

MURRUMBIDGEE

ISSUE 22 AUTUMN 2023

MATTERS

MAGAZINE

IN
FOCUS:
HEALTHY
AGEING

FEATURE:
FIRST NATIONS
COMMITMENT

OUTSTANDING
EXPERIENCE
INFINITE
OPPORTUNITIES

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ABOUT US

Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) provides a range of public health services to the Riverina and Murray regions of NSW, Australia.

We provide services across a geographic area of about 125,561 square kilometres to a population of more than 240,700 residents. People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage make up four per cent of the population.

As the largest employer in the region, with more than 3,800 healthcare staff working across 33 hospitals and 12 primary health care centres, we are supported by hundreds of volunteers who make an invaluable contribution to enriching the lives of people in our care.

Our services are provided through:

- 1 Rural Referral Hospital
- 1 Base Hospital
- 8 District Health Services
- 5 Community Hospitals
- 16 Multipurpose Services
- 2 Mercy Care Public Hospitals
- 12 Community Health Posts
- 1 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service

PUBLICATION

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land covering MLHD and remind people that we live and work on Aboriginal land.

Welcome to the 22nd issue of Murrumbidgee Matters Magazine.

This quarterly publication is developed by MLHD. Information is correct at time of printing.

Publication costs are subsidised by income generated from advertising.

FRONT COVER

Kayla Hill, Holbrook Facility Manager and winner of the Don Kendell Memorial Leadership Award.

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OUR VISION

Exceptional rural healthcare
Healthier together
Care tailored to people's needs

COVER STORY

FRIENDSHIP BLOSSOMS FOR PEN PALS



Our activities officers are always looking for new and interesting ways to engage our aged care residents, so when Junee residents raised the idea of pen pals, an idea was born.

What better way of engaging than reclaiming the lost art of letter writing?

The teams at our Junee and Lockhart Multipurpose Services have organised for their residents to write pen pal cards to each other. And they would love it to grow.

Marjory Tapprell, Activities Coordinator from Junee says the idea of “penpaling” across the MLHD came from her Scouting background and during a discussion as part of the Certificate IV in Health & Leisure.

"It combines a number of enjoyable parts, getting a letter that is not a bill; seeing cards or notes from other places; memories of past letter writing and pen-pals and interacting with others across the MLHD," said Ms Tapprell.

"I first approached Lockhart before Christmas, but we were all so busy that it didn't properly start until the beginning of 2023.

"Our residents were not sure what to write to start – remember when you were trying to think of what to say to your first unknown pen pal?- but after a few chats we sent the first two cards."

Lockhart replied within the fortnight and the residents were thrilled to receive cards back.

"We are looking forward to a happy correspondence during the year and we are very happy for other residential aged care places to join our activity."



HEALTHY AGEING IN THE MURRUMBIDGEE

As many of us are aware developed countries around the world are experiencing a rapid ageing of their populations due to such factors as lower birth rates and greater life expectancies and Australia is no exception.

This situation is all the more relevant in Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) where 20% of our population is over 65. In fact it will take 15 years for the percentage of older people nationally to reach current MLHD levels.

We know that older people are far more likely than younger people to require hospital admission and their length of stay tends to be longer and more costly. The cost of an admission for the average 85 year old is 4-5 times more than the average 50 year old and this is partly due to factors such as length of stay along with the cost of investigations and treatments.

We also know that older people rarely present with just one problem and instead often present with geriatric syndromes most efficiently managed by a geriatrician. This can be referred to as frailty – the accumulation of deficits resulting in a decrease in reserves and an increased risk of poor outcomes such as hospitalisation.

COMPREHENSIVE GERIATRIC ASSESSMENT

Comprehensive geriatric assessment is the process by which Geriatricians assess frail older patients and the bulk of our specialist training aims to hone our skills at carrying out these assessments in order to develop a coordinated and integrated plan for treatment and long-term follow-up. There's good evidence that this approach has a number of benefits for patients and their families in terms of reducing hospital stay, patients being more likely to return to their own home, improved patient and family satisfaction, better advanced care planning, greater MDT working and a reduction in unnecessary investigation.

NEW AGED CARE WARD OPENS

The opening of the new Aged Care Ward at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital expands bed numbers from 8 to 16 beds, with plans to expand further to 28 beds in the not too distant future.

As well as having more beds, the new ward will have its own specialist allied health team which will help us provide the best possible care for our older patients.

"Our expanded bed base will enable us to admit a greater proportion of frail older people at an earlier stage in their admission

reducing bed moves and improving access to the specialist ward," explains Consultant Geriatrician and General Internal Medicine Physician Dr Matthew Thompson.

"As well as improving services for inpatients we have plans to expand our work in the community and offer a wider range of outpatient clinics improving access to specialist aged care throughout the district."

WELCOME NEW GERIATRICIAN

MLHD welcomes Dr Stephanie Armstrong to our team of geriatricians at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

"We're fortunate enough to be one of the few rural hospitals involved in training geriatricians and Dr Armstrong was one of our first advanced trainees," Dr Thompson said. "It's fantastic to welcome her back as a consultant colleague and I feel it highlights the importance of showcasing the high quality training and experience we're able to offer at Wagga Wagga Base hospital." ■

WHAT ARE MURRUMBIDGEE AGED CARE SERVICES?

Growing older can sometimes mean seeking help to manage day-to-day living activities.

There are many different types of aged care services available, and many are government-funded. Eligibility is based on an assessment process. Carers may also be eligible for respite services.

The Aged Care Service Team provides services that focus on the health needs of older people and their carers.

Old age is a part of the lifespan that can hold as much promise and meaning as all other stages of life and Aged Care Services are here to support you to live a satisfying and fulfilling life by assisting with your healthcare needs.

Our specialist aged care team work with you and your loved ones to best determine how we can help you manage your healthcare needs as you age.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

MLHD Aged Care Services
T (02) 5943 2750

MLHD Specialist Aged Care
T (02) 5943 1600

E MLHD-GEMAdmin@health.nsw.gov.au
Monday to Friday 8:30am-4:30pm
19 Peter Street, Wagga Wagga

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES?

You are eligible for services from the Aged Care Team if you are aged over 65, or if you are aged over 50 and identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

We understand that your journey to aged care services is unique, and we look forward to understanding your experiences and what we can do to help now you're here with us.

