

WE ARE

Issue 5 | SPRING 2022 | FREE

Southern

Excellence in Care

**Cultural
birth story**

In this issue:
Checking in on mental health
Helping Ukrainian refugees



Southern NSW
Local Health District

Taking care of your teeth and mouth



The Oral Health Service at Southern NSW Local Health District offers free dental care for NSW residents aged under 18, as well as NSW residents aged over 18 who are eligible for Medicare and have one of the following Australian Government concession cards:

- Health care card
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

Online registration now available

It's easy to get in touch with the service and make an appointment. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/SNSW-OralHealth and enter your details in the Request a Call Back form. Once submitted, our operators will aim to contact you within 30 minutes if within business hours (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.15pm) or by 9am the next day.



You can also contact the Oral Health Contact Centre to request an appointment. Call 1800 450 046

Oral Health Services in SNSWLHD

Bega – South East Regional Hospital, Cooma Hospital and Health Service, Goulburn Community Health, Moruya – Eurobodalla Health Service, Pambula Health Service, Queanbeyan Hospital and Health Service, Yass District Hospital.

*For all contact with our service, you will require a current Medicare card, and for adults a valid Centrelink concession card.



Marina Kinred, Kim Pietrini (Manager), Lara Van Der Weiden and Theresa Fife are part of the Oral Health Contact Centre team assisting clients with registrations and bookings.

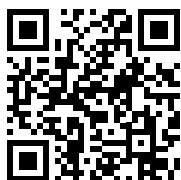
Working in the hospital

Queanbeyan District Hospital's Maternity Unit Manager Jenny Flaherty is a finalist in the 2022 NSW Midwife of the Year award, which is part of the annual NSW Health Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards.

Jenny has worked as a midwife with Southern for 33 years, and her commitment to improving practice in Queanbeyan and other maternity services across the Local Health District has earned her the respect of both colleagues and the women and families in her care.

Midwife of the Year is one of eight categories that recognise nurses and midwives who have made a difference in clinical practice, management and leadership.

Finalists and winners will be celebrated at the Awards ceremony, which will be livestreamed on 24 November 2022 from 2pm. More information on the 2022 Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards is available at <https://bit.ly/NSWMidwife2022>



Jenny Flaherty from Queanbeyan Hospital is a finalist in the NSW Midwife of the Year awards.





Message from our Chief Executive

Spring is always a beautiful time across South East NSW but we are especially grateful this year for the easing of respiratory illness that has hit our communities and health services hard this winter.

Southern staff have continued to provide the best care for patients in hospital, community health and home settings while managing ongoing staff shortages and the predicted surge in COVID-19 and flu cases.

Recent years have brought many unexpected and prolonged challenges. They have added to the everyday pressures we face working in healthcare.

We recently launched a District-wide Wellbeing and Engagement program to ensure our people feel valued, safe, respected, and cared for at work.

The program was designed in response to more than 1,300 staff submissions to the 2021 Workplace Wellbeing Survey. It focuses on growing positive leadership, feeling heard and supported and staying safe and healthy. A range of resources, activities, equipment and care packages are already being rolled out across our sites thanks to wellbeing funding from NSW Health.

Southern's vision is to *improve the wellbeing of the community we serve*. The wellbeing of our staff and volunteers is central to this mission.

I hope the warmer weather and longer days provide restoration and renewal to all our wonderful Southern staff, volunteers and community members.

Margaret Bennett

MARGARET BENNETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Southern NSW
Local Health District



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On the cover

Arcadia Fernando was photographed during her pregnancy journey at the Queanbeyan Hospital grounds. Arcadia is connected with the Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service at Queanbeyan Hospital.

Monkeypox transmission in NSW



Southern is urging the community, particularly gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to continue to be vigilant for the symptoms of monkeypox following local transmission of the virus in NSW.

Monkeypox can cause pimple-like lesions or sores on the body.



As of 21 August, 42 cases of monkeypox had been identified in NSW residents. One case is confirmed to have acquired the infection in NSW, while two other cases acquired their infection within Australia.

