

WE ARE

Issue 7 | AUTUMN 2023 | FREE

Southern

Excellence in Care



**A life-changing
path to
university**

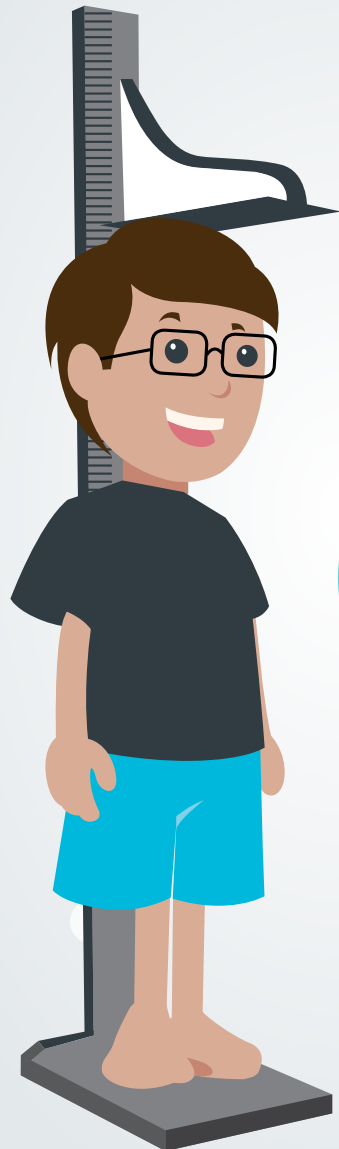
In this issue:

- From racing for gold to saving lives
- Keeping children's growth on track
- Breastfeeding and work: making it work



Southern NSW
Local Health District

We measure the height and weight of all children as part of a child's health assessment



Your health care professional will help measure your child's height and weight

For more healthy habit tips visit healthyliving.nsw.gov.au
For health professional resources visit pro.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

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HEALTHYEATING
ACTIVE LIVING

Working in the hospital

Southern's Blood Management Clinical Nurse Consultant, Elise Coppins, was recently selected for a competitive national leadership program for rural women.

Elise's experiences as a nurse at Southern have been integral to her leadership journey.

"No matter your role, all nurses are leaders in some capacity already. Nursing provides you with crucial traits for leadership such as attention to detail, commitment to excellence, a disposition to care, strategic thinking, conflict resolution and performance development," said Elise.

"Nursing is a career that is versatile and has a variety of professional development and career options. It has allowed me the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to progress and take on various leadership roles across a broad range of including clinical care, education, management, research, and health service delivery."

Elise attended the National Rural Women's Coalition Leadership Muster, a four-day residential leadership program held yearly in Canberra. The program provides an opportunity to women from rural, regional, and remote Australia to interact with inspirational leaders, receive formal leadership training in a collaborative group environment and 'give back' to their community through a volunteer project in their local community.

Elise lives on a sheep and cattle property in Tarago with her husband and two children, and her project reflected her community interests.

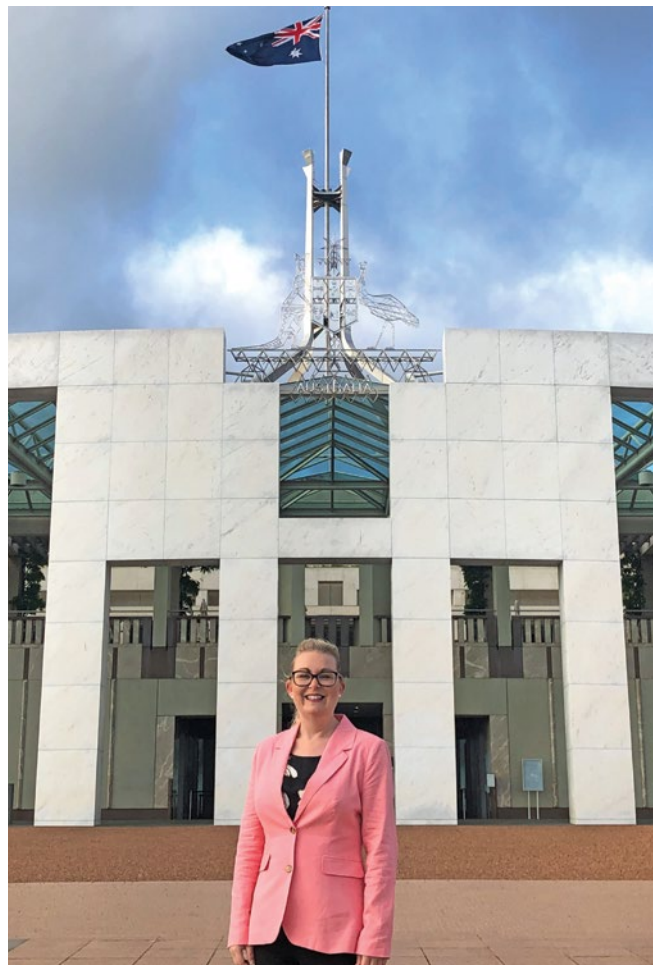
"My project is to introduce farming education sessions and resources for the Braidwood and Tarago areas, for both large- and small-scale holdings, aiming to build agricultural community members skills and knowledge, improve animal welfare, and provide support systems and social connections within the community," explained Elise.

"The National Rural Women's Coalition Canberra Muster 2022 brings rural, regional and remote women together to work toward strengthening rural communities through rural women's leadership - this is a strength of the Muster," National Rural Women's Coalition President Leonie Noble said.

"History has shown the difference the amazing women who make up the Muster Alumnae have made to both their communities and their personal leadership journeys."

Elise's advice for aspiring leaders is to look for opportunities to develop leadership skills both inside and outside the workplace.

"Set leadership values and goals. Invest in your personal development and sign up for leadership opportunities both within our organisation and outside work. Look for leadership roles you enjoy, excel and are passionate about - such as leading a volunteer group, sporting group or mentoring someone."



Elise Coppins at the Parliament House Photo: NRWC



Message from our Chief Executive

Welcome to the first edition of **We Are Southern for 2023.**

Our Autumn edition offers just a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes to keep Southern an effective, responsive and caring health service. Our strength is our people - and inside you'll read about some of the individuals making a difference in their communities.

As we approach National Close the Gap Day on 16 March, it's timely that we feature several stories about how Southern is working on cultural and system change to bring about true Reconciliation.

Partnerships are essential to embedding practices that lead to real change. Our partnership with PCYC NSW is improving outcomes for young First Nations people by introducing our region's first Aboriginal Go4Fun program; and supporting Ngunnawal athletes to compete in the Nations of Origin sporting event for the first time since 2017.

This edition also profiles our higher education partnerships. We share how the Djirruwang program, which proudly has its roots in Queanbeyan, continues to have both a local and national impact. You can also read about how the University of Wollongong's Bega campus supported Loureene Kelly to become a Registered Nurse.

Finally, I'm pleased to introduce you to Christine Archer and Marnie Ponton, who we have recently welcomed to Southern as part of our expanding Nurse Practitioner workforce. Their roles echo Southern's vision to invest in a skilled and sustainable rural health workforce to address the unique health care needs of our District.

We are proud of our achievements at Southern and share our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributes to providing health care in our region.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Bennett".