DOES IT COST ME ANYTHING?

MLHD Aged Care Services are provided by NSW Health and Medicare. Our allied health and nursing services are free of charge. Our doctors are also free of charge but will require a referral from your local GP. Once our team receive this referral, we can book you in with one of our geriatricians.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CONTACT MLHD AGED CARE SERVICES?

Once you contact aged care services, you will be assisted by one of our skilled nursing team to see how we can best help you or your loved one.

Our focus is on helping you to navigate our system. Please provide as much as much information as you can. This helps us understand your issues and expectations.

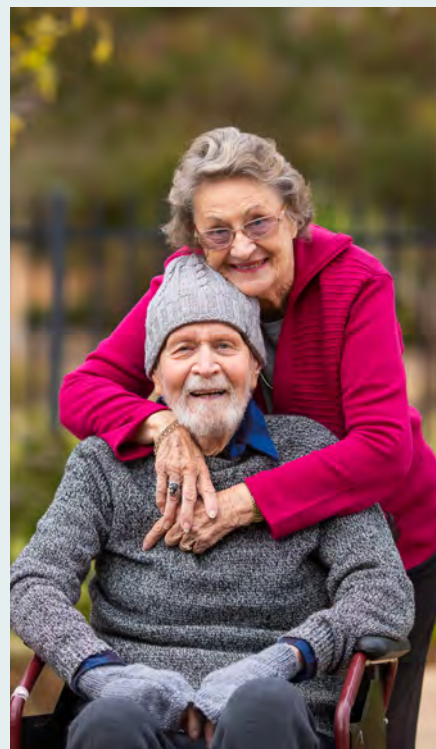
Once you have spoken to our team we will be able to point you in the best direction for your needs. This could include an appointment in our team through a range of methods including:

- > Clinics
- > Home visits
- > Telehealth
- > Phone consults

Based on the information you have provided our specialist team will determine the best type of appointment to help you or your loved ones.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- > Medical and nursing comprehensive aged assessment
- > Cognitive assessment and dementia support
- > Falls assessment
- > Carer training and support
- > Education and advice for families and facilities
- > Assistance to access mental health services via Accessline
- > Specialised Aged Care Doctor Services
- > Specialist Aged Care Nursing
- > Allied Health (occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology, social work, podiatry, dietetics)
- > Geriatric Evaluation & Management (GEM) Medical Unit at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and Outreach Services in the district
- > Community Transition Aged Care Programme (TACP) packages
- > Regional Assessment Services (RAS)
- > Aged Care Assessment Program (ACAP)
- > Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)
- > Flexible Care Packages



MY AGED CARE

The My Aged Care website and national contact centre have been established by the Australian Government to help you navigate the aged care home package.

They can provide you with information on aged care home packages for yourself, a family member, friend or someone you're caring for.

Go to the My Aged Care website to find trusted information about aged care services.

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>

My Aged Care can assist you with:

- > Personal care
- > Domestic assistance
- > Transport
- > Modifications to your home like hand rails or ramps
- > Nursing
- > Meals
- > Social activities
- > Home Care Packages
- > Residential Aged Care
- > Respite

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact My Aged Care
T: 1800 200 422
W: myagedcare.gov.au



“ **Wagga provides an excellent work life balance with space to really make a difference to quite a large and diverse ageing population.** ”

AGED CARE

WAGGA'S TRAINING

Murrumbidgee Local Health District is pleased to announce the further expansion of Inpatient Aged Care Services at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (WWBH), improving access to specialist geriatric services for older people.

The opening of the new Aged Care Ward at WWBH will see an increase in both staffing and beds.

Dr Matthew Thompson, Senior Staff Specialist Geriatrician and Head of the Department of MLHD Geriatrics, said the increase will allow more patients to access more timely specialised geriatric care at an earlier stage.

“We will see an additional 8 beds provided, from the current 8 to 16,” Dr Thompson said.

“We are also delighted to announce we have a dedicated team of allied health staff to assist in the newly expanded ward and welcome an additional geriatrician, Dr Stephanie Armstrong to the team.

“We’re fortunate enough to be one of the few rural hospitals involved in training geriatricians and Dr Armstrong was one of our first advanced trainees. We’re delighted that she’s chosen to return to us to embark on her consultant career.

“I feel it highlights the importance of showcasing the high-quality training and experience we’re able to offer at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.”

“Dr Armstrong will already be known to many of our patients and staff, and we are excited to have been able to attract her to MLHD as a consultant Geriatrician,” he said.

“We already run a series of aged care outpatient clinics across the district including at Griffith and Deniliquin together with a team of specialist geriatrician doctors, a specialist nurse practitioner and clinical nurse consultants and dedicate admin staff.

CARE EXPANSION

GROUND FOR RURAL GERIATRICIANS

“Increasing our staff and services across both the hospital and the outpatient setting will assist us in providing the best possible care for our older patients and will enable us to be involved at an earlier stage,” Dr Thompson said.

“There’s good evidence that this approach has a number of benefits for patients and their families in terms of reducing hospital stay, patients being more likely to return to their own home, improved patient and family satisfaction, better advanced care planning, greater multidisciplinary team working and a reduction in unnecessary investigation.

“This is especially important for our older people living in the MLHD, where 20% of our population is over 65. In fact it will take 15 years for the percentage of older people nationally to reach current MLHD levels,” Dr Thompson said.

Dr Stephanie Armstrong , who previously spent a good deal of her training at Wagga Base Hospital, feels like she is returning home.

“Wagga provides an excellent work life balance with space to really make a difference to quite a large and diverse ageing population,” she said.

“Geriatrics is a wonderful speciality. We have a lot to learn from our patients, and everyone I see has unique and interesting life story. It is truly rewarding seeing someone regain their independence, confidence and quality of life through medical and allied health interventions,” Dr Armstrong said.

“While it sometimes has its challenges, I love being a part of that patient journey.

Dr Armstrong feels that Aged Care Service within the Murrumbidgee Local Health District is a dynamic and important space.

“The expansion of the Aged Care Ward at the hospital and our ability to expand our service across the community and provide specialised geriatric care to our ageing population, who face significant geographical challenges in accessing such specialist care is crucial.