NSW Health Executive Director of Health Protection Dr Richard Broome said the recently diagnosed case highlights the importance of people remaining vigilant for symptoms regardless of whether they have visited high-risk environments overseas.

'Men who have sex with men who are returning from overseas should contact their GP or local sexual health clinic for a check-up when they return as symptoms of monkeypox can be mild,' Dr Broome said.

'Symptoms usually begin seven to 14 days after exposure through skin-to-skin contact and can include fever, headache, body aches and a rash or lesions on the genital area.'

NSW Health has worked with doctors and community partners on the initial rollout of the JYNNEOS smallpox vaccination program focusing on the most high-risk groups in our communities.

If you have questions about monkeypox, contact the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624. Further information on monkeypox is available at <https://bit.ly/NSWmonkeypox>



Monkeypox symptoms

Symptoms usually begin 7-14 days after exposure. This can be as short as a few days or as long as 21 days.

Monkeypox symptoms may include:

- rashes, pimple-like lesions or sores, particularly in areas that are hard to see such as the genitals, anus or buttocks, and on the face, arms and legs.
- ulcers, lesions or sores in the mouth.

People can experience fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills and/or exhaustion prior to the rash or lesions developing. The lesions start as a flat red rash that develops into pustules, which then form crusts or scabs and fall off.



high fever



headache



muscle aches



rash on body



lymph nodes



chills



fatigue



rash on hands & legs

Cooma unveils new Emergency Department



The Snowy Monaro region is set to benefit from the new and improved Emergency Department (ED) at Cooma Hospital that officially opened on 29 July.

Minister for Regional Health, Mental Health and Women, Bronnie Taylor said the ED represents a key milestone in the delivery of the NSW Government's \$24 million Cooma Hospital redevelopment.

'The expansion of the Cooma ED provides the hospital with additional capacity to meet the current and future health needs of the community,' Mrs Taylor said.

'The new department is much larger than the original, and includes improved treatment spaces, as well as upgraded equipment, and will help the emergency team to continue to deliver outstanding healthcare with even greater efficiency.'

In addition to the expanded ED, the Cooma Hospital's \$24 million redevelopment includes a new maternity department, a new ambulatory care centre and an expansion of the medical imaging department.

Member for Monaro, Nichole Overall said work is progressing well on the other elements of the Cooma Hospital redevelopment with the refurbished maternity ward expected to be completed in late-2022.

'The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that everyone in our state has access to high-quality health care close to home,' Mrs Overall said.

Other major projects being delivered across South-eastern NSW include:

- **\$260 million project to develop the new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital**
- **\$20 million for a new community health centre in Batemans Bay**
- **\$165 million redevelopment of Goulburn Base Hospital - final works are expected to be completed mid-2023**

Southern executive and staff members with the Member for Monaro, Nichole Overall MP (centre) and Minister for Regional Health Bronnie Taylor (third from right) at the Cooma Emergency Department opening.



Above: Southern's Executive Director Operations Fiona Renshaw pictured with community members Kay Anderson and Chris Reeks.





Sharing the journey of motherhood

Mother of four Tenica Ryan mentoring and supporting first-time mother Arcadia Fernando at Queanbeyan Hospital.

In honour of Aboriginal women who give birth at the Queanbeyan Hospital Maternity Unit, Southern commissioned photographer Alex Orme to create images that capture the journey of pregnancy and birth.

A selection of the stunning photographs will be presented to the Queanbeyan Hospital Maternity Service to hang on the walls, showcasing shared cultural practices, knowledge and wisdom.

The vision was to capture an Aboriginal mother of four mentoring and supporting a sister experiencing pregnancy for the first time and her journey of becoming a new mother.

Queanbeyan’s Aboriginal Health Team Leader Skyan Fernando says it is important for Aboriginal women to feel empowered and connected to each other.

‘Baby Gifford was born just a few days after these photos were taken. Arcadia is due to have her baby in October 2022 – we’ll be gathering again once both babies are born to reconnect and share birth stories so that our Booris and women feel connected to culture and each other,’ she said.