MARGARET BENNETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Southern NSW
Local Health District



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Emergency Nurse Practitioner Marnie Ponton is no stranger to high-pressure situations

Southern NSW Local Health District acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians of the lands within its boundaries, the Gundungurra, Ngambri, Ngarigo, Ngunnawal and Yuin peoples.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community members and staff for their ongoing contribution to society and their commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

On the cover

*Registered Nurse Loureene Kelly at South East Regional Hospital
Photo by Kyal Dorsett*

Expanded Moruya Hospital Emergency Department opens

The Moruya community will benefit from expanded emergency treatment and care services with treatment spaces more than doubled at the Moruya Hospital Emergency Department (ED).

Premier Dominic Perrottet officially opened the new ED on 20 January 2023, to support a seamless transition for staff into the new \$260 million Eurobodalla Regional Hospital.

“Growing the capacity of the emergency department in Moruya is key to ensuring we provide the community with high-level emergency health care now and into the future,” Mr Perrottet said.

“This emergency department will be crucial in preparing the local workforce for the expanded services that will be offered at the brand-new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital, with construction set to be completed in 2025.



Premier Dominic Perrottet joined hospital staff, including Nurse Unit Manager Katherine Fisher to open the new emergency department at Moruya Hospital



The new ED includes additional resuscitation and consulting spaces for patients as well as a new undercover vehicle ambulance bay.

Upgrade works have also included an enhanced Close Observation Unit which will provide 24-hour specialist supervision and care for patients with complex medical, or surgical needs.

The community can expect to see early works begin on the new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital in early 2023, including Aboriginal archaeological works.

The expanded Moruya ED is part of the \$260 million Eurobodalla Regional Hospital redevelopment which will deliver a sustainable, modern and purpose-built hospital.

The Eurobodalla Regional Hospital will be built to accommodate a Level 4 health facility including:

- Emergency Department
- Eight bed Intensive Care / Close Observation Unit
- Increased capacity for chemotherapy and increased access to renal dialysis
- Surgical and operating theatres and a day stay surgical unit
- Expanded medical imaging department, including MRI service
- Ambulatory care for community and outpatient services
- Paediatric and maternity beds, and a special care nursery
- Mental health beds for short term admission
- Enhanced education and training facilities, including a simulation laboratory.



Hospital history celebrated in new exhibition space

The remarkable history of the Goulburn Base Hospital has been celebrated in a new heritage exhibition space as part of the \$165 million Goulburn Hospital and Health Service Redevelopment.

The purpose-built space, named 'Springfield Place', is located within a new linkway that joins the original hospital with the new state-of-the-art Clinical Services Building.

Named in recognition of the Faithfull family and their longstanding association with the Goulburn Base Hospital and community, 'Springfield Place' tells the story of the hospital, from its humble beginnings with capacity for 28 patients, to the modern health facility it is today.

The Goulburn Base Hospital has been providing high-quality healthcare and services to the Goulburn-Mulwaree Community since 1889, and the stories of its more than 130-year history come alive as part of this new community space.

The exhibition brings to life the story of how the hospital and health services have grown and evolved with the community over the years and showcases some remarkable artefacts and items from the hospital's collection.

As part of the opening, the community were thanked for their involvement in delivering the new heritage display, which features many of their stories and memories of the hospital, along with contributions from local groups such as the Goulburn Historical Society, Goulburn Post and Goulburn Mulwaree Library.



Member for Goulburn Hon. Wendy Tuckerman MP, Margaret O'Neill, Pamela Maple-Brown and Minister for Regional Health Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC officially opened Springfield Place

The Goulburn Hospital and Health Service Redevelopment Arts and Heritage Working Group worked with the Goulburn Health Service Historical Cataloguing Volunteer Group to select a variety of items which are on display to create an engaging public health space for patients, visitors, and staff.

The redevelopment also includes new artwork created by local Aboriginal students and artists, restored tapestries and bright installations of local flora around lifts and staff stations.

The opening of Springfield Place coincided with the opening of the Hospital's Main Entry and new carpark, and completion of restoration work on the Hospital's heritage façade, marking a significant milestone in the Goulburn Hospital and Health Service redevelopment.

Final works for the redevelopment are due for completion in late 2023, including delivering upgraded spaces for ambulatory outpatient services, oncology, Aboriginal health, and pathology.

Springfield Place is open to patients, staff and visitors between normal operating hours, 7 days a week.

For more information and to view a map of the public entrances to the hospital and Springfield Place, visit: <https://www.goulburnredevelopment.health.nsw.gov.au>



Dr Nathan Oates recognised for educational leadership



Dr Nathan Oates

South East Regional Hospital anaesthetist Dr Nathan Oates was recently awarded ACT Clinical Educator of the Year (2022), by the Canberra Region Medical Education Council (CRMEC), acknowledging his pivotal role in improving rural education and training opportunities in our region.

Nominations for the award come from a prevocational junior doctor, and Nathan was recognised for his work as Director of Prevocational Education and Training at South East Regional Hospital, working with the Rural Clinical School of the ANU Medical School.

Dr Oates' nomination highlighted the way that he goes above and beyond in his role, providing support, teaching and welfare support to SERH's Junior Doctors.

"Not only is Nathan an exceptional teacher in that he is able to clearly explain complex concepts in a way that helps Junior Doctors understand the science and clinical application of those concepts, he also provides an emotionally safe learning environment."

Dr Oates was presented with his award at the Australian and New Zealand Prevocational Medical Education Forum in Adelaide in November, where he was also a finalist in the National Clinical Educator of the Year from the Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Council (CPMEC).

Come to Southern campaign launched

Southern has recently launched 'Come to Southern', a recruitment campaign on our social media channels.

The campaign includes a series of videos showcase the personal and professional benefits of rural health practice. The videos encourage potential candidates to take the next step by giving them a sense of how unique our region is and giving them a view of what their working environment might look like.

A new Facebook Page has also been launched to support the campaign – search 'Southern NSW Local Health District Careers' to see our latest career opportunities.

The campaign coincides with the launch of the NSW Ministry of Health's Rural Workforce Incentive Scheme, a comprehensive incentive package focused on the recruitment and retention of staff in areas of critical need in rural and remote NSW.



Registered Nurse Benjamin Burnett stars in Southern's new recruitment campaign.



Scan the QR code to watch the video series

Planting seeds of kindness



Live music filled hospital foyers across Southern in November as part of NSW Health's Gathering of Kindness.

NSW Health's Gathering of Kindness is celebrated annually during November, using World Kindness Day to continue a conversation about kindness and compassion.

This year's event was bigger than ever at Southern and focused on connections, how our relationships shape us all, and how much connection means in these times.

To mark the 2022 Gathering of Kindness, Nick Chenery from the ANU School of Music gave a lunchtime concert at Queanbeyan Hospital on Monday 7 November, and Dean Gray and Anna Martin-Scrase performed at South East Regional Hospital on Wednesday 9 November.

At Southern, we are committed to providing kindness and compassion in every interaction with patients, carers, families and our work colleagues.

"A smile, listening to worries, or a reassuring conversation are some of the small acts of kindness that make a big difference to the experience of our patients and their families, and our staff, across NSW Health," said Terence Joe, Manager Patient Experience.

Throughout the week of events, site-based staff Wellbeing Crews worked away on local activities and Kindness Trees popped up across the District, sharing acts of kindness that staff have received or witnessed in the health service.

