement evidence-based practice in their daily practice.

Participants found the seminar series:

*"Extremely informative"*

*"Improved my understanding and confidence of EBP"*

*"Comprehensive coverage of the topic and professionally delivered"*

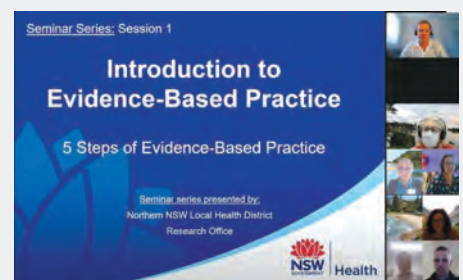
Led by Research Operations Manager, Dr Zoe Michaleff and Director of Research, Dr Alex Stephens, the seminar was presented by a local team of experts including A/Prof Christina Aggar (Nursing Research Conjoint NNSWLHD and Southern Cross University), Melissa Evans (Lismore Base Hospital Librarian) and A/Prof Chris Williams (Principal Research Fellow, University of Sydney and Research Development Manager, Mid North Coast Local Health District).

The team would like to thank all staff who attended the series. Stay tuned for an exciting research training calendar coming your way in 2023!!

For support with evidence-based practice or research please contact:

Alex Stephens, Director of Research,  
[Alexandre.Stephens@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Alexandre.Stephens@health.nsw.gov.au)

Zoe Michaleff, Research Operations Manager,  
[Zoe.Michaleff@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Zoe.Michaleff@health.nsw.gov.au)





# Sharing opinions and listening to our varied voices

Nearly half of all staff across Northern NSW Local Health District (46%) had their say in the 2022 People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) providing feedback about their experiences, perceptions and ideas of how to further improve our workplace cultures.

## Some of the results:

- most staff (84%) understand what is expected of them to do well in their job, and 80% of staff said they consider customer (patient) needs when planning their work
- a 5% increase (up to 79%) of people in workgroups who can explain how their work impacts customers (patients), and providing patient-centred care remains their focus
- 74% said their workgroup treat each other with respect with 65% saying their manager encourages and values employee input.

However, not all feedback was positive, with respondents wanting to see more improvements in:

- actions taken on results
- performance management (clear assessment criteria)
- grievance management
- staff wellbeing support, reducing burnout/fatigue
- pay rates, flexible working

- access to professional development
- more listening from their senior managers.

## What comes next?

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will review the results, including comments, and will consider strategies to improve the experience of working in NNSWLHD for all staff. Further communication around these actions will follow.

## The winners:

Congratulations to the services who met the response rate competition criteria and received a monetary prize for a staff-related activity:

- Ballina District Hospital
- BreastScreen Services
- Byron Central Hospital
- Casino and District Memorial Hospital
- Health Promotion Services
- Lismore Base Hospital Allied Health

- Maclean District Hospital
  - Bonalbo MPS
  - Kyogle MPS
  - Nimbin MPS
  - Urbenville MPS
  - Murwillumbah District Hospital
  - Oral Health Services
  - The Tweed Hospital Allied Health
- Casino also won the lucky draw prize for the competition of an additional \$1,000.

Thank you for participating in the PMES 2022 – your feedback is important to us and will be taken on board as we work together over the coming year to improve our workplace and care for our patients and community.



The PMES results are available on the intranet



Lucky prize draw L-R: Emma Willmott, Senior Organisational Development Consultant, Jane Walsh, Director of BreastScreen NSW North Coast, Graeme Williams, Manager Health Promotion, Lisa Dielt, Manager, Community and Allied Health, and Richard Buss, Director of Workforce.

# Smoothing out the recruitment path

The recently announced Recruitment Redesign Project which will streamline and enhance recruitment processes across the District is gaining momentum.

This project is a key element of the LHD's suite of strategies being implemented to address the challenging recruitment market and its impact on our ability to attract and retain staff.

The project steering committee includes Project Sponsor, Richard Buss, Director of Workforce, and Executive Leadership Team nominees from Clinical Operations, Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Nursing, Midwifery and Aboriginal Health, and Human Resources, Workforce Systems and

Support and Recruitment Services managers.