Both women pictured are engaged with the Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service (AMIHS) at Queanbeyan Hospital, which provides pre and post pregnancy care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families.

For more information about AMIHS visit:
<https://bit.ly/AMIHS-SNSW>



Cooma's new generation CT scanner

Cooma District Hospital has upgraded its CT scanner, providing significantly improved imaging services to the community.

Cooma Medical Radiation Practitioners Gavin Fuller, Pat Redmond and Ceara Collins

The new generation CT scanner uses much less radiation, can scan faster than the previous generation and will allow for improved imaging quality, more efficient scanning of stroke patients and improved patient comfort.

Inpatients and outpatients can access Southern's medical imaging services.

For more information about Southern's medical imaging services visit: [https://www.snswhd.health.nsw.gov.au/our-services/radiology-\(medical-imaging\)](https://www.snswhd.health.nsw.gov.au/our-services/radiology-(medical-imaging))



Don't miss Southern's Annual Public Meeting

Southern's Annual Public Meeting will be held on Thursday 3 November at Queanbeyan's Royal Hotel.



Community members are encouraged to attend the meeting to learn more about Southern's achievements and future plans.

It's also an opportunity for community members to ask questions and provide feedback.

The event will start at 2pm and will be livestreamed.

To attend in person please book a free ticket via Eventbrite: <https://annualpublicmeeting2022.eventbrite.com.au>



Helping Ukrainian refugees

South East Regional Hospital Pastoral Care volunteer Therese Griffiths is the kind of person who often slips under the radar; she's empathetic and humble and avoids being the centre of attention if she can. Her ambition in life is to help others, which recently led her to help Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

'I follow my heart. I do what I see as important. If something pulls at my heart and I feel I can make a difference, then I get involved,' Therese said.

When she found a way to help Ukrainian refugees displaced by the war, Therese felt the familiar pull and knew she had to go. She got on a plane to Poland and volunteered at a Ukrainian refugee camp close to the border.

Each day, busloads of people arrived and, along with the other volunteers, Therese met them with blankets and food. She offered whatever help she could, some days cleaning stretchers and performing basic nursing duties. Every day, she listened to their heartbreaking stories.

'Sometimes I just sat with people, listened to their stories, crying or laughing, and helping in whatever way I could,' she said.

'It was mainly women and children, and their stories were just atrocious, families being split, leaving behind older sons or leaving their husbands.'

She remembers one woman fondly. 'She told me, "I don't need a psychologist. I just appreciate a friendly ear".'

Therese previously worked in aged care as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Moruya. More recently, she started supporting those with dementia at Pambula Community Health. In her free time, she also volunteers at Southern, offering pastoral care to those who just need someone to listen.

'I've done pastoral care pretty much all my life. It's who I am as a person. It really is about allowing people the time to be heard. Listening is important. It's not so much me doing the talking. When you do pastoral care, it's all about meeting that person where they're at.'

“

Sometimes I just sat with people, listened to their stories, crying or laughing, and helping in whatever way I could.”

Southern volunteer Therese Griffiths (centre) helping Ukrainian refugees in Poland.





Southern's Chief Executive Margaret Bennett, Queanbeyan Hospital Nursing Unit Manager James Heslop, Global Response nurse Thuan Vo, and Queanbeyan Hospital Site Manager Cassandra Packwood.

Supporting Australia's oldest man

Australia's oldest man, Frank Mawer, a former participant in Southern's Transitional Aged Care Program (TACP), celebrated his 110th birthday on 15 August.

Frank suffered a small stroke and spent six weeks in South East Regional Hospital at Bega earlier this year. Thankfully, he made a strong recovery and was discharged to the TACP.

TACP provides short term care to older people after a hospital stay. It supports their independence as they transition from a hospital stay to home.

To read about Frank's tips for a long-life visit Riotact's story at: <https://the-riotact.com/australias-oldest-man-frank-mawers-simple-tips-for-living-to-110/583859>



Flying squad of nurses

Eight nurses recently arrived in Southern NSW for deployment to hospitals experiencing critical staff shortages.