Southern's local activities complemented NSW Health's Gathering of Kindness 2022 program of in-person and virtual sessions, focusing on connection, creativity, change, collaboration, courage, and contemplation.



Monica Alcock and Lauren Robinson at Queanbeyan Hospital's lunchtime concert



Physiotherapist Antony Du tends to Cooma Hospital's Kindness Tree



Dr Dae Kwon celebrates the Gathering of Kindness at Queanbeyan Hospital



Musician Nick Chenery



Cooma Hospital's Wellbeing Crew

Scan to read more about Southern's commitment to kindness in our Care & Kindness Charter





Cooma Hospital takes out the Red Sock Renal Shield



Sarah Burns RN out walking her dog 'Pickles' in her Red Socks



Cooma Renal Unit staff Tyla Owen and Sarah Burns went for a 5km walk with their patient Jo Alam to get their kilometres up for the Red Socks Run Challenge

Cooma Renal Unit staff Sarah Burns and Tyla Owen sold 40 pairs of socks to hospital staff as part of their Red Socks Sale

Cooma Hospital has taken out Southern's Red Sock Renal Shield, as the highest fundraisers in a fundraiser for research, support services and treatments for kidney disease.

Throughout October, the renal teams at Cooma, Moruya and South East Regional Hospitals participated in Kidney Health Australia's Red Socks Run 60km challenge. Internal competition was high, with the units competing for the Red Sock Renal Shield.

Participants covered 60km of running, walking or cycling across the month. The Red Socks Run 60km challenge was inspired by people living with kidney failure who require life-saving dialysis.

For Australians living with kidney failure, dialysis or kidney transplant are needed for them to stay alive. For those on dialysis, they spend an average of 60 hours a month hooked to this life-saving machine, which cleans their blood of toxins.

Dialysis can make them feel cold so blankets and warm socks are a must, so the Red Socks Run was born.

The Red Sock Renal Shield was awarded to Cooma Hospital, who raised \$6,186 for Kidney Health Australia. The team also made the national leader board, as the third highest workplace fundraiser in the challenge - an extraordinary achievement for a small regional team competing with large metropolitan centres.



Aboriginal Go4Fun comes to Queanbeyan

In a Southern first, Queanbeyan will play host to Aboriginal Go4Fun during Term 2.

Aboriginal Go4Fun is a culturally adapted version of the evidence-based Go4Fun program and aims to improve the health, fitness and self-esteem of Aboriginal children who are above a healthy weight and their families.

The 10-week program is free to attend for children who are above a healthy weight, aged 7 – 13 years and has a parent/carer attend. The program runs in line with the school term, and sessions are once per week, for two hours.

Aboriginal Go4Fun will be delivered in partnership with Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council and Queanbeyan PCYC. The program includes Aboriginal support staff, traditional foods and games, and culturally adapted family resources.

For more information about Aboriginal Go4Fun visit go4fun.com.au, or call 1800 780 900.



“ The program includes Aboriginal support staff, traditional foods and games, and culturally adapted family resources.

Cancer care closer to home

Christine Archer is helping patients access cancer care closer to home as Southern’s Nurse Practitioner Cancer Services.

Cancer patients in Bega, Moruya, Cooma, Goulburn and surrounding rural areas, can now access care virtually or face-to-face closer to home, thanks to Southern’s new Nurse Practitioner Cancer Service. The service provides free-of-charge health assessment, diagnosis and management for cancer patients suffering pain or side effects from their treatment.

Christine Archer is a registered nurse endorsed by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency to practice as a Nurse Practitioner, completing her Masters in Nurse Practitioner in 2021, specialising in Oncology and Dermatology.

She has over 20 years’ experience in Oncology and Haematology, completing her training in apheresis and autologous stem cell transplant in 2006 and her Masters in Cancer and Haematology Nursing at the University of Sydney in 2017. Christine was the 2019 ACT Nurse of the Year.

Christine developed a keen interest in skin cancer and melanoma management, working as the Melanoma and Skin Cancer Specialist Nurse in Canberra for 8 years. She is passionate about supporting people living with a cancer diagnosis, particularly those living in rural and regional areas.

To access the service, contact your doctor or speak with your Oncology clinic.



Christine Archer

Celebrating research success

Queanbeyan Hospital's Melanie Lang is celebrating after her recent success in a research communication competition.

The annual Three Minute Thesis competition, run by the Australian College of Operating Room Nurses (ACORN) challenges researchers to explain their 80,000 word PhD thesis in a time limit of just three minutes. Melanie won the competition for her ability to explain her research in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.

Melanie's research focuses on work nurses do when setting up the operating theatre for surgery.

Melanie explains that nurses set up equipment for a wide range of surgeries and need to be prepared for the unexpected while also reducing unnecessary waste.

"The task is labour- and resource-intensive, time-sensitive and can be tedious and onerous."

By better understanding the tasks and processes involved in setting up surgical equipment, Melanie says that we can make surgery safer, and more efficient.

Follow Melanie's research updates on Twitter at @Melanie_Lang1



Scan the QR code to see Melanie's winning entry



Antenatal care research published



Research on antenatal care by Southern researchers has been published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

The research, led by Dr Pramesh Ghimire, examined the impact of the number and timing of antenatal care visits on low birth weight and preterm birth in Southern.

The researchers found that women who accessed antenatal care in the first trimester and attended the recommended number of antenatal care visits were significantly less likely to have a baby with low birth weight or born prematurely.

"Early and continuous care offers the opportunity to support mothers to prepare for birth and motherhood, to identify pre-existing health conditions, obstetric complications and

foetal anomalies early, and to offer health promotion interventions," said Dr Ghimire.

"In particular, timely antenatal care can improve outcomes for Aboriginal mothers and babies. Providing culturally appropriate care close to those who need it most in regional NSW could be an important strategy to improve birth outcomes."

The research used NSW Perinatal Data Collection (PDC), a population-based surveillance system covering all births in NSW public and private hospitals, as well as home births. The data is collected around the time of birth and includes information on mothers and their babies.

Scan the QR code to read the article





Competition winners
Lillyann, Pip and
Charlotte



Competition winner Sophie

Welcome gnome!

Crookwell Hospital recently welcomed two new members of the Emergency Department team - a pair of doctor and nurse meerkat gnomes, donated by local resident Brendon Rutter.

School students from across the Upper Lachlan Shire were invited to participate in a competition to name the new additions, along with a colouring competition.

Judging was difficult because of the high standard of the entries, but Crookwell Hospital Auxiliary president, Greg Long and Darian Cameron, chairperson of the Crookwell Hospital Community Consultation Committee did an excellent job selecting the winners from the 85 submissions, who went in the running for a book prize.

The meerkats were dubbed 'Dr Madagascar and Nurse Meek' in the winning entry by Charlotte from Taralga Public School.

The colouring in competition winners were Huxley, Grace and Joscelyn from Crookwell Public School; Sophie from St Mary's Primary School; and Pip and Lillyann from Taralga Public School.

Crookwell Hospital staff would like to thank the schools and children who participated, Brendon for his donation of the meerkat gnomes, Studio 4 Signs & Design for designing the colouring in competition and the judges.



Judges Greg Long and
Darian Cameron

Accolades for Auxiliary President



Jean Frost

Yass Hospital Auxiliary President Jean Frost has been awarded the Yass Valley Citizen of the Year.