The recently created Centralised Recruitment Unit team are making good progress to support all sites to achieve the NSW Health 40-day end-to-end recruitment process targets.

The close liaison and strong working relationship between the Unit and facility partners underpins this project.

The next project milestones for January 2023 include re-aligning

certain recruitment system tasks to the centralised recruitment unit staff, which will reduce the workload of hiring managers, and putting in place the formal Service Level Agreement to meet the recruitment needs of each facility.

## Want to learn more?

Contact Isabel Perdriau, Project Implementation Officer, Recruitment Redesign

[isabel.perdriau@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:isabel.perdriau@health.nsw.gov.au)

# Christian Minett

From Broken Hill to Ballina, Rehabilitation Coordinator and Occupational Therapist Christian Minett is passionate about helping clients achieve a life that is rewarding and fulfilling.

Originally from Taree, Christian Minett knew after hearing from a family friend who worked in aged care assessment, that a career in Occupational Therapy would be something he would enjoy. He was instantly drawn to being able to “help people do what they want to do”.

After completing Occupational Therapy at the University of Newcastle, Christian moved out to Broken Hill where his role was very broad and general, and whilst he enjoyed the mix of clients, he found a particular passion for working with patients who had complex brain and spinal cord injuries.

*“You work in health care for people to get better; better than when you saw them first,” Christian says.*

*“Rehab is great because it’s the whole picture. You get to meet people, do the assessments, work on the therapy and then see them get better.”*

After two years out west, Christian landed a role in the Spinal Unit at the Royal Rehab in Ryde, a hospital renowned for its specialist rehabilitation treatment and services. He worked for six years in Ryde, predominantly in the Spinal Unit, and completed other secondments, one being the Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation Team which covered the whole of North-West Sydney. During his time in Sydney, Christian also worked in the NSW Spinal Outreach Service and for a project role in rehabilitation technology to bring world-leading technology to Royal Rehab.

When the dual role as Rehabilitation Coordinator and Occupational Therapist came up with Northern NSW Brain Injury Service based in Ballina 12 months ago, Christian jumped at the opportunity.

Christian and his fiancé viewed a house for rent over Facetime, and made the move up to the Northern Rivers.

Christian loves working with complex clients with catastrophic injuries, and being a part of providing services that offer tremendous value to his patients at a critical time. It’s particularly important for those who return after being in acute care, as they navigate the road map back to their former life, or to their new normal.

*“There’s a massive range here in this service, where we see clients who have a mild traumatic brain injury from a sports injury or a fall and who have a short period of unconsciousness, through to clients with severe traumatic brain injuries who require specialist rehabilitation in Sydney or Brisbane before returning home.*

*“From a catastrophic injury point of view, nothing changes more than being in a coma for two weeks and waking up and relearning how to do things. It’s great working with people whose whole life has changed from top to bottom, helping and educating them in their journey to a fulfilling life, even if it is a bit different to what they had planned.”*