Southern has partnered with renowned healthcare crisis response agency Respond Global to deploy eight nurses to health facilities that are under staffing pressure.

All hospitals in the District have been impacted by furloughing caused by a surge in winter respiratory illnesses.

The 'Flying Squad' was set up to enable continuity of care in the places that need it most.

Southern NSW Local Health District Chief Executive Margaret Bennett says that the Flying Squad has been a great support to service delivery in Southern.

'The Respond Global nurses have been enthusiastically welcomed by the care teams they have supported across Southern. I am very grateful for the fabulous support of Respond Global who have partnered with Southern NSW Health in the provision of highly skilled nurses to assist us during a period of critical staff shortage,' she said.



Frank Mawer from Central Tilba is Australia's oldest man at 110 years old. Picture supplied by Philip Mawer.

Checking in on mental health



R U OK? Day was held on 8 September. But it's never too late to ask someone if they are OK.

This year's RU OK? Day theme was 'no qualifications needed', which highlighted research findings that four in 10 Australians believe asking someone 'are you okay?' is a conversation better had with an expert.

However, R U OK?, the organisation behind the day, say that you don't need qualifications to have a mental health conversation. They believe that expert help from a professional can be vital but listening and giving someone your time might be just what your friend, colleague, or family member needs to help them through.

Who is R U OK??

R U OK? is a harm prevention charity that encourages people to stay connected and have conversations that can help others through difficult times in their lives.

Their work focuses on building the motivation, confidence and skills of the help-giver – the person who can have a meaningful conversation with someone who is struggling with life.

R U OK? contributes to suicide prevention efforts by encouraging people to invest more time in their personal relationships and building the capacity of informal support networks – friends, family and colleagues – to be alert to those around them, have a conversation if they identify signs of distress or difficulty, and connect someone to appropriate support long before they're in crisis.

Their vision is for people to be more connected and have a stronger sense of belonging so that they are more likely to reach out for help when they're struggling. They want to ensure people are protected from suicide by support from people around them.

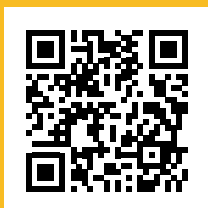


Mental health support is more important than ever.

Eight people take their lives every day in Australia. For every death by suicide, it's estimated that 30 people will attempt to take their life.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics have summarised the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing. The study results speak to increasing mental health challenges across all demographics, particularly in young people.

Take time to check in with your friends, family and colleagues to ask how they are feeling and if they are ok.



It's important to know where you or someone you care about can go for help in a crisis:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800



Your experience matters to us



Southern's Patient Experience Manager Terence Joe shares some of the findings from the *Your Experience Matters* survey, which asks patients to share feedback about their healthcare experience.

“Before I retired I stayed in many hotels. The staff during my surgery experience at Southern NSW LHD - including the nurse in prepping, the nurse in recovery, the nurse covering Ward Room 1, the surgeon, the tea lady and the bed maker - were better than any staff in any posh hotels I've stayed at. Congrats and sincere thanks to these wonderful people.”

- *Your Experience Matters* respondent

The comment above is one of many received as part of Southern's recent *Your Experience Matters* patient survey. Feedback provided in the survey gives us a chance to respond and make changes, in real time where necessary.

Patient experience is about so much more than good quality clinical care. Southern's promise is to provide Excellence in care. We are committed to the delivery of appropriate, effective, personalised and safe care from the moment your care journey begins.

Patient experience includes every aspect of an individual's interaction with our people and facilities. Every patient feel heard, respected, informed, safe and supported.

Early findings from the *Your Experience Matters* survey show that:

84% of respondents always felt cared for (mostly 11%)

Very good overall care 86% (good 9%)

Survey responses have included many insightful and constructive suggestions and observations especially about food, transport, décor and furniture.

“It would be an improvement if more comfortable chairs were provided. This would make the wait time less noticeable.”

Pressured resources and staffing challenges were recurrent themes, with a high level of appreciation and empathy for health workers’ efforts throughout COVID-19.