“I look forward to being part of the evolving service both at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and in the community and working with such a wonderful team. ■

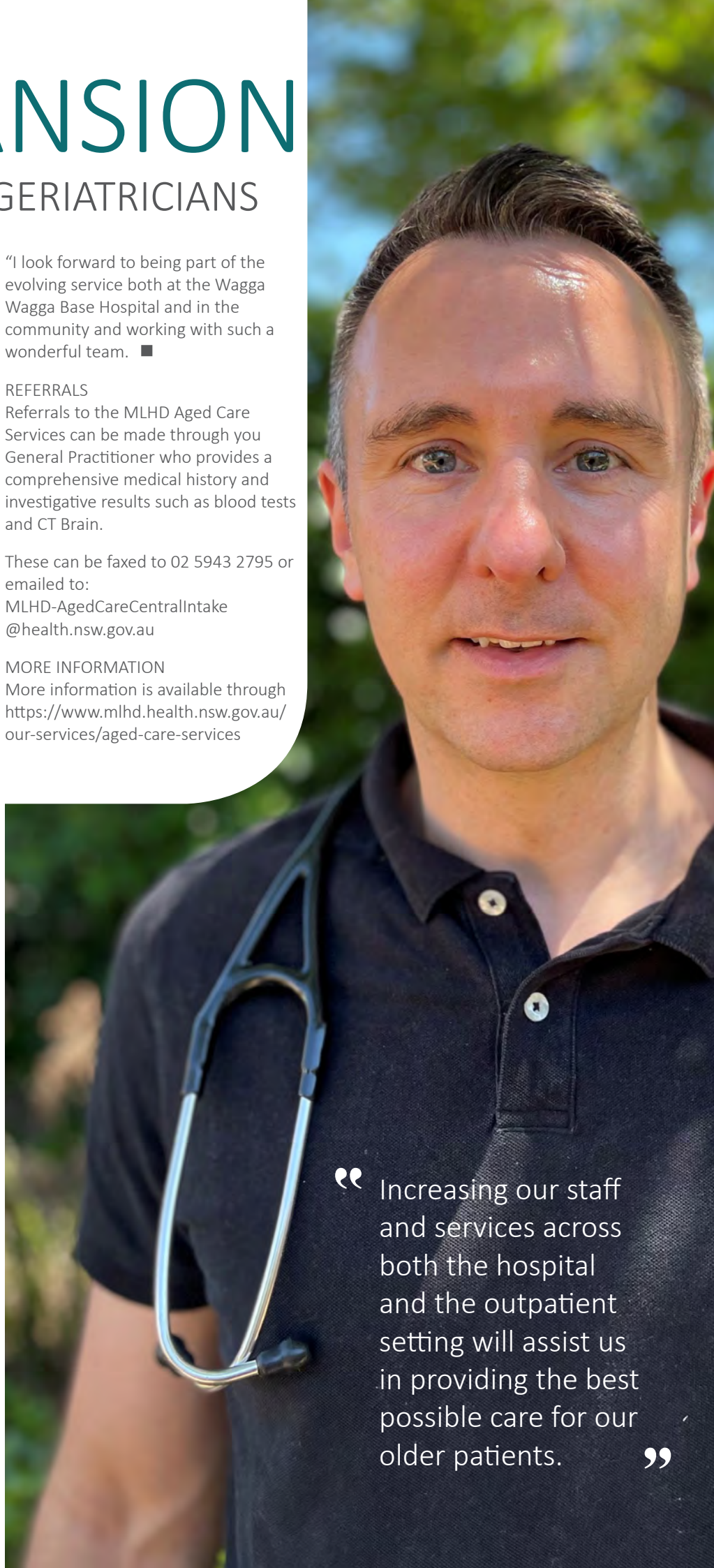
REFERRALS

Referrals to the MLHD Aged Care Services can be made through your General Practitioner who provides a comprehensive medical history and investigative results such as blood tests and CT Brain.

These can be faxed to 02 5943 2795 or emailed to:
MLHD-AgedCareCentralIntake@health.nsw.gov.au

MORE INFORMATION

More information is available through <https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/our-services/aged-care-services>



“Increasing our staff and services across both the hospital and the outpatient setting will assist us in providing the best possible care for our older patients.”



Merryl's Legacy

Philip and Merryl Cross were planning the trip of a lifetime in July 2009, when a routine specialist appointment identified that Merryl required urgent heart surgery.

"We were due to fly out of Sydney to Europe for a month, including a cruise down the Danube with friends. But before we knew it, Merryl was undergoing open heart surgery at Saint Vincent's in Sydney.

"Three days after she came home, Merryl suffered a stroke that paralysed her whole left side, head to toe," Philip said.

In shock and unsure if his wife of 38 years was going to survive, Philip was left feeling numb, trying to make sense of medical terms, and the procedures and interventions Merryl required.

"Back in 2009, things were a little different to now, and I found in the early days of Merryl's stroke, the communication about her condition and complications was lacking.

"I decided to educate myself quickly and not be afraid to question things and remind medical professionals to slow down and explain.

"It prompted me to be more inquisitive, to ask more questions and demand more answers and to advocate for Merryl," Philip said.

He kept a diary of events to keep up with what was happening daily, enabling him to follow up on any questions he had and the actions that were required.

"How can we consent and respond as patient and carer if we do not properly understand what is happening?"

I wanted to be an active part of making sure that my wife received the best care and treatment, and that we were being listened to," Philip said.

"I was encouraged to see that my feedback and concerns were taken on board, and I feel that we got there in the end.

And so, Merryl's stroke began the couple's 13-year association with the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital Stroke Ward.

"The staff were working in difficult conditions in an old hospital, but they were refreshingly open with us, very encouraging, and kept us up to date.

"The level of answers to complicated questions can be tricky to understand, but they were patient, kept the lines of communication open

and helped us to fully comprehend her condition and the long-term problems we may face. They listened to our concerns," Philip said.

"It really dawned on us both about what we had been through and how much life would be different and not as we had planned in retirement.

"It was hard on her, some days so very frustrating. Before the stroke Merryl was very active, she loved exercising daily, outings, socialising with her friends until late. She was a member of in Inner Wheel for over 20 years, both in her Wagga club and at a district level and involved with her church.