Jean has served on Boards and Committees over many years of community service to the Yass district, including the Yass Hospital & Health Service Community Consultation Committee (CCC), as well as fundraising for the Yass Hospital Auxiliary and Yass Can Assist.

In her acceptance speech, Jean acknowledged the support from the many volunteers around her.

“Jean is always the first on the spot to lend a hand- even if not requested, she has that magic intuition to be there in support and she always operated under the radar. Jean truly is one of a kind and Yass Valley is lucky to call her one of ours,” said Leisa Doggett, Secretary of Yass Hospital Auxiliary.

In an extra accolade, Jean and team of Can Assist Yass were awarded Yass Community Group of the Year.



Lymphoedema course graduates

Lymphoedema learning

Eight more of Southern’s community nurses are now qualified lymphoedema practitioners of the lower limb.

The nurses completed an evidence-based accredited course, supported by Community Nursing Clinical Nurse Consultant, Leah Pennay.

Lymphoedema is a chronic swelling of a limb or body region. It is associated with significant morbidity, loss of function and, on rare occasions, mortality.

“A qualified lymphoedema practitioner has the skills and knowledge in order to deliver specialised lymphatic services to patients such as prescribing manual lymphatic drainage and compression therapy such as garment prescription, wraps, intermittent pneumatic compression and bandaging,” explained Leah.

“By having more accredited lymphoedema practitioners, those in the community with venous insufficiency and venous wounds, lymphoedema, lipoedema, and swelling (such as post-operative or cancer-related) will have access to sound evidence-based treatments and reduction in hospital presentations such as cellulitis.”

“Lymphoedema is a chronic swelling of a limb or body region. It is associated with significant morbidity, loss of function and, on rare occasions, mortality.”



Supporting communities in Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone

Communities in Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone have benefitted from a donation of surgical equipment from the Goulburn Base Hospital.

Goulburn Base Hospital paediatrician, Dr Nils Hanson and nurse Angela Abakah have collected the disused equipment and will send it on to hospitals and health services in the developing countries.

Dr Hanson said the items include basic metal and steel surgical items that can be easily sterilised and reused repeatedly.

“Hospitals in developing countries can’t always afford the newest equipment so donations like these really make a big difference,” Dr Hanson said.

Dr Hanson travels to Timor-Leste every few years as part of his volunteer work for charity organisation, Maluk Timor.

“Maluk Timor helps raise funds to support health services and advance health care across Timor-Leste and I volunteer a couple of weeks each year to teach doctors wanting to learn paediatrics,” Dr Hanson said.

Angela said she regularly collects disused medical equipment from hospitals to send it back to her home country, Sierra Leone.

“My husband and I came to Australia around 17 years ago and for the past 10 years have been collecting used medical equipment to send back to hospitals in Sierra Leone,” Angela said.

“Simple everyday equipment like steel forceps and scissors are really useful to hospitals who just need good quality equipment – it doesn’t matter if its old.”

“In a country like Sierra Leone, donations of used medical equipment can make the difference between life and death for many patient –it can change people’s lives.”

Angela and her husband are also working to build a 50-bed hospital in Bo, Sierra Leone’s second most populated city.

“For the past five years, we’ve been saving and using the money we earn in Australia to fund the hospital,” Angela said. “We are working to set up a charity here in Australia that people will be able to donate to.”

Angela Abakah



Administration Officer Robina Zucchetto and Dr Nils Hanson



“You’ve got to be tall for that”: Is your child’s growth on track?

When your child attends any of Southern’s clinics, they’ll have their height and weight measured as part of their health assessment. We talked to Paediatrician Dr Susie Piper about why it’s so important to monitor children’s growth over time.



Dr Susie Piper

Eight-year-old Divya is excited to be getting taller.

“I’m going to play for the Capitals when I grow up, and you’ve got to be tall for that.”

Divya wants to be as tall as her idol, Australian professional basketball player, Lauren Jackson.

“I’m up to Mum’s shoulder now, I reckon I’ve got a bit to go still.”

attend for an appointment with our services, to check that their growth is on track.

Paediatrician Dr Susie Piper is Southern’s District Medical Lead for Paediatrics.

“Around 25% of Australian children and adolescents are above the healthy weight range. Tracking children’s growth and development is part of the core business for our services,” said Dr Piper.

It’s not always easy to tell if a child is a healthy weight for their age and height. With childhood obesity becoming more common, it can be difficult to tell if your child is above a healthy weight as they may look similar to other children their age.

Dr Piper said that no two children are the same, but there are some basic guidelines for children’s weight.

“Tracking a child’s growth on percentile charts can help parents to see whether their child’s growth is following the chart, or whether their weight is increasing more quickly than their height.”

Growth charts are not a diagnostic tool on their own, but rather contribute to an overall clinical impression of the child being measured. Children and teenagers need to grow, but they are healthiest if they stay within a certain weight range as they grow.

“Tracking a child’s growth on percentile charts can help parents to see whether their child’s growth is following the chart, or whether their weight is increasing more quickly than their height.”

- Dr Susie Piper, Paediatrician

“You measure them all the time when they’re a baby,” said Divya’s mother, Lakshmi. “You lose track of it a bit as they get older. It’s really helpful to know we’re on track.”

Divya has just had her height and weight measured as part of her speech pathology appointment.

At Southern, we measure height and weight in all children as part of their health assessment. Your health professional will help you measure your child’s height and weight when you





Divya and her mum Lakshmi are embracing healthy food choices.



Altered growth can be an indicator of underlying health, development, or social issues. Southern's clinicians will use information about a child's growth over time to help form a picture of their overall health.

"We know that being above a healthy weight is associated with poorer health and wellbeing. Bullying and teasing can lead to poorer mental health and quality of life. Children who are above a healthy weight are more likely to be above a healthy weight as adults."

Obesity is driven by a complex mix of factors, including genetic, social, environmental and cultural. For individuals, healthy behaviours have significant

benefits independent of weight loss, such as improved social connection and mental health.

For children who are above a healthy weight, support is available through community-based programs such as Go4Fun, your GP and Southern's allied health and paediatric services.

Dr Piper has advice for parents who may be concerned about their child's weight.

"Parents can take practical steps by encouraging healthy eating and physical activity and limiting sedentary time," she said.

For Divya and her family, they have found that simple swaps can help to keep them on track. Choosing healthier snacks and

fewer unhealthy sometimes foods at the supermarket makes it a little easier.

"It's often easier to grab what's around, so we try to keep the cupboard stocked with healthy choices and just do the best we can," said Lakshmi.

"We also don't bother with fruit juice, cordial or soft drink. Not only is water a cheaper choice, it's also the healthiest."

Lakshmi said that if everyone in the family joins in to practice healthier habits, then everyone will be healthier.

"Your child can't do it without you. If the whole family makes healthy food choices and gets active, it's easier for your child to stay healthy over the long term."

If you have concerns about your child's eating habits or their weight, see your local child and family health nurse or your doctor.

For more healthy habit tips visit healthyliving.nsw.gov.au



30 years of the Djirruwang Program



Mental health has become an increasingly important area of intervention and community-based care, particularly for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

To support First Nations people, it is critical that our health services offer culturally appropriate care by training more Aboriginal Mental Health Workers. In NSW, the Djirruwang Program continues to serve this purpose and has increased the number of Aboriginal people trained in

mental health services across the region and beyond.