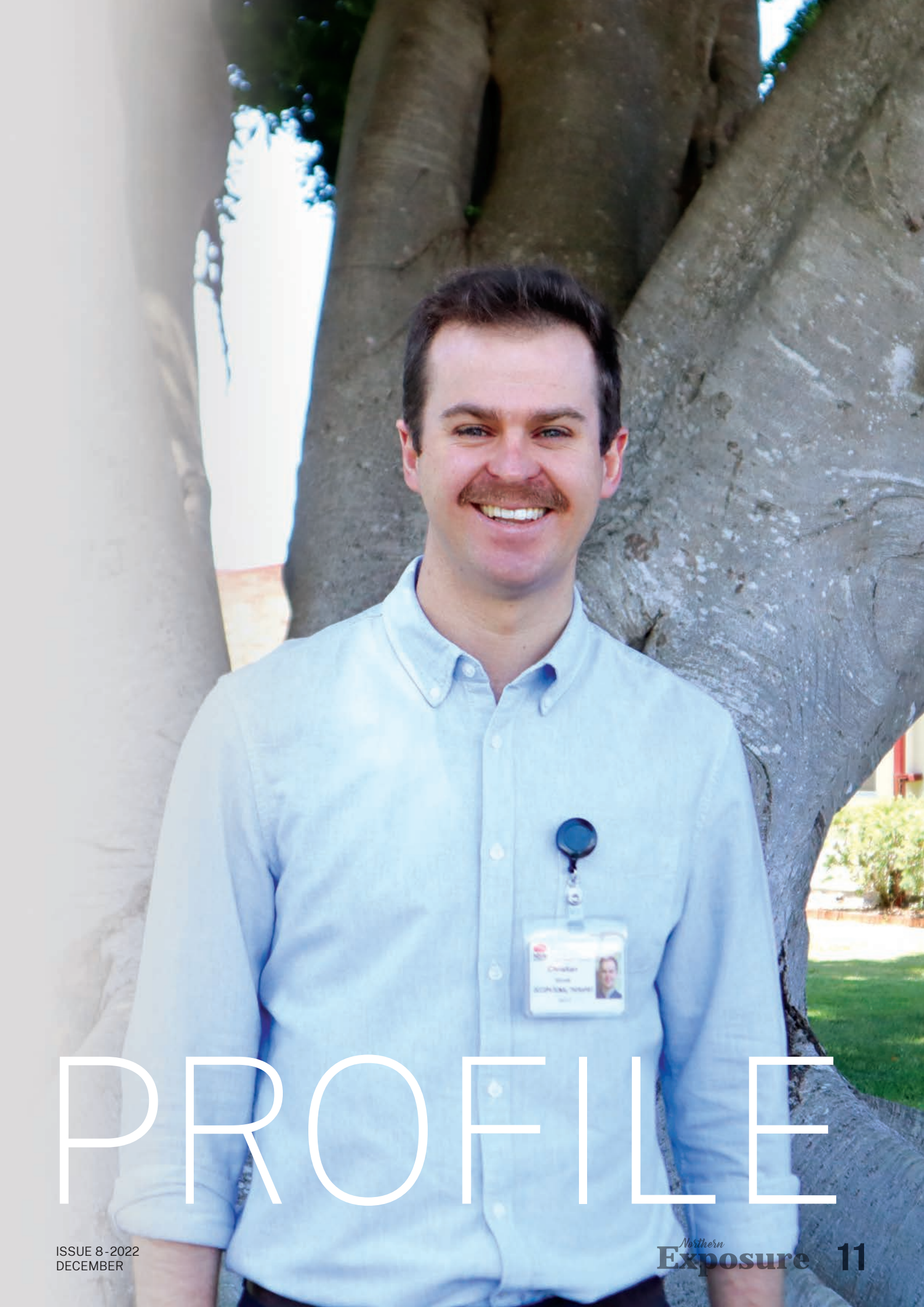
The rehabilitation road is different for every person, and is full of so many unknowns.

*“For a client or their family navigating a world after catastrophic injury and rehabilitation, they don’t know what they need or what supports are available to them, and that’s where we come in.*

*“The challenge with my job is being able to pull people together to get the support systems working together effectively.*

*“Supporting people to achieve their goals and return to their productive roles, including returning to drive and work, is certainly one of the highlights of my work.”*





# PROFILE

# Patients report excellent care throughout COVID-19

Patients who received care at hospitals in Northern NSW Local Health District during 2021 have given local health staff excellent ratings in the Bureau of Health Information's latest Adult Admitted Patient Survey.

Patients provided positive feedback on their experiences during a period of significant upheaval for the Northern NSW community, with 92 per cent saying the care they received at local hospitals was 'very good' or 'good'.

Across the region, 94 per cent of patients surveyed rated the doctors who treated them as good or very good, with 96 per cent rating the nurses who treated them as good or very good.

Chief Executive Wayne Jones said the positive results were a testament to the ability of health staff to deliver compassionate and patient-focused care even amongst trying circumstances.