"Merryl understood what it was like, the frustration of being suddenly limited and trying to re-learn things you once took for granted, but she was always more concerned for others than herself.

"Even in her hospital bed she was trying to help the other patients beside her, especially those who could not communicate as well as she could.

"It didn't matter what was happening she always tried to have a smile on her face to ease the burden and stress on others," Philip said.

After 210 days in hospital, Merryl was able to return home, where

Philip had remodelled the house to accommodate Merryl's needs.

"As a civil engineer, I had a good eye for detail and determining what equipment worked best for Merryl, assisting her to maintain her independence, feelings of self-worth and enjoy as many things as possible.

"We had to reverse our roles. I had to learn to run the household, and she became my teacher.

"Merryl was a wonderful cook and had the most amazing ability to plan our meals, what we would eat, what we needed to buy. I would take her shopping and she would just tell me.

"She had committed all her recipes to memory, all the ingredients and processes.

Philip smiles when he remembers: "If I would say 'where is the recipe?', Merryl would say 'just do as you are told!' and we would end up with a lovely meal in the end.

"Her mind was still extraordinary, she could remember everything, names of people she just met, birthdays for all our family and friends.

"All the thinking parts of our lives and planning I left to her, and I was the doing person.

Philip ensured that Merryl was able to continue her work and projects with Wagga Wagga Inner Wheel.

"It was like bees to a honey pot when her friends milled around her to have a chat, and beautiful to witness.

"We attended the Wagga Base Hospital rehab regularly which benefited her greatly. The more active she was the better her health was. She was able to use a quad stick to walk around the house and I think her exercise bike pre-stroke, were she peddled thousands of kilometres, gave her good leg strength to use the hospital's facilities so well.

"The staff and patients became an important part of our lives and new routine, and Merryl enjoyed chatting to everyone.

Philip and Merryl could see how their experience may assist others in similar circumstances.

"The electric mobility chair was too heavy and sensitive for her to use. It was brand new, so we donated it to the rehab ward. For everyday use we used a fold up a manual wheelchair with a gel cushion and arm and foot support.

"When you are spending a lot of time assisting someone in a wheelchair, you realise how important a good chair, mobility and the facilitation of some form of independence is.

Philip became the Wagga community representative for the Hospital Stroke Executive Committee in 2011, helping to raise awareness and funds for the stroke ward and its services within the community.

"Our lived experience as carer and patient gave us unique insight into some of the important things that able-bodied people and medical professionals can take for granted.

"I gave little talks to the training nurses about our expectations as a carer of a loved one, about some of the frustrations we face," he said

"The simple things like effective communication, or things to help you feel more human: having your hair brushed, legs shaved or the administration of medication at a consistent time, because changing a routine, a delay can have a big impact.

"We felt it important to share our thoughts, to talk about some of the barriers and to help to make a small difference to others," Philip said.

When Merryl passed away in November 2021, in lieu of flowers, donations could instead be made to Inner Wheel, allowing the purchase and donation of a second mobility chair to the Wagga Base Hospital Stroke Ward.

"The more you are involved in caring for someone, helping with all their appointments, activities of daily living, the more you look at life differently.



Philip and Merryl Cross

"You treasure the moments that usually slip by without much thought. We had some lovely conversations when doing the little everyday things," Philip said

"I was her husband for more than 50 years, but also her carer, and we needed to mesh those two roles in a way that still preserved our relationship, her independence, her own dignity.

"Merryl was driven to not give up, had a spirit to keep going and she never lost her compassion, and loved to see her family, her grandchildren and catching up on skype.

"We really were a good team, I miss her terribly, I miss our conversations and her organising my days, those tender moments, her beautiful face.

"I am thankful that with the right help and interventions we had an extra 12 years of life together after her stroke, but she was always a bit dirty we never got to go down the Danube." ■



WELCOME TO NEW GRADUATES



Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) has welcomed an additional 55 newly graduated registered nurses, who commence their careers across 17 sites.

In 2023 the District will welcome a total of 134 graduates, who will begin the graduate program throughout the year with intakes in February, May, and August.

District Director of Nursing and Midwifery Ms Christine Stephens said the newly commencing graduate nurses bring enthusiasm and excitement to the next stage of their careers as registered nurses and will be a welcome addition to MLHD's dedicated workforce.

"I want to extend a warm welcome to the local and metropolitan graduates commencing work with Murrumbidgee Local Health District. We are pleased to provide employment opportunities to so many nursing graduates," Ms Stephens said.

"Graduates relocating to MLHD bring their families and friends to our wonderful regional communities enabling us to showcase what the District has to offer.

"Previous graduates have applauded the learning opportunities that regional facilities across the District have provided, and the reward of working as a part of local communities."

Ms Stephens said the new nurses are supported with a comprehensive education and mentoring program to assist the safe transition from university into the workplace.

"Each nurse is linked with local nursing and midwifery staff, educators and managers to ensure graduates have access to the support needed during their entry into the nursing workforce," she said.

MLHD provides a structured graduate program which offers additional education opportunities and diverse clinical exposure due to the variety of service delivery options that rural and regional sites provide that will enable the consolidation of skills and knowledge developed at university.

Graduates are aligned to facility and cluster groups and can link together via an array of virtual technologies to share information, learnings and experiences.

"2023 will bring exciting opportunities for our newly graduated registered nurses, we hope that today marks a long and successful nursing career within MLHD."

Graduate nurses began in February 2023 at these local hospitals: Boorowa, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Corowa, Deniliquin, Griffith, Gundagai, Junee, Harden, Henty, Holbrook, Leeton, Narrandera, Temora, Tumut, Wagga Wagga, and Young. ■

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT A CAREER IN NURSING VISIT: <https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/nursing-midwifery-careers/gradstart-nursing-and-midwifery>

Registered Nurse

YOUR NEXT
>ADVENTURE >CHALLENGE >CAREER
STARTS HERE

MURRUMBIDGEE Local Health District NSW GOVERNMENT



Meet our School Based Trainees

Our Murrumbidgee Local Health District School Based Traineeship Program provides a holistic and supportive pathway for HSC students, from school to work within our local health district.

Not only will our trainees have a certificate III in their chosen area of work and study, MLHD supports them in their post school options as they have opportunity to build connections and networks within the healthcare industry.