Now celebrating its 30th year, the Djirruwang Program has its early beginnings in the development of the Koori Mental Health Outreach Workers Training Program, a 1993 pilot project funded by

Rural Health Support Education and Training (RHSET) based in Queanbeyan, NSW. But it has developed significantly over the years, becoming what is now a bachelor degree program offered by Charles Sturt University (CSU) in partnership with NSW Health.

Kimberley Green, Aboriginal Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs District Coordinator (left) is a program graduate. She is pictured here with Nicole Jorgensen.





Aboriginal Mental Health Trainees from the former Greater Southern Area Health Service in 2007, including Jackie Jackson (top left)



Kimberley is keen to develop initiatives that focus on early intervention and suicide prevention.”



Jackie Jackson, Southern's Director of Aboriginal Health, is a graduate of the program.

Importantly, the program establishes Aboriginal Mental Health Workers as a specific profession in its own right. Kimberley Green worked in generalist nursing positions for fifteen years before completing the traineeship. Now the Aboriginal Mental Health District Coordinator at SNSWLHD, Kimberley said for her, and many others, the program is an important pathway to community-based care. “That is where my passion is,” she said.

“It gives people an opportunity to work in community-based positions, providing direct care to community members through mental health prevention as well,” she explained. Because the program grows a specialised workforce, it is better positioned to support access to mental health services in culturally appropriate ways. “Training Aboriginal staff in our local areas means that we have firsthand knowledge of what’s going on in the community,” said Kimberley.

“Trainees have gone on to do some really amazing things. One of our trainees is now an advisor to mining companies, another of our other trainees is a clinical leader, and one is now the director of Aboriginal Mental Health,” said Kimberley. “Without the traineeship, we wouldn’t have the amount of identified positions in mental health that we do, especially here in Southern.”

Graduates of the program include Jackie Jackson, Southern’s Director of Aboriginal Health, and Matthew Trindall, the Director of Aboriginal Mental Health at the NSW Ministry of Health.

Kimberley is keen to develop initiatives that focus on early intervention and suicide prevention. Recently, all of the trainees currently employed in her district became Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid instructors as well.

These trainees can now give specialist mental health guidance to local communities, teaching others how to identify signs of mental health distress.

At the end of the traineeship graduates are guaranteed ongoing employment. “The most exciting part is watching my trainees get to the end of their degree and seeing those wanting to stay. It means that we are expanding our workforce and our community members have better access to Aboriginal staff working in mental health,” Kimberley said.



From racing for gold to saving lives

Marnie Ponton, Goulburn Base Hospital's first Emergency Nurse Practitioner, is no stranger to high-pressure situations.



An accomplished marathon runner, Marnie won the 2022 Canberra Marathon, and has represented Australia at the World Cross Country and the Commonwealth Half Marathon Championships.

"I think the amount I run makes me more efficient, to be honest," she said. "The more you run, the better you get at time management. You just don't waste any time."

"Exercise is a great way to maintain a lower level of stress. I don't ruminate when I'm running, I'm just completely free and thinking about running. I'm getting all those good endorphins."

Marnie grew up in Yass and completed her nursing degree at the University of Canberra, before relocating to the Blue Mountains. After completing a Master of Advanced Practice in emergency nursing and Master of Nursing (Nurse Practitioner), she worked as an Emergency Nurse Practitioner at Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District. She's recently made the move to Southern with her partner and two children.

"We decided that we wanted to be closer to family, and I was keen to work in rural practice," she said.

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have authority to practice independently and collaboratively in an expanded clinical role. Nurse Practitioners can assess and treat patients, prescribe medications, order diagnostic investigations, and refer to other health professionals. Nurse Practitioners collaborate with the broader multi-disciplinary care team to support safe, appropriate, and timely care.

Marnie Ponton is an Emergency Nurse Practitioner at Goulburn Base Hospital

Nurse Practitioners are a rapidly expanding clinical speciality in Australia. Australian nurse practitioners have extensive post-graduate clinical experience and have completed mandatory prescribed education at a Masters level.

The Emergency Nurse Practitioner role at Goulburn was developed to work alongside the well-established emergency medical model, to manage patients presenting with minor injury or minor illness. Emergency Nurse Practitioners can also be found at Queanbeyan and South East Regional Hospitals.

The new role echoes Southern's vision to invest in and build a rural health workforce which is contemporary, sustainable and has the right skills and training to address the unique health care needs of our regional and rural communities.

Marnie Ponton on her morning run (Photo: Natalie Wong)

“There's huge opportunity for Nurse Practitioners in rural practice, for the simple reason that they're a mainstay of the community,” Marnie said. “They've got a commitment to the community and to giving good healthcare. They augment the medical staff, who can be transient at times in rural communities.”

About Nurse Practitioners

- Nurse Practitioners are advanced practice nurses whose registration is endorsed by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) to enable practice within their scope using the title, which is protected by Law.
- Nurse Practitioners work across a diverse range of clinical specialty areas, including chronic and complex care, mental health care and child and family health care.
- As of 30 June 2022, there were 2224 endorsed Nurse Practitioners in Australia.

“

I think the amount I run makes me more efficient, to be honest,” she said. “The more you run, the better you get at time management. You just don't waste any time.”



How a graduate nurse achieved her dreams



University of Wollongong (UOW) Bega student Loureene Kelly never imagined that she could attend, let alone graduate from, university.

During one of the worst experiences of her life, Loureene Kelly had something akin to an epiphany.

Her father had been diagnosed with cancer and was in palliative care at Pambula Hospital on the Far South Coast.

Loureene had moved home, from Sydney to Eden, a coastal town on the Sapphire Coast, to look after her father. Day after day, Loureene and her sister kept vigil by his bedside, and it was there that she realised the path that she wanted the rest of her life to take.

"I've wanted to work in healthcare since I was four years old," Loureene says. "I used to be obsessed with this medical journal that we had on the bookshelf at home. But my life took me in a different direction.

"When my father got cancer and was given a short amount of time to live, I came home to help care for him. When he was in the hospital, at the end-of-life stage, my sister and I stayed with him round the clock.

"What really stood out to me during this time was watching the nurses work."

"It's not just the way they treated my Dad, although that was exceptional, but the way they made one of the worst experiences of my life so much better.

"My Dad didn't want to die in hospital; he wanted to die at home. The doctors didn't want that, but the nurses advocated so strongly for my Dad. He was not able to go home, but the fact that he felt heard, and his wishes respected, meant the world to him, and to us."

It was the first step for Loureene on the path to achieving her dream of becoming a nurse. The experience crystallised her future and made her realise that life is too short to not chase your dreams.

"What the nurses gave my Dad and my family, I'll never forget it. I want to be able to give that to other people and be there for them in those moments. Losing my Dad, I really reflected on what I wanted to do with my life."

Loureene had never felt that university was an option, but in the months following her father's death, she began to take the tentative steps towards studying nursing.

*Loureene Kelly with her mother and two boys, on her graduation day from UOW Bega in February 2022.
Photo: Paul Jones*

Registered Nurse Loureene Kelly



Those steps led to the UOW Bega Campus, where Loureene celebrated her graduation with a Bachelor of Nursing. She was one of the recipients of the Robert Hope Memorial Prize, UOW's most prestigious honour for students and celebrates the life and contribution of the University's founding Chancellor, Robert Hope.