*"Last year in particular, our staff faced added daily challenges which were impacting the way patients – and their loved ones – interacted with our health services," Wayne said.*

*"These included measures like screening hospital visitors for respiratory symptoms and vaccination status, increased infection prevention controls within our facilities, border restrictions impacting on the ability of staff and patients to get to hospital and increasing hospitalisations because of the local spike in COVID-19 cases in the last quarter of 2021.*

*"Many of our staff were also involved in COVID-related functions which took them away from their usual place of work, such as vaccination programs, contact tracing and staff education to ensure we could support our residents to get through the pandemic.*

*"Our staff continued to put patient care and compassion at the fore, and we can see that reflected through the experiences of patients. Thank you to all our staff for your amazing efforts."*

## HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

### Ballina District Hospital:

- 98% of patients said the care they received overall was 'good' or 'very good'
- 91% said staff they met on arrival were polite and welcoming
- 94% of patients said health professionals were kind and caring

### Byron Central Hospital:

- 92% said hospital areas were 'very clean'
- 92% rated the teamwork of health professionals as 'good' or 'very good'
- 90% of patients said the care they received overall was 'good' or 'very good'

### Casino & District Memorial Hospital:

- Recorded 10 results above the NSW average
- 94% said teamwork of health professionals was 'good' or 'very good'
- 91% said staff they met on arrival were polite and welcoming
- 84% said the overall care they received was 'very good'

### Grafton Base Hospital:

- 97% said their overall care was 'very good' or 'good'
- 85% said hospital areas were 'very clean'
- 87% said staff they met on arrival were polite and welcoming

### Lismore Base Hospital:

- 95% rated the nurses who treated them as 'good' or 'very good'
- 90% rated the teamwork of health professionals as 'good' or 'very good'
- 89% said the care they received overall was 'good' or 'very good'
- 88% said staff they met on arrival were polite and welcoming

### Maclean District Hospital:

- 90% said their care was 'good' or 'very good'
- 90% said staff were 'definitely' polite and welcoming on arrival
- 90% said teamwork of health professionals was 'good' or 'very good'

### Murwillumbah District Hospital:

- Recorded 16 measures significantly higher than the NSW average
- 97% said staff were polite and welcoming on arrival
- 87% said the overall care they received was 'very good', the highest individual hospital result in the state

### The Tweed Hospital:

- 93% said the overall care they received was 'good' or 'very good'
- 96% said the teamwork of health professionals was 'good' or 'very good'
- 88% said staff on arrival were 'definitely' polite and welcoming



Casino and District Memorial Hospital staff recorded 10 results above the NSW average in the recent Bureau of Health Information's latest Adult Admitted Patient Survey



# Walking on Country

The Grafton Base Hospital Redevelopment project team recently joined local Aboriginal Elders, knowledge-holders, and representatives from the LHD Aboriginal Health Unit for a Walk on Country.

They learnt of the importance of the Clarence River, the history of place, as well as ongoing cultural activities and desired outcomes for the future.

The Aboriginal community have provided direction on what they require to support their health aspirations and how the project can honour Country and support Aboriginal community through building design, landscaping and arts.

*“We are committed to creating a culturally safe and welcoming place at Grafton Base Hospital that increases engagement and health outcomes for the benefit*

*of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,” Sherrie Rutherford, Project Director said.*

The Walk on Country was the first of many place-based co-design

activities to be held throughout the planning and delivery process, with a ‘Connecting with Country Project Working Group’ to be established in January.



# Boots on the ground at PRIMEX – Let’s talk!

NNSWLHD Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) Coordinators, Sam Osborne and Steve Carrigg partnered with St Vincent de Paul Bushfire Recovery to talk all things health and wellbeing at the PRIMEX agricultural event in Casino in November.

It was RAMHP’s opportunity to support the local community and catch up with our many valued partners at neighbouring stalls.

*“PRIMEX is a great opportunity for the community to take a break, connect and better understand the range of services and help that is available,” Sam said.*

It was estimated that 6,000 people visited the multiagency tent over the three days. Within the tent, people had the opportunity to spend time with RAMHP workers and clinicians from our NNSW Disaster Recovery Team, Disaster Relief Australia, Resilience NSW, Women on the Land and Red Cross.

PRIMEX is such a special event on RAMHP’s calendar, and we can’t wait to see everyone again next year!