“I was confident that I was receiving quality care and all the staff were very caring, approachable and professional. However, they were very busy and I feel they were frustrated and concerned that they were struggling to spend quality time with patients. I can easily see why so many of our health care professionals suffer burnout.”

Southern’s Patient Experience Team manage consumer feedback all year round to continually improve service design and delivery.

Between April and June this year 120 formal compliments and 90 formal complaints were received. This does not include the many informal compliments and hand-written thank you cards our staff gratefully receive from patients every day. Complaints are thoroughly investigated to ensure that issues are dealt with quickly.

When patients feel listened to as part of the complaints process, they often express their satisfaction:

“I met the delightful Director of Nursing and Midwifery yesterday and she was just terrific. I felt very heard and respected. She explained as a nurse with many years’ experience in Emergency Departments that the dressing done that night was inadequate. She agreed I should have been seen by a senior nurse to make sure the nurse on duty was clear with what she needed to do and perhaps the doctor needed to be also clearer in his instructions. She felt that with her experience I was doing quite well but to expect at least another few months for it to be completely healed and to be very careful regarding knocking it etc. Thank you very sincerely for keeping on this for me and understanding my situation.”



There are several ways you can provide feedback to Southern NSW Local Health District:

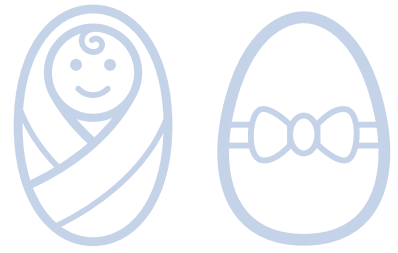


Your Experience Matters survey

<https://qars.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/Survey?p=1E011791>
 Call our feedback line on 1800 662 167
 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or email
SNSWLHD-Consumerfeedback@health.nsw.gov.au.
 Write to the Chief Executive,
 PO Box 1845, Queanbeyan, NSW 2620.



Crookwell's Easter surprise



On a night when they should have been preparing for the Easter Bunny, Ben and Felicity were instead preparing for the emergency arrival of their first child, Charlie.

At just 32 weeks pregnant, Felicity thought she still had eight weeks before her little boy entered the world, but Charlie had other plans.

'As it was so far before his due date, we thought Felicity was just experiencing Braxton Hicks but thought it was best to go to the local hospital just to make sure everything was ok,' Charlie's dad, Ben said.

This decision quite possibly saved Charlie's life. On arrival at Crookwell Hospital, it was clear Charlie was in distress and would need a lot of extra support when he was born.

In a matter of hours, Crookwell Hospital, which doesn't have a maternity unit, had called in all forces to help with Charlie's delivery. This included their

Clinical Nurse Educator, Donna Skelly, who came in while on annual leave, obstetrician, Dr Ramaswamy Thangavelu, who came out of retirement after 45 years of service, and the Newborn and paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS), which activated NETS teams from both Sydney and Canberra.



Ben, Felicity and baby Charlie at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney.

NETS also coordinated paramedics, a paediatrician and midwife travelling from Goulburn with a 'Good Egg Pack' infant resuscitation pack. These Good Egg Packs are situated in similar hospitals across the state to help in situations exactly like Charlie's.

'The emergency response from the Crookwell team to go over and beyond the call of duty was absolutely critical and meant the Sydney NETS team arrived in time to set up the equipment Charlie needed when he was born,' Ben said.

Charlie was born needing immediate intubation to support his breathing, and needed surfactant, a surface active agent, applied to his lungs so they functioned properly.

The NETS team then spent several hours stabilising Charlie before he was able to be transferred via helicopter to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney, for further specialist care.

'I doubt Charlie would have lived if he hadn't had the specialist expertise and equipment of the NETS team,' Ben said.

Ben also pays tribute to the team on the ground, particularly Dr Thangavelu, who, as fate would have it, also delivered Charlie's mum, Felicity, and his aunts, 40 years ago.

'We will be eternally grateful for the dedication and immediate response of the team at the Crookwell Hospital and the NETS crew. They made a very scary situation for us, manageable as we knew that we were in good hands,' Ben said.