Loureene also delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the student body. During her speech, she mentioned the immense role the regional campus had played in helping her to achieve her dreams.

"University was never something I had imagined," Loureene reflects. "I'm the first in my family to attend university. I am a young woman of colour. I was very much the minority in the community when I was growing up. University wasn't something I saw, it wasn't normalised for me."

Loureene went along to an information night at UOW Bega, which she describes as "very exciting, but still scary".

With the help of the team at UOW Bega, led by Campus Manager Sam Avitaia, Loureene began a nursing pathways course at South

Coast Colleges, before transferring directly into the Bachelor of Nursing. It had been many years since Loureene had studied, but the support and help that she found at the Bega Campus was invaluable and made all the difference.

At the same time, Loureene landed a job working in an aged care home. She wanted to make sure that nursing was what she really wanted to do.

"The staff at Bega welcomed us with open arms, no matter who we were or our background. I spent my whole degree with imposter syndrome," Loureene says. "But at some point, I decided to stop being Miss Independent and to ask for help when I needed it."

"I used every support service that was available. I saw the Bega Campus counsellor when I was having a hard time during my first clinical placement, and COVID-19 had first begun. I saw Deborah Gough from Bega's Learning Support team. I did pretty badly in my first assessment and I didn't think I had what it took to be there. But when I went to Deb, she helped me to understand academic writing and the marking rubric. My marks improved dramatically from then, but I still liked to talk to Deb when needed."

"The team at Bega: Sam, Amelia [Love] and Britt [Brown] were so supportive, and I always knew they had my back."

Throughout her studies, Loureene was juggling her degree and her job with the challenges of solo parenting two young boys.

It was, she says, incredibly hard at times.

But having many balls in the air did not stop Loureene from seizing every opportunity her degree offered, including a clinical placement in Cambodia. It was an experience she describes as "life-changing".

"In 2019, I was selected as a UOW representative to go to Cambodia. It was the highlight of my life. I was based in rural clinics just outside of Siem Reap [in north-west Cambodia], and we spent our time delivering primary health care promotions to the Khmer community," Loureene says.

"It really opened my eyes to how creative and amazing nurses can be, even when they are working with very few resources."

"It really opened my mind to what's possible. The whole experience has inspired me."

Loureene Kelly delivers the vote of thanks on behalf of the student body on her graduation day from UOW Bega in February 2022. Photo: Paul Jones





Loureene Kelly with UOW Vice-Chancellor Patricia M Davidson during the graduation at UOW Bega in February, 2022.

work in remote and Indigenous communities.”

The idea of giving back and making a difference in other people’s lives, is a major thread in Loureene’s life. However, she’s never ostentatious about it, but it is clear she is a naturally born leader who demonstrates authenticity and empathy.

Loureene volunteers with the Rural Fire Service, and in the summer of 2019-2020, as bushfires constantly threatened the town of Eden and the Far South Coast, she set up a community Facebook page with the aim of facilitating emergency information to those who needed shelter, food and supplies.

In addition, she has held leadership positions with Student Nurses as Professionals (SNAP) and seeks out any opportunity to mentor other student nurses.

“I love empowering people,” Loureene says. “It’s incredibly empowering to use my experience to teach others, encourage them, and to help other students feel more confident and capable. I want to be a positive influence on their journey, so they don’t feel they should know everything when they start nursing, so they understand that’s it okay to ask questions.”

Throughout Loureene’s time at UOW Bega, and as she enters the workforce as a graduate nurse at Bega Hospital, she is most proud of is how she has, single-handedly, changed the narrative of what university means to her family.

“I feel strongly that everyone deserves to have options and that regional campuses, in particular, are vital for small communities,” Loureene says. “Where isolation and lower socio-economic demographics provide barriers to education, UOW regional campuses

remove these barriers and give people like me a chance.

“When I started studying, I began to prepare my boys, telling them why I was doing this degree for me, but also for all of us. We have struggled in the past, and as much as I’ve tried to hide that struggle, they knew what was happening.

“Studying the Bachelor of Nursing has given me financial freedom, and I don’t take that for granted. But my boys have also seen me celebrating the wins and experiencing the lows, and they were there cheering me on when I needed the motivation to push through and get things done.

“University is normalised for them now. It was never normalised for me. My boys don’t question that one day they will go to university and achieve their dreams.”

This article first appeared in the University of Wollongong’s ‘The Stand’

Partnership helps Ngunnawal youth kick goals



Three teams represented the Ngunnawal nation at the PCYC's 2022 Nations of Origin, participating in the Rugby League Under 16 Male and Female Competitions, and the Netball Under 14 Female Competition at Raymond Terrace.

Southern's Skyan Fernando, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, and Deanne Pikula, Aboriginal Health Worker, worked in partnership with the Queanbeyan PCYC to enter the area's first teams since 2017 in the annual sporting festival, representing the Ngunnawal nation.

The multi-faceted sport, cultural, education and leadership program, which runs over four days, brings together nearly 1500 young Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from around NSW for tournaments in Rugby League, Football 5s, Netball, Basketball and Gymnastics.

The Ngunnawal Rugby League Under 16 Female team placed eleventh out of 18 different Aboriginal nations from around NSW, while the Rugby League Under 16 Male team placed thirteenth out of 21 Aboriginal nations.

"The youth demonstrated exceptional sportsmanship towards each other and the opposition teams," said Skyan.

"The camaraderie was especially reflected in their support toward each other when the other team played, gestures of offering water and encouragement were sublime.

"One of the highlights of the trip was our kit presentation after dinner on our first night. The anticipation of what number and position they would be playing in was very humbling and exciting for all."

The PCYC Nations of Origin program requires behavioural school and attendance standards with the concept designed to encourage youth to celebrate Australia's diverse Indigenous culture.

"Each year I am impressed by this amazing celebration of Australia's indigenous culture

and its deep impact on our nation," PCYC NSW CEO Dominic Teakle said.

"In participating and representing their country, each team epitomises the themes of Reconciliation Australia to Be Brave and Make Change.

"This event is life-changing, as it reinforces the objectives of our strategy by bringing together PCYC, Police and the community to play hard and fair, and to pay our respect to the elders whose custodianship of the land and culture gave us the legacy we enjoy today."

Skyan echoed the importance of working in partnership.

"Taking a collaborative approach ensures that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and community have access to services available to them," she added.

The 2023 Nations of Origin is due to be held from 11 to 14 July.



PCYC NSW, a registered charity in its 85th year, operates 66 clubs across the state, with more than 95,000 members and 63,000 youth members, allowing police to empower disengaged and disadvantaged young people through sporting, recreational, cultural and educational activities.

PCYC fund nearly most of its operations through club activities, contestable grants, and donations from generous people who care about our youth. Help raise vital funds for PCYC's life-changing youth programs, and support vulnerable, at-risk and disadvantaged young people across NSW by visiting www.pcycons.org.au

Palliative care volunteers find meaningful connections



The volunteers in Southern's Palliative Care Volunteer Service provide essential companionship to patients in the final stages of life. Volunteer Coordinator Fiona Sivyer explains how they make a difference.