Top: Left to right: Bianca Bright (NNSW Rural Community Counsellor), Steve Carrigg (RAMHP), Amanda Forbes (NNSW Disaster Recovery Clinician) and Sam Osborne (RAMHP).  
Bottom: From left RAMHP Coordinators Sam Osborne and Steve Carrigg

As we approach the pointy end of the year, we recognise the festive season can be a stressful and overwhelming time for some.

Make sure you check in on others and prioritise some time out for you.

Remember, it’s OK to say no!

[www.ramhp.com.au](http://www.ramhp.com.au)  
[facebook.com/ramhp](https://facebook.com/ramhp)



# Spreading kindness at Casino

Casino and District Memorial Hospital staff and patients celebrated NSW Health's Gathering of Kindness during November.

Celebrations kicked off with a visit from the NNSWLHD Executive team to present staff with a special badge of recognition and thank them for supporting the community through COVID and the floods. A campus-wide celebratory afternoon tea was joined by patients, previous staff members, and students.

There were numerous random acts of kindness from all departments and team members – operational, administration, HealthShare and physical resources services, and the clinical units of emergency department, inpatient and surgical services, operating theatre as well as nursing administration, and an unknown kindness fairy.

Some of the site-wide activities included 'kindness trolleys' filled with goodies, interdepartmental gift contributions and distributions across the hospital, and staff and patient morning teas and kindness huddles.

Staff, visitors, and patients were invited to leave uplifting messages on the display board and reminders of what kindness looks like and how a single moment of kindness can make a significant difference in someone's day.

One message read, "Acts of kindness have the potential to make the world a happier place. An act of kindness can boost feelings of confidence, being in control, happiness, and optimism. May also encourage others to repeat the good deeds they have experienced themselves, combining to a more positive community."

The Casino team has been working very hard to acknowledge the great work of their staff.

*"As a team we have risen to the challenges of the past few years to get the job done in a professional and supportive manner for both the patients and each other," Ellen Palmer,*

*Executive Officer/Director of Nursing said.*

*"It was just wonderful to see how innovative each department was and how each department and staff members actively participating and contributing to these celebrations."*



Top: Casino staff. Bottom: Kindness treats

# New HealthPathway – low back pain in adults

Non-specific back pain makes up about 95 per cent of presentations for back pain to primary care.

The HealthPathways team has recently reviewed three pathways on low back pain, consolidating and updating the information available into one easily accessible resource, Low Back Pain in Adults.

HealthPathways Clinical Editor Dr Hilton Koppe said as part of the normal quality assurance process, local specialists had reviewed the new pathway and provided positive feedback.

*"One of the specialists said if this pathway was followed, there would be far fewer people requiring assessment in hospital, which is a win for everyone – patients and hospitals," Dr Koppe said.*

*"Low back pain is very common and if GPs can feel confident in*

*their approach to managing it, that will be good for patients and good for the health service.*

*"It means the right patients are going to see the right practitioners at the right place at the right time."*

Dr Koppe said the new pathway would help clinicians determine which patients needed further investigation and what sort of investigation would be most helpful.



*ongoing back pain," Dr Hilton said.*

*"The pathway also guides GPs through a step-wise approach to medication management in people with*



Mid and North Coast Localised Pathways **manc.**  
**communityhealthpathways.org**

Username: manchealth  
Password: conn3ct3d



# Empowering our clinicians and community through Virtual Care

The NNSWLHD Virtual Care Steering Committee is pleased to present the Virtual Care Strategy 2021-2026 and the accompanying Virtual Care (VC) Strategy Action Plan.

The VC Strategy and Action Plan aims to deliver every clinician the means to offer virtual care (VC) to every (suitable and willing) patient by 2026.

Our vision is for an empowered NNSWLHD community, where people are in control of their health.

VC enhances patient-centred care and provides an opportunity to bridge the gap across acute to primary care with the aim of ensuring positive experiences and seamless navigation across a patient's health journey.

Our aim for VC services is to provide flexibility, equity, be

culturally appropriate, and meet the social circumstances of our diverse population and changing environmental conditions.

Our delivery framework includes an enhanced support capability for People, Processes and Technology, to deliver our vision and embed virtual care into our clinical services by 2026.