'As for Dr Thangavelu, he is an inspiration. At 87 years old, to come out of retirement and to work past 4am to see Charlie's mum was recovering well is something I'll never forget.

'He epitomises the essential contribution that people continue to bring to rural communities.'

Charlie spent four weeks in hospital but is now back home and thriving. His dad can't wait to show off his progress and (re)introduce Charlie to the angels who, not only helped deliver him, but helped save his life.

- Story supplied from The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network

Debbie Hay and Dr Ramaswamy Thangavelu from Crookwell Hospital with Member for Goulburn, Wendy Tuckerman MP.



We will be eternally grateful for the dedication and immediate response of the team at the Crookwell Hospital and the NETS crew. They made a very scary situation for us, manageable as we knew that we were in good hands."

Ben, Felicity and baby Charlie enjoy being home from hospital

From engineering to oncology

When Dr Katherine Francis' mother was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer, she realised she wanted to help others in a similar position.



Dr Katherine Francis is Southern's first Medical Oncologist and is based in Bega.

'That was actually the reason I went into medicine,' Dr Francis said, who is currently based at South East Regional Hospital in Bega.

Dr Francis grew up on the north coast of NSW in Coffs Harbour and, like many young people from a regional area, relocated to Sydney for university. At the time, she planned to become an engineer and she graduated with a degree in electrical engineering from the University of NSW. However, not long after moving to university, her mum received the cancer diagnosis.

'My mum was diagnosed with cancer at a time and in a place where we didn't have a regular oncologist. We experienced what it was like to not have that kind of continuity of care for her. Although, we were lucky enough that in the time of mum's illness an oncologist did start, and we saw the difference that it made to have someone based locally,' she said.



This experience not only inspired Dr Francis' career change to medicine, but it also encouraged her to become an oncologist. Dr Francis has worked across many clinical trials at St George Hospital and in private practice and is currently a Research Fellow with the Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group (ANZGOG), the peak national gynaecological cancer research organisation for Australia and New Zealand. But she always wanted to do more for regional patients and has joined Southern as the first Medical Oncology Staff Specialist.

The opportunity to expand services in a regional area and help patients access treatment closer to home was a big part of Dr Francis's decision to join Southern. 'Fundamentally, the reason I got into medicine was to improve cancer services in the regions.'

Dr Francis is now four months into her new role and can see the difference a local specialist oncologist makes to patients. Rather than relying on visiting specialists who come once a month or on referrals to Canberra, having a Medical Oncology Staff Specialist available in the region means patients are being reviewed more quickly.

'Up until now, when each new patient got a new diagnosis of cancer typically, they were not reviewed in Bega,' she said.

Many patients had their first appointment in Canberra, which meant a six hour round trip.

'I've now met people who chose not to start treatment if it meant travelling to Canberra. Now they are willing to come and see me and have a chat about treatments we could try them on.'

Katherine and the oncology team are now looking at ways to improve access to oncology services and treatments through local clinical trials.

'We're keen to start clinical trials to improve access to drugs that wouldn't necessarily be available. I hope we'll be able to bring a lot of the things that I was accustomed to in Sydney down to Bega and the surrounding areas.'

- Written by Brooke Boland



Hospital fundraisers

The work of the BDCU Goulburn Hospital Fundraising Committee is well known in the local area. Since the charity began fourteen years ago in 2008, it has purchased close to \$500,000 worth of medical equipment.

‘Everything goes toward the buying of equipment that’s needed in the hospital and associated health facilities,’ said Nerida Cullen, who has served on the committee since it was first formed.

Now President of the organisation, Nerida is leading future efforts in a post-covid world. While some events have been cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic in recent years, the committee remains dedicated to raising money to enhance health services in the Goulburn-Mulwaree Shire.

The charity is supported by the Berrima District Credit Union and run by a group of passionate individuals from the community. It organises a calendar of events and initiatives that bring the Goulburn community together, including movie nights at Kingsdale Winery and the popular fundraiser Dancing with the Starz.