Palliative care volunteers at a recent training session in Queanbeyan

Palliative care is a specialised type of care that focuses on providing comfort, support, and relief from symptoms and stress for people who are facing life-limiting illnesses. This care is provided by a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals, but it's the volunteers who complement this care that can make all the difference.

"Our trained volunteers offer free, patient-centred, non-judgemental support to help address social, emotional, practical and respite challenges where it is required, most commonly in the home or in aged care," said Fiona.

The volunteer program is an integral part of the palliative care services provided by Southern.

Volunteers play a vital role in providing emotional support and companionship to patients who are dying. They offer a listening ear, a comforting hand, and a warm smile that can make all the difference in the world. They bring comfort to patients and their families during an incredibly difficult time.

"One of the main goals of the palliative care volunteer program is to provide a supportive and compassionate presence for patients who are facing the end of their lives. The volunteers provide a listening ear, offer words of encouragement, and provide comfort and reassurance. They are an important source of support for patients who may feel isolated and alone during their final days," Fiona explained.



I've seen how volunteers can benefit people and their families enormously, and I'm excited to offer this service to the community. It is an honour and a privilege to be part of what are precious months for our clients, and we hope to find more people willing to be part of that privilege."



Volunteer Coordinators Michelle Gardiner and Lauren Hare

In addition to providing emotional support, volunteers also offer practical assistance, such as reading to patients, playing music, or providing light refreshments. These small acts of kindness can make a big difference in the lives of patients and their families.

Fiona is enthusiastic about encouraging community members from across the district to apply to become volunteers for their local community.

"I've seen how volunteers can benefit people and their families enormously, and I'm excited to offer this service to the community. It is an honour and a privilege to be part of what are precious months for our clients, and we hope to find more people willing to be part of that privilege."

The program is a shining example of how volunteerism can make a real difference in people's lives. The volunteers are a true testament to the power of compassion and kindness, and they demonstrate the importance of providing a human touch in healthcare.



If you're interested in volunteering or learning more about the program, contact Fiona Sivyer at SNSWLHD-MonaroPCVS@health.nsw.gov.au or call 0448 073 542



Breastfeeding and work: making it work



Planning on breastfeeding when you return to work? We caught up with Child & Family Health Nurse Mary Hourigan to give you the low-down on practical things to consider when returning to the workplace after having a baby.



Try to confirm your breastfeeding or expressing needs with your employer before returning to work.”

Returning to work: breastfeeding options

There are many ways to keep breastfeeding when returning to work, explained Mary. What works for you will depend on your workplace, working arrangements, childcare arrangements and baby’s age.

“For example, you might be able to keep breastfeeding without changing your feeding routine by having your baby brought to you; visiting your baby to breastfeed when you need to; or working from home,” said Mary.

“You might be able to adjust your routine and do a mix of breastfeeding before and after starting work and at night; or giving your baby expressed breastmilk or infant formula during the day when you’re at work.”

Mary explains that it’s good to be flexible and consider all your breastfeeding options when

you return to work. Continuing to breastfeed means your baby keeps getting the benefits of breastmilk.

“It can also help to maintain the bond between you and your baby, and it can be very rewarding for both of you when you’re together.”

Start talking with your employer early

If you want to keep breastfeeding when you return to work, discuss your breastfeeding needs with your employer well before you go back to work.

“You might talk with your employer about breastfeeding before you go on parental leave,” said Mary. “If you visit your workplace to introduce your baby to your workmates, this could be a good chance to make time to chat to your manager.”

“You can discuss whether your workplace provides lactation breaks. Try to confirm your breastfeeding or expressing needs with your employer before returning to work.”

Mary suggests it's a good idea to check your employer's attitudes to and knowledge of breastfeeding policies. If you need to, you can discuss it with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer or Human Resources Department at your workplace.

Expressing breastmilk at work: practical things to consider

If your baby will drink expressed breastmilk, you may be able to express at work and safely store the milk for your baby to have another time. Expressing at work can also help you maintain your milk supply.

You can express breastmilk by hand, but a manual or electric pump can make expressing easier. A double pump can make it quicker.

“When you're getting started, it can help to have flexible work hours and breaks if you can. Once you're used to expressing at work during breaks and lunch time, things should get easier to manage,” said Mary.

Carers and breastfeeding

Breastfed babies usually don't mind having expressed milk from someone other than their mother.

“But if a carer will be looking after your baby when you return to work, you can help your baby get familiar with the carer and the change in feeding routine,” said Mary.

“One way to do this is by organising for the carer to give your baby some expressed milk via a feeding cup or bottle before you go back to work.”

When your baby is with the carer, it might also help to leave a piece of clothing that you've worn. This can help to settle your baby if they get upset because you aren't there.

It's a good idea to start expressing a few weeks before returning to work so you can have some expressed milk in reserve.

Getting help

If you're having breastfeeding difficulties, talk with your midwife, child and family health nurse, GP or lactation consultant, or an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor via the National Breastfeeding Helpline (1800 686 268).



Southern supports breastfeeding staff

In late 2022, South East Regional Hospital became accredited by the Australian Breastfeeding Association as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace.

The accreditation provides external validation that mothers returning to work have improved access to lactation breaks, flexible work options, private facilities to express breastmilk, and more.

Southern is committed to supporting breastfeeding for both mothers and babies and will support employees that wish to balance breastfeeding and work responsibilities.

Never too late to start moving

A famous comedian once said, “you can’t help getting older, but you don’t have to get older”. Ageing is an inevitable but integral and natural part of life. Whilst getting old does come with a higher risk of falls and fragility it doesn’t have to all be doom and gloom.