We are proud to support this significant body of work managed by the VC Service established in the Integrated Care Directorate.

This Strategy closely aligns with the **NSW Health, NSW Virtual Care Strategy 2021-2026.**



**Read the NNSWLHD VC strategy here:**

[sharedapps.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/telehealth/SitePages/Introduction.aspx](https://sharedapps.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/telehealth/SitePages/Introduction.aspx)

**For more information** about Virtual Care, please contact Wendy Roulston, Manager Virtual Care on 0438 497 318

# On the job training earns highly regarded accreditation for Tweed Cancer Care nurses



This year, more than 51,000 people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in NSW. Health professionals play an important role in efforts to reduce the incidence of cancer, increase survival rates and improve the quality of life of people with cancer.

As part of this, Cancer Institute NSW provides programs, resources and events to support health professionals with the skills they need to care for our community.

Recently, Tweed Cancer Care as part of the North Coast Cancer Institute, supported three new staff to complete the Antineoplastic Drug Administration Course (ADCD). The course is designed to develop the necessary knowledge and clinical skills to administer antineoplastic drugs, and safely handle related waste.

Developed by Cancer Institute NSW and following a strict governance, the ADAC uses eviQ content to develop education courses that are delivered through high quality, interactive, scenario-based eLearning guides, online

quizzes, supervised clinical practice, competency assessments, and a clinical skills workshop to consolidate theory to practice.

Tweed Cancer Care Unit's support for continuous professional development enables early career nurses to acquire specialist

skills and this is recognised and celebrated within the multidisciplinary team.

Find out more: [education.eviq.org.au/courses/antineoplastic-drug-administration-course-adac](https://education.eviq.org.au/courses/antineoplastic-drug-administration-course-adac)



From left: Lisa McLean Program Lead – eviQ Education, Rose Melville Transition to Practice RN, Jessica Currie 2nd Year Speciality program RN, Cassie Hinchcliffe 2nd Year Speciality program RN, Lisa King eviQ Content Author – Medical Oncology/Nursing and Daniel O'Flynn Assistant Director of Nursing, Medicine and Critical Care, The Tweed Hospital

## Do I get a discount on Microsoft products at home?



Save 30% on select Microsoft 365 subscriptions, and up to 10% on Surface products.

Did you know that as an employee of NSW Health, you're eligible for the Microsoft Workplace Discount Program (formerly known as the Home Use Program). This allows you to shop for selected Microsoft products at discounted prices.

1. Scan QR code and sign up with your work email address. You'll receive a confirmation email with a link.

2. use the link to sign in with your personal Microsoft account to shop for products. You can create a personal account if you don't have one already.



## Salaam and Selamat Datang

NNSWLHD Multicultural Strategies Coordinator, Rita Youssef-Price works to make our Health Services culturally safe and responsive to the culturally and linguistically diverse communities that have settled in the Northern Rivers.

Rita is part of a team that welcomes newly arrived migrants and refugees who attend local TAFE Adult Migrant English Classes.

She provides information about how to access health care and describes the different services available, fielding questions about maternity services, access to dentists, GPs and telehealth services, ambulance bills, paediatric specialists, counselling support and of course, using interpreters.

Presenting information about a complex health system can be tricky, especially when there are communication obstacles. It highlights the importance of using interpreters for complex health conversations where safety and understanding is critical.

Although keen to understand how they can improve their health and wellbeing, many of the students explained that without health interpreters they felt unsafe and vulnerable when accessing a doctor or other health appointments.

Rita is quick to explain that people have a right to an interpreter

through the Health Care Interpreter Service when using all Northern NSW health services.

As part of her work, Rita has been involved in co-designing the NNSWLHD Multicultural Health and Refugee Strategy and says that there are great ideas and actions planned that will help to alleviate the obstacles faced by these vulnerable communities.



The Health Care Interpreter Service is available 24/7 to all NNSWLHD staff.

Call (02) 4924 6285 for communication with patients and family members or carers who have lower levels of English proficiency, as well as for deaf people who use AUSLAN.