Tana Scott is an Aboriginal School Based Trainee, based at Tumut Health Service and has enjoyed completing his traineeship and the unexpected opportunities that have followed.

“I found out about the program through my brother but was not expecting it to go anywhere. When I found out I was accepted I was happy, but actually a little nervous because I did not know what to expect,” Tana said.

“I have really enjoyed all my different placements so far, including time at Tumut, Gungahai, and Cootamundra Hospitals. I have spent time with the dieticians, speech pathologists, physio’s and occupational therapists, as well as the allied health assistants.

Tana is also hoping to spend time with the MLHD Aboriginal Health Team as part of his traineeship.

“It would be great to have an opportunity to work within a community setting, and our Aboriginal Health Worker at Tumut Hospital has been encouraging and supportive of me learning more about that as a prospective career,” Tana said.

“It feels really good to be able to help people and to work in a good team. Doing the program is a big commitment but I have been getting great support and encouragement to keep going, and I am able to focus on the areas I am really interested in.

“I still have not decided which direction to go, there is so much opportunity for a rewarding career in health and lots of things to consider.



Kamola Komilova School Based Trainee Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

“I have met a few health professionals now and see what they do, it is a great way to have an introduction to a career I had not previously thought much about, and I am looking forward to seeing where that leads me,” Tana said.

School Based Trainee Kamola Komilova loves the hands-on training she is receiving at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and is into her second year of study in the program.

“So far I have been with the metabolic clinic, renal, physios, paediatric physios and radiography, and I loved it. I am actually considering becoming a radiographer or something to do around working with kids,” Kamola told us.

“The way that the health professionals teach you and guide you is really good, and the support has been amazing.

“I really like to be doing hands on things and the traineeship has been a great way to learn a few practical skills and decide the things I like best,” Kamola said.

The MLHD school-based traineeship program also provides students with a source of income while they are studying. Over the two years of their traineeship, they complete a minimum of 100 days of paid, on the job training in their chosen area - one day a week during school terms and the rest in the school holidays.

“It is meaningful work and interesting and at the end I have the bonus of having a qualification I can use, and a pathway into a health job if I want to go that way.

Murrumbidgee Local Health District’s Education and Development Manager, Charmaine Marshall said the program’s delivery model means they are doing, not just learning.

“The students are surrounded by mentors and opportunities and can be assessed on their work on the job, not just in an exam or classroom,” said Charmaine.

“They will finish school workplace ready. Not only will they have a qualification and experience, they will have also built connections and networks within the industry.”

Applications for school based traineeships are open to students in Year 10. Interested students should contact their school Careers Advisor or email MLHD-Traineeships@health.nsw.gov.au. ■



Tana Scott, School Based Trainee at Tumut Hospital

MAKING A BIG SPLASH



DR WARREN HARGREAVES CLINICAL DIRECTOR OF GENERAL SURGERY GRIFFITH BASE HOSPITAL

Dr Warren Hargreaves thinks that city people are missing out.

He and his wife Melita, a practicing dentist, swapped their busy Sydney lives for a little piece of Italy in the heart of the Riverina.

"I am very happy with Griffith and the Base Hospital. It is a great place to live and work, the staff are excellent, everyone has been very welcoming and keen to show us around.

"I would like to see more medical professionals come and just try it, because you do not really understand how good it is until you do. I suspect once they come, they will not want to leave," Dr Hargreaves said.

"It is a big change of scenery and lifestyle, less hassles, less time commuting, more opportunity to enjoy the house, maintain a yard. I think that I have been to Bunnings 100 times since I've been here".

Dr Hargreaves is a Surgical Oncology Specialist, an expert in the removal of soft tissue tumours, in particular sarcoma, breast and skin tumours. He is involved in teaching medical students and graduate doctors in Australia, New Zealand, and Myanmar and has also spent time practicing in London.

"I have always been curious about how things work. I admire the people who can build things, make dams, bridges, buildings, pour concrete. We rely on their skill and expertise to live our lives. I am interested to know how things are made," he said.

"I considered a career as an engineer, electrician, or a plumber, but I thought that understanding the intricacies of the human body, its complexities and being able to fix something that was broken, would be the ultimate profession. That led me to becoming a surgeon. Plus, I wanted to do something with my hands, having the chance to fix a person and then see them go on living their lives.

"Surgery is a team activity, you cannot do it alone. I like being part of the professional team in a hospital, and we have a great group of people working here. I find it quite interesting and especially in a place like Griffith where everyone's got different backgrounds and different stories to tell," Dr Hargreaves said.

"Patients are patients wherever you go. If you've got appendicitis in the city or appendicitis in the country, it really doesn't matter. We wouldn't manage a problem any differently here than in a big teaching hospital, which is good. Health professionals may be worried about coming to the country because they think they won't be able to practice a certain way or to a certain standard, but that simply is not true.

"The people in this community receive just as good care as in the city and

there is so much potential for health professionals to come and develop their careers in regional areas.

Dr Hargreaves cannot pinpoint exactly what made him want to relocate, and feels it was a combination of things that helped him set his sights on Griffith.

"It's quite hard to put it into words because it's not one thing. I'm not on the run from anything, No, it's lots of little things!" he laughs.

"I was teaching and practicing at St Vincent's for about 17 years and very happy there, but I think if you work in one place for a very long time, you get a little bit stale. I felt it was the right time to have a change of practice, not a career change as such, because I'm doing the same sort of thing at Griffith Base.

"Practicing here is not that different to practicing in the city. You might have to become more resourceful here at times, and there is plenty of opportunity to broaden your practice, do things that you wouldn't have a chance to do in the city, use the full scope of your training and qualifications.

One of the most important draw cards for Dr Hargreaves was the development of the new Griffith Base Hospital.

"I am most excited about the development of the hospital and the input I can offer. There is lots of work to do, lots of planning for the setup of the clinical spaces and theatres. I've previously been involved in redevelopments, but a new total re-build is an opportunity to apply my career



learnings, all the years of experience and my thoughts about how to make a hospital work better," he said.

As the Clinical Director of General Surgery for Griffith Base Hospital, Dr Hargreaves hopes to see Griffith Base Hospital renowned for providing not only exceptional care, but a destination of choice for health professionals seeking to relocate to regional areas.