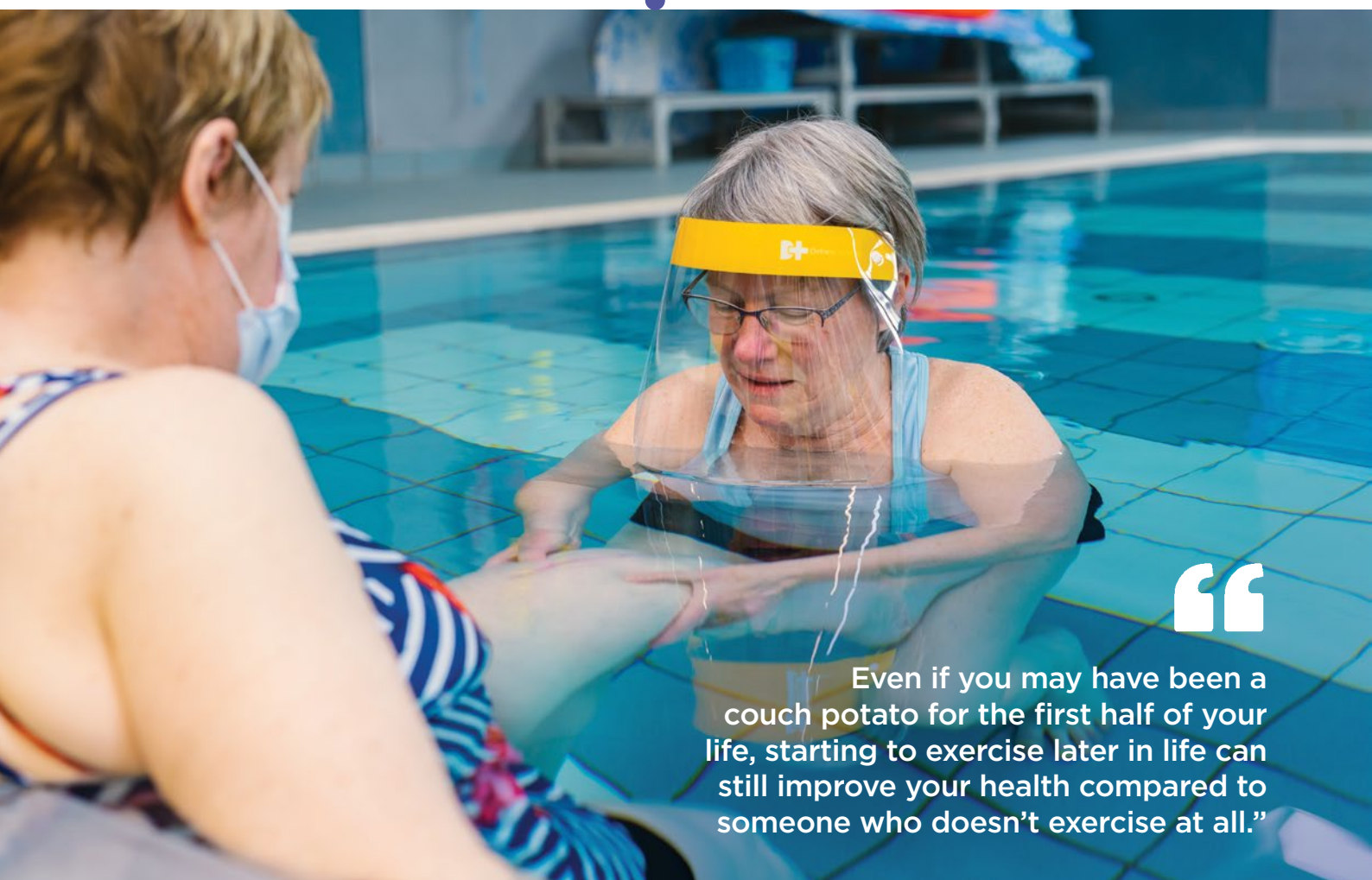
You might have heard the saying healthy ageing but what does that mean? The World Health Organization defines healthy ageing as “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age.” There are four key aspects of healthy ageing and following them can help you live a happier, healthier, longer life.

Physical activity

Studies have shown that regular physical activity can help slow the process of ageing, reverse some symptoms that come with chronic disease such as a pain and give you the ability to be mobile and independent for longer. Even if you may have been a couch potato for the first half of your life starting to exercise later in life can still improve your health compared to someone who doesn’t exercise at all. The current recommendations for older adults 65 years and over, is at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.



Physiotherapist Dale Whitfield helps patients get active during hydrotherapy sessions at Cooma Hospital.



“

Even if you may have been a couch potato for the first half of your life, starting to exercise later in life can still improve your health compared to someone who doesn’t exercise at all.”



Cognitive activity

Keeping your mind active and healthy is just as important as keeping your body active and healthy. Cognitive activities such as completing puzzles, sudoku, crossword puzzles, word search puzzles, or memory games have been shown to offer beneficial effects on cognitive reserve and dementia risk.



Good nutrition

As you age, your body and life change, and so does what you need to stay healthy. We tend to need fewer calories, but we still need to get enough nutrients. When deciding what to eat it is important, we focus on nutrient-rich foods that will help you get the vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, and fats you need. These foods include: vegetables and fruits, beans and lentils, nuts and seeds, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein.



Social engagement

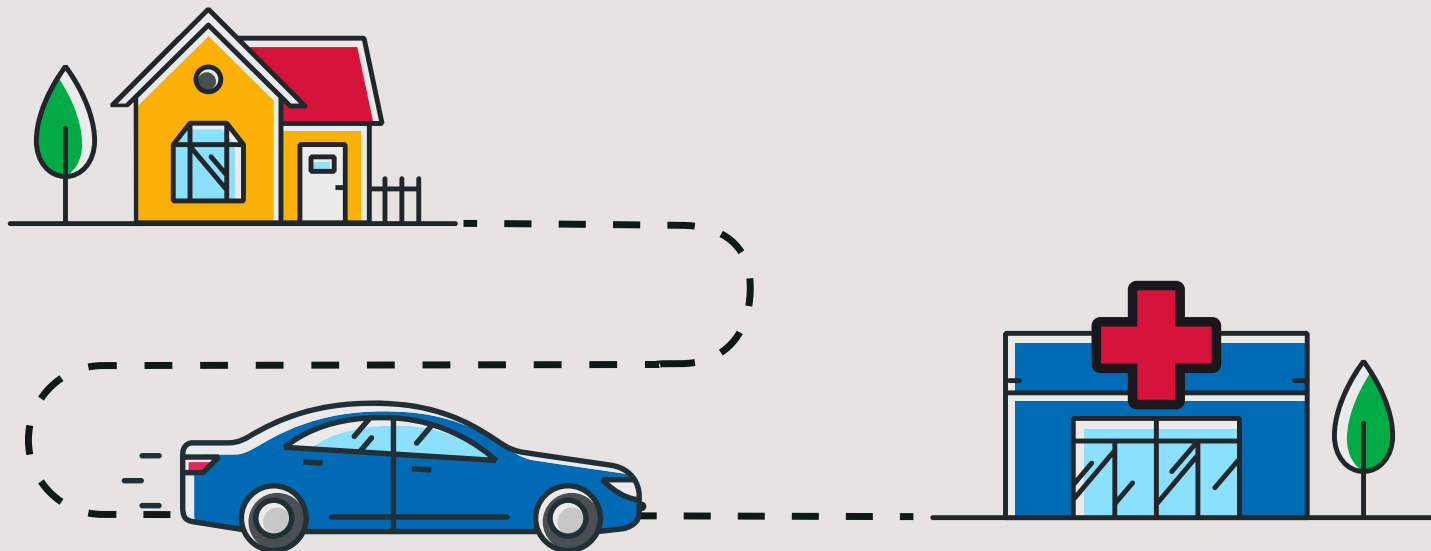
Being socially active builds a greater sense of belonging and higher self-worth levels. Studies have also shown older adults are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety when they regularly socialise. Social activities that can help with keeping older adults engaged include: joining a club, Volunteer or find a part-time job, joining a church group and visiting friends and family often.

Southern celebrates April Falls Month®. The annual campaign aims to raise awareness about the impact of falls and promote best practice fall prevention strategies. The 2023 theme is Better Balance for Fall Prevention. The campaign supports healthcare professionals and the broader community to continue promoting balance in all areas of life for fall prevention and healthy ageing, which includes nutrition, physical activity (strength and balance), resilience and social engagement. It's never too late to get active!

Do you travel long distances for specialised healthcare?



If you travel more than 100km one way or 200km within a week you may be able to claim financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs.



To find out if you are eligible



Ask

your social worker
or healthcare team



Call

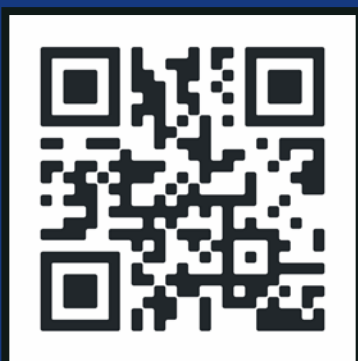
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