Contact Rita if you'd like to arrange training or more information about using the Health Care Interpreter Service on 66399109 or via email on [rita.youssefprice@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rita.youssefprice@health.nsw.gov.au)



Wollongbar and Ballina TAFE English Language students



# Making travel for treatment more affordable

Do you have patients, friends or family who need to travel 100km (one way), or at least 200kms in a week with multiple trips to receive medical care?

The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) provides financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs if people need to travel long distances for treatment not available locally. And the criteria have recently changed to widen access.

- ✓ increased financial assistance and eligibility
- ✓ easier application process

#### New services:

- patients seeking non-commercial clinical trials
- high risk foot clinics
- highly specialised publicly funded dental health clinics and ophthalmologists

#### More financial support:

- accommodation subsidy nearly doubled
- private vehicle subsidy nearly doubled

Interested patients should talk to their social worker or healthcare team



Phone: 1800 IPTAAS (1800 478 227), option 2

[www.iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au)

Or scan QR code to check out the fact sheet



Camilla receiving treatment at Ballina District Hospital

#### IPTAAS beneficiary – Camilla Reynolds

Camilla Reynolds has been receiving IPTAAS payments for the past seven months and said it has been a 'massive financial help'.

She travels over 80 kms, three times a week to receive treatment – between her home at Mullumbimby and the Ballina District Hospital for haemodialysis. Camilla was told about the scheme from one of her treating nurses and soon discovered that she was eligible for the payments.

*"For someone who needs to travel multiple times a week, the financial assistance is lifechanging, particularly when the costs of living are increasing."*

Camilla said that without the support, it would be harder to receive the treatment she needs.

# Murwillumbah Pink Ladies hang up their aprons

After 39 years of dedicated service, the Pink Ladies of Murwillumbah District Hospital have recently retired.

The local group was established in 1983 by Noreen Ring with the primary focus of improving the comfort and morale of patients.

This mission was well and truly fulfilled over the years with the Pink Ladies offering support for tasks including arranging flowers, offering reading material, making cups of tea, and offering companionship during their hospital stay.

On Wednesday 12 October, Murwillumbah District Hospital (MDH) hosted an afternoon tea to honour the tireless work of the Pink Ladies.

Pink Ladies farewell morning tea at Murwillumbah District Hospital, with from left, Tracey Claverie (EO/DON Murwillumbah District Hospital), Marg Dorrrough, Judith Campbell, Val Foster, and Nyrie Tillotson.

*"Our patients, visitors and staff will certainly miss being greeted by the friendly smiles and kind words of the Pink Ladies. We thank all of them for their generosity of time and spirit,"*  
Murwillumbah District Hospital

*Executive Officer/ Director of Nursing Tracey Claverie said.*

*"We'll be adding an acknowledgement of the Murwillumbah Pink Ladies to the historical records wall at the hospital in their honour, as a permanent tribute to these remarkable ladies."*



# End of an era for women's health in the Clarence Valley

On 3 November 2022, Dr Marion Leaver held her final Women's Health Clinic in Grafton Aruma Community Health Centre. It was the conclusion of 35 years of dedicated and committed service to the women and girls of the Clarence Valley.

Dr Leaver began as VMO General Practitioner at Grafton Base Hospital in 1986 and the following year began as the medical officer in the Women's Health Clinic. Her interest in women's health expanded in 1999 to include working at the Aboriginal Medical Service and at the Coffs Harbour Women's Health Centre from 2004 to 2006.

The Clinic had many homes in Grafton, including the Grafton Daily Examiner building, the current Child and Family building in Market Square, and the Annex at Grafton Base Hospital, before relocating to Aruma Community Health Centre in Queen Street in January 2008, where the service remains. Dr Leaver has continued to run weekly clinics alongside the women's health Clinical Nurse

Consultant, mentoring medical students and providing a much needed and highly valued service to women and girls.