"I want to see services expand, to be strengthened. The new build will give us that opportunity and will be world class facility enticing more professionals from the big tertiary hospitals. People will be surprised when it's all done and they see how good it is.

Despite warnings about missing the beach and opera, Warren and Melita feel that Griffith has everything they need to settle comfortably in their new home.

"We don't feel like we are missing out on anything major, Griffith has amazing restaurants, it is easy to socialise, and have friends and family visit us, because the Riverina has much to offer. Griffith is a decent size, has good facilities and amenities and a diverse population.

"There's no traffic, there's no waiting around, no queues, no crowds. It's much, much quieter, and there's still lots of things to do here. You can still go to the movies, you can still eat out, play sport, ride bikes, horses, swim in the river, whatever you please. And there is so much opportunity to sample local produce, farmers markets and visit nearby towns. The only thing you can't do is go to the beach".

"My wife is a dentist and has commenced work at a local practice. She feels the same as I do and is settling into her new role. She grew up in Nyngan, a small country town on the edge of the NSW outback, so it is another change of pace coming to a regional city," he said.

Dr Hargreaves wants more people to come to regional and remote towns and sample the lifestyle.

"I think it is sometimes hard to keep the younger ones in regional towns, they go off to study in the city, and often do not return. That is normal and expected. They gain important exposure to a wide range of things, different health systems and understand what works.

"But there exists a large pool of experienced health professionals in the city who are looking for something else. Entice them to the country, make the transition easy, remove the stress.

"You may not fully appreciate all the things regional areas have to offer, until you live it. You may find time for new interests, time for family you did not realise you were missing.

"I can now walk to work and it only takes a few minutes.

"Strangely enough I have found I love to garden and mow the lawn. I've not had a yard since I was 17. We now have a big yard, with an olive tree that is fruiting, and I am very interested to see how they go and how to prepare them, maybe learn to grow my own produce.

An accomplished competitive canoe sportsman, Dr Hargreaves is also looking forward to paddling on the river.

"I enjoy ocean canoe racing, dragon boat racing and am in the NSW team for dragon boat racing. The national championships are running in Albury this year, so I am just swapping the ocean for the river to keep training.

Dr Hargreaves sees the Riverina as an untapped resource of talent and opportunity.

"There is so much potential here, so many people doing extraordinary things, creating amazing products. People seem happier here, more positive. We are looking forward to embracing our new lifestyle, having the time to get out and about, talking to people, hearing their own stories and learning more about all the food bowl of NSW has to offer.

"Perhaps I might learn to make my own gnocchi along the way, that would be a bonus. ■



If you'd like to join our team of dedicated Health Professionals in the Murrumbidgee, find your next opportunity here:

<https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/careers?viewmode=0>

CE UPDATE



Jill Ludford Chief Executive

OFF TO A FLYING START...

We have had a cracking start to the year, with lots of new faces and interactions with our communities.

Our Local Health Advisory Committees (LHACs) have commenced their planning sessions for the year, with many great advocacy ideas and projects already identified to support better health outcomes in our regional communities.

I meet regularly with the LHACs to discuss their ideas and concerns, and it's such an important channel for feedback and better understanding what's going on in local towns and villages. I'd like to thank all our active LHAC members for their commitment and dedication to health and wellbeing in our communities.

I've also been out and about recently visiting sites and talking with staff about what's happening on the ground, and what's important in their workspaces.

WELCOME

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new arrivals for 2023.

Board Directors - welcome to our new Board Directors Ms Glynis Ingram, Mr Andrew Jones and Mr Tony Kolbe. We are also lucky to have three experienced and enthusiastic new board directors who will bring their own skills and expertise to the new roles. I'd also like to acknowledge the retiring members Dr Douch, Geoff Twomey and Andrea Jordan completed their terms at the end of December, and acknowledge their hard work and dedication in support of the community.

Junior Medical Officers - 28 new medical graduate interns will do their rotations across the different specialty areas.

Graduate Nurses - 55 newly graduated registered nurses joined us across 17 sites. We expect over 130 new nurses graduates will join us over the course of the year. We wish them well in their placements over the next few months and hopefully we will see them remain longer term across our District.

School Based Trainees - 15 students joined the School Based Trainee program to kick start their health careers. Their training will count towards their High School Certificate (HSC) and ATAR. The students join 37 existing students who will complete their training this year in the areas of nursing, allied health or administration.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

Our 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards nominations have opened. This annual program of awards recognises the achievements of our health professionals and volunteers and is an exciting opportunity to showcase the great work of our teams across the District.

I'd like to also thank our sponsors for their support of these awards. Your contribution means we can truly celebrate these achievements and reward the award winners with professional development opportunities.

More information about our awards is available on our MLHD website here: <https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/about-us/newsroom/events/mlhd-excellence-awards-2023>.

Nominations close **Friday 21 April 2023**

CLINICAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

We launched our new Clinical Governance Framework for 2023 - 2027. The Framework outlines the components of the clinical governance system, roles and responsibilities to achieve safe, consistent, person led healthcare for the people of Murrumbidgee.

SERVICE PLANNING

We continue with our Health Service Planning projects across the District, and have just completed our initial round of consultation for the Lake Cargelligo Health Services Plan.

Consultations have recently been completed for Deniliquin and Leeton Health Services plans.

The Finley and Temora Redevelopment projects are progressing with Vision Workshops held with members from the local community, Local Health Advisory Committees, local government representatives and staff. Vision Workshops are held to define the vision and objectives for a project, and to outline the design principles. It's an important step in the early planning stage of a redevelopment. Models of Care and Project User Group meetings will begin in the coming months.

CONGRATULATIONS!

I'd like to congratulate all our volunteers who were acknowledged at the 2023 Australia Day celebrations. A special congratulations and acknowledgment to:

- **Lourene Liebenberg – Deniliquin LHAC**
Edward River Council citizen of the Year – presented to a resident who has made a noteworthy contribution to the betterment of the Edward River Region and given outstanding service to the local community in the past 12 months or over a number of years.
- **Keith Edgerton – Lockhart LHAC**
Lockhart Shire Council Citizen of the Year
- **Fran Fifield – Henty LHAC**
Greater Hume Shire Citizen of the Year award
- **Linda Swales & Tina Billing – Adelong-Batlow LHAC**
Joint Citizen of the Year – Rotary Club of Batlow
- **Nola Pinnuck – Finley LHAC**
Berrigan Shire Citizen of the Year Award - Nola has lived, worked and volunteered in the Finley district for the majority of her life. Dedicating a huge amount of time to community organisations to ensure the betterment of the Finley township and surrounding areas her involvement in many projects and organisations.