Last time Dancing with the Starz was held, it raised an incredible \$85,000. ‘That was a huge success,’ Nerida said.



The BDCU Fundraising Committee members are passionate about raising funds to buy medical equipment for Goulburn Base Hospital.



From breast pumps to bariatric lifters and tilt tray tables for physiotherapy, the charity has purchased much-needed medical equipment over the years and plans to do more.”



Goulburn Hospital



From breast pumps to bariatric lifters and tilt tray tables for physiotherapy, the charity has purchased much-needed medical equipment over the years and plans to do more. Currently, it is funding the purchase of a new patient information and entertainment system that will allow patients to order food electronically and stream from their own devices.

‘The new system will add to the comfort of patients during their stay at the hospital,’ Nerida said. The charity is also advocating and applying for grants to fund the purchase of two new birthing beds, worth \$23,000 each.

But Nerida’s favourite purchase over the years are the blanket warmers, ‘I just think they are the best psychological piece of equipment a hospital can have, just to keep someone warm,’ she said.



Beating the afternoon brain fog

How often do you get to the middle of the afternoon, and you feel your brain has just switched off? Do you find your mind wandering away from the task at hand or feeling like you have brain fog? Funnily enough, what you eat plays a role in how well your brain is functioning at present and in the future.



If we think about our brain, we can easily say it is constantly on, even without you realising. Every thought, every movement, every breath and every heartbeat, our brain is continuously working. Due to this, our brains need a constant supply of fuel.

This fuel comes from the food we eat, and recent research has shown our brains are just like cars. The better fuel we can provide our brain, the better reaction times we can have and the slower it will deteriorate.

So, what should we fuel our brains with?

Well, carbohydrates are the preferred choice as they are made up of fibre, starch, and sugars and provide the longest energy supply. Carbohydrates do need to be broken down into glucose before your brain can use them, so by maintaining a good amount of carbohydrates and therefore sugar in our body, we can manage our energy, mood, and hunger more easily. We do however need to look at what carbohydrates we are putting in our body. Carbohydrates come in two forms simple/refined and complex carbohydrates both which are processed at different rates and therefore effect our brain's fuel supply.

What are simple carbohydrates?

Simple carbohydrates are easily digested and turned into glucose quickly, causing our sugar levels to rise and fall at a faster pace. This results in crashes in energy, like we feel in the afternoons. Simple carbohydrates are found in foods that are more highly processed such as white bread, chocolate, chips, soft drink, and other ultra-processed foods.

What are complex carbohydrates?

Complex carbohydrates on the other hand take longer to digest and as such slowly releases glucose into the blood stream, providing sustained energy, a stable mood, reduced cravings, and improved focus. Complex carbohydrates are found in foods that have not undergone major processing such as fresh fruit, wholegrain cereals, legumes, and starchy vegetables and are the optimal choice for fuelling our brains.

Don't worry though, it's not all bad news. Although complex carbohydrates are the preferred choice for sustained energy, we can still enjoy our favourite simple carbohydrate treats! By combining our carbohydrate of choice with protein and/or fats we can slow the speed of which carbohydrates are digested and turned into glucose. For example, instead of enjoying a plain cracker for afternoon tea which would give you a quick burst of energy and then have you sitting in a slump not too long after, try adding a topping or two like ricotta with blueberries and honey for a more sustained release that will give you enough energy to get through until dinner.

The food we eat plays a part in our mood, concentration levels and energy.

Overall, the food we put into our bodies will ultimately play a part in our moods, concentration levels, energy and ability to perform everyday tasks. Research has shown that by loading up on vegetables, enjoying a rainbow of fruits, snacking on nuts, cooking with olive oil, enjoying meat free meals and consuming fish weekly gives us the best chance possible to have a productive day, feel good and beat the brain fog.





Southern NSW
Local Health District

COME WORK AT SOUTHERN

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE IN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

A career in nursing or midwifery at Southern offers so many opportunities to develop new skills while living in a beautiful region of New South Wales

TO VIEW CURRENT VACANCIES VISIT
WWW.SNSWLHD.HEALTH.NSW.GOV.AU/CAREERS