*"Dr Leaver's interest and expertise in women's health has driven her dedication to patient care throughout her career. The people of Grafton and the Clarence Valley have benefitted greatly from her work," Jenni King, Acting Nursing Unit Manager, Aruma Community Health said.*

*"Congratulations on a wonderful career and for the highly regarded Women's Health service you helped initiate and drive for the past 35 years.*

*"We wish you all the best in your retirement and thank you for your service!"*



Top: Dr Leaver with current and past admin staff from the last 35 years

Bottom: Roslyn Hollis (CNC) with Dr Leaver

# Bright start for new Mental Health AINs

Earlier this year, Northern NSW Local Health District's Mental Health services employed two teams of casual Assistants in Nursing (AINs).

A new nursing role in the District, these AINs provide key caring roles to consumers in the mental health inpatient wards under the supervision of Registered Nurses. The two teams of AINs are based at Kurrajong inpatient unit in Tweed, and Tallowood, Kamala and Lilli Pili inpatient units in Lismore.

NNSWLHD is fortunate to have a strong link with Southern Cross University (SCU), with most of the Mental Health AINs being undergraduate SCU nursing students. Alongside their university commitments, these AINs are learning more about the field of mental health nursing through these new positions, from the guidance of the experienced nursing staff and through regular education days.

Each AIN brings unique strengths and skills to the role, and the feedback from the wards about these new roles has been overwhelmingly positive.

We can't wait to see these AINs progress towards registration and use the valuable skills learned as mental health AINs throughout their nursing career.



Tweed mental health AINs Lochlan, Kate, Alyanna, Destiny, Beth and Lucy at their latest education day



# A million connections a second for 2000 days

The First 2000 days of a child's life from conception to age 5 is a critical period for physical, cognitive, social, and emotional health and has a major impact on the next 30,000 days of life.

One million new neural connections are formed every second during this time, when ninety per cent of the brain is developing.

The First 2000 Days Framework is a strategic policy document which outlines the importance of the first 2000 days and the actions people within the NSW health system need to take to ensure that all children have the best possible start.

On 9 November, we launched a local five-year implementation plan at the First 2000 Days conference at Ballina Surf Club, attended by around 130 participants from a broad range of internal and external service partners.

Dr Elisabeth Murphy, Senior Clinical Advisor for Child and Family Health

at NSW Ministry of Health gave the keynote address, and Professor Melissa Green presented her research on the NSW Childhood Development Study looking at life course risks of children and parents with mental illness. Elizabeth Best outlined the Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Services evaluation, and NNSWLHD staff presented on local initiatives.



Presentation video recordings and Implementation Plan can be found here:



[intranet.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/child-youth-family-services/](https://intranet.nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/child-youth-family-services/)

[first-2000-days](#)

If you would like more information or would like to be a champion, please contact:

Ellie Saberi

[ellie.saberi@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ellie.saberi@health.nsw.gov.au)

# Northern NSW Health Literacy Framework 2022-2025

The **Framework** will guide health literacy improvement for the next three years, and it builds on the work we have done in partnership with Healthy North Coast since 2016.

Framework actions are supporting improved communication and health policies and processes, and aim is to make health care as accessible and easy to follow as possible.

Support is available for managers and staff who want to improve health literacy in their service.

Contact the health literacy team if you would like help to:

- develop health information or education
- plan or implement a quality improvement project related to health literacy
- improve communication processes

- design consumer engagement activities
- assess the health literacy environment of your service
- incorporate health literacy principles into your project work

We can also come to you to provide staff workshops on health literacy.

## OUR VISION FOR NNSWLHD

- Better health outcomes
- Better care experiences
- Better satisfaction with care.

## OUR AIMS

1. People are empowered and supported to access, understand and take appropriate action on health information and services.
2. The health service and its staff take responsibility to continuously improve the health literacy environment

## FOCUS AREAS

1. Consumers are empowered to be health partners
2. The people who provide healthcare embed health literacy practice into their ways of working
3. Health literacy is supported by the health service environment.



Contact the team at [NNSWLHD-HealthLiteracy@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NNSWLHD-HealthLiteracy@health.nsw.gov.au)

Visit the [Health Literacy Website](#)

# *Northern* **Exposure**

Issue 8, 2022 December



#### **Front cover**

The Tweed Goorie Go Getters enjoying a break from pumping iron!

#### **Back Cover**

Clarence Valley starry sky