THANK YOU

We are proud of our achievements and acknowledge the contribution and compassion shown by our staff, volunteers and community advocates as they continue to enrich the lives of our patients, consumers, residents and communities.

We share our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributes to providing healthcare across our region.

Jill Ludford
Chief Executive



Visiting with the People and Culture team in Albury



Construction progress at Leeton Hospital Emergency Department



Griffith Base Hospital: Minister Bronnie Taylor with Josh Poscoliero Senior Nuclear Medicine Technologist



Smoking ceremony: Official Opening of Tumut Hospital helipad



Official Opening of the Wagga Wagga Health Services Hub



A word from The Chair

Adrian Lindner Interim Board Chair

FAREWELLS & WELCOMES

I am pleased to commence a term as your Board Chair and bring you this update on behalf of the MLHD Board. At the end of 2022 the terms concluded for three long-standing Board members, our Chairman Dr Tom Douch, Andrea Jordan and Geoff Twomey. Tom, Andrea and Geoff brought extensive experience and different perspectives to our Board and we will miss their contributions.

We now welcome three new enthusiastic members of the Board – Glynis Ingram, Andrew Jones, and Tony Kolbe.

Glynis has had more than 30 years' experience in a range of senior executive roles in state and local government.

Andrew has more than 25 years' experience in the finance industry and a strong interest in human resources.

Tony has more than 40 years' experience in the health sector including 17 years in senior public health positions within NSW Health.

An experienced international public health consultant, he has previously served as a non-executive board director of the Hume Medicare Local.

LIFTING HEALTH OUTCOMES

I have been on our Board for six years. A key function of the Board is to read, note and review reports from your Executive team on MLHD proposals, current activities and performance. This includes examining data and charts, primarily to gauge how we are doing in meeting our goals and tracking performance indicators contained within our strategic plan.

We also use them to see how we are performing compared to our NSW targets and to other NSW Districts. That is, benchmarking. But what is behind every metric is an important, valued person – a patient or consumer who received treatment for a health condition. Therefore, it is important to see how our services are making a difference to patient care or where there could be improvements in our services. One such metric we examine are Hospital Acquired Complications (HAC).

There are 14 individual HACs and they include such complications as pressure injuries, falls and healthcare associated infections. These HACs even form part of our MLHD annual

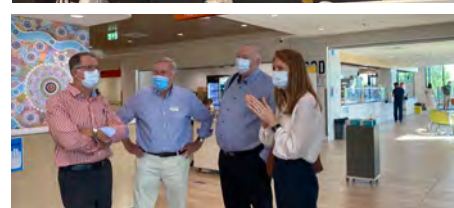
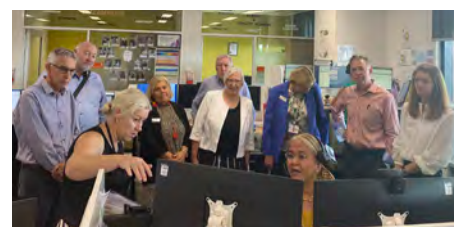
agreement with the NSW Ministry of Health, so they are very important to gauge our performance. If a HAC is above expectations or exceeds the NSW average, we do a “deep dive” or the Executive team lead an investigation into why and how we can rectify the high rate.

Over the last six years I have really noticed the great advance we have made in improving the numbers within the HACs. Where we may have previously been higher than the NSW average on some HACs, we are now below the NSW average on all, yes, all 14 HACs.

Overall, combining all 14 HACs we are at 2.4 HACs per 1000 patient days compared to the NSW rate of 5.7 HACs per 1000 patient days. A tremendous comparison. So what that means is our patients are receiving improved health care and that is so pleasing to know. Well done to you all, in your endeavours to improve patient safety and quality. It's making a difference!



ABOVE: Interim Board Chair Adrian Lindner welcomes new Board Directors Andrew Jones, Tony Kolbe and Glynis Ingram.



PHOTOS: MLHD Board visits Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

BOARD CULTURAL STATEMENT

Our Board approved in December a Board Cultural Statement to demonstrate our support for Aboriginal people and multi-cultural communities. This is an important and significant recognition of our Aboriginal heritage and our diverse communities. The Charter will be on display in the entry foyer of our health facilities and is part of creating a welcoming space for our Aboriginal patients and visitors. The Statement includes our commitment to all people in our communities to;

- Recognise them,
- Respect them,
- Respond to their story, and
- Learn from them.

Also included will be an Acknowledgement of Country together with the apology to the Stolen Generation from our NSW Health Secretary, Susan Pearce. The Statement is part of our ongoing commitment to equity and accessibility of health services for all.

OUR STAFF

It is important to celebrate the fantastic work and initiatives of our staff. The best way to recognise them is to nominate them for our 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards.

I enjoy being one of the judges on a category for the Awards each year, to read about the tremendous innovations that really make a difference to improving our services to patients or that support our staff.

Nominations for the 2023 Awards open on 1 March with a closing date of 28 April, so please nominate your colleague to recognise their worthy contributions to our services.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR STATE?

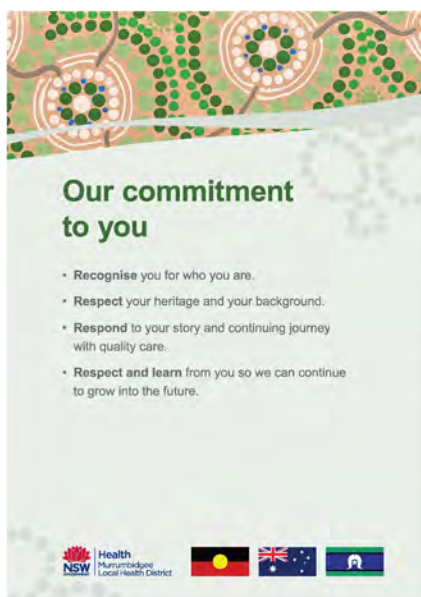
The NSW Government created the new Regional Health Division in 2022 to focus on health services and outcomes for the quarter of NSW's population living in regional NSW. This follows the recommendations from the Rural Health Inquiry and a critical component for the Division is formulating a new 10-year Strategic Plan to steer our direction in regional health. The plan has just been released to the public and presents four strong priorities;

1. Strengthen the regional health workforce
2. Enable better access to safe, high quality and timely health services
3. Keep people healthy and well through prevention, early intervention and education
4. Keep communities informed, build engagement, seek feedback

Our current strategic plan (2021-2026) carries similar themes and our Board looks forward to working with the Regional Health Division to focus and fully align our objectives and activities with their priorities.

Adrian Lindner
MLHD Interim Board Chair

OUR FIRST NATIONS



MLHD'S COMMITMENT

Murrumbidgee Local Health District Board and Staff acknowledge and accepts that Australia's First Nations peoples are and always will be the Traditional Custodians of the Land that we all share.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to all First Nations people, and value their continued connection to land, water and culture.

The MLHD Executive Board announce that as part of our ongoing commitment to actively recognising, respecting and responding to the story of First Nations People and their continuing journey around access to culturally safe and quality healthcare services, we aim to proudly display a series of posters in every MLHD facility across the district by the end of March, 2023.

The NSW Health Apology, Acknowledgement of Country and Our Commitment to You, will take pride of place in every MLHD facility, and we hope this is not only a reminder to our staff about our ongoing pledge to provide culturally safe health care, but a visual recognition for First Nations People to see that we hear you, we want to acknowledge past wrongs and that we want you to feel welcome and safe in each and every MLHD facility.

We are dedicated to working in partnership with Aboriginal people, communities and survivors of the stolen generation. We are committed to acknowledging the pain, suffering and ongoing impacts this has for Aboriginal people in accessing our services.

We hope that the prominence of the NSW Health Apology, Acknowledgement of Country and our Commitment to You is another small step in an important and ongoing journey, to demonstrate that we strive to continue to listen to your story, we recognise and respect you and we want to continue to grow with you, into the future. ■

For more information about Aboriginal Health Services visit: <https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/our-services/aboriginal-health-services>

If you are interested in becoming an MLHD Aboriginal Health Worker or joining the MLHD team, please contact Jackie Brodie on 0458 778 095

Or register your interest here:

<https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-employment>



ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Aboriginal Health unit is responsible for promotion of Aboriginal Health and the provision of Aboriginal Health services across the Murrumbidgee Local Health District.

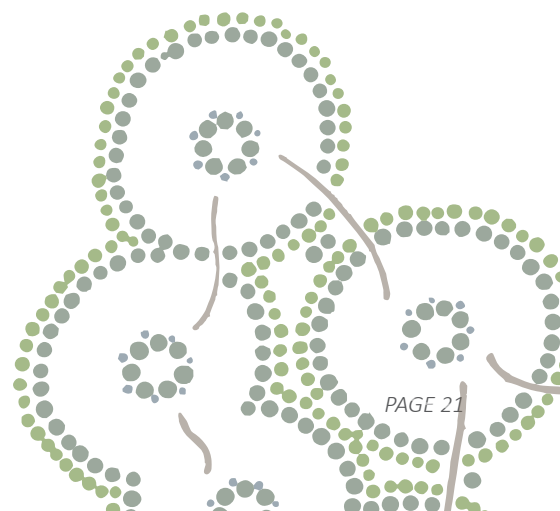
It provides programs and services that are culturally appropriate and accessible to Aboriginal people and Communities. The Aboriginal Health unit also works with mainstream staff to enable them to more effectively plan and deliver high quality and accessible health services to Aboriginal people and Communities.

PROGRAMS

As well as providing a service to inpatients and clients individually, there are also a number of programs that Aboriginal Health staff within the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) are trained in and responsible for implementing.

Programs designed specifically to support positive health outcomes for Aboriginal people include:

- > Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service
- > Aunty Jeans Program
- > Building Strong Foundations for Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities
- > Otitis Media Screening



MEET OUR PEOPLE:

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INSPIRED BY FAMILY, ELDERS AND ANCESTORS



VIVIAN PRIOR CHRISTIAN
Aboriginal Health Worker,
Narrandera

Vivian Prior Christian is driven by her intuition, her passion for others and a love and connection to her country and her community.

Vivian is the youngest in her family but has always felt compelled to take care of everyone in her family and to look after the people around her.

“It is what I am meant to do,” Vivian said.

“Before I was employed as an Aboriginal Health Worker for MLHD, I was kind of doing this work anyway, trying to help and make sure my people are doing ok. I am often asking- ‘Hey are you alright?’”

“Before I applied for this job, I already knew about the role and because it was a role that was based in the community, I felt like it was my calling, because looking out for others has always been a part of who I am.

“When I was successful in becoming an MLHD Aboriginal Health Worker I felt incredibly privileged.

“I was actually studying to be a nurse and midwife at the time, but life got a bit hectic and I felt pulled into this community care taking role. I felt I could really help the people in my town on a very practical and personal level.

“I have grown up here- my family is here, I know so many in the community, and what is important to me is that they actually know who I am and what I’m about. With that comes a mutual trust, and that is very important in being able to help my mob. It is crucial.

“Being employed to help my community as part of my everyday job, when that is where my passion lies, that is crazy to me!” said Vivian.

“My role is focused on building strong foundations for school aged children and their families, so it involves many things like helping my mob to keep up-to-date with their childhood vaccinations, offering health checks, talking about the importance of education and taking care of self and our little ones.

“I am a single mother with my own three young children, so I am learning as I go as well. I can really relate to some of the common things that I am asked about and some of the challenges we face.

“One day, when my children are older, I hope to be able to help even more and complete my nursing and midwifery.

“I will know when the time is right for that, but for now I feel my ancestors are telling me ‘this is where you need to be, right here, doing what you are doing.’”

Vivian is about to host a Community Mentoring Breastfeeding Workshop.

“It is a course for the community, for Aunties, Sisters and Elders to help mentor new mothers on their

breastfeeding journeys. The course shares with us basic breastfeeding knowledge and helps to develop skills that empower our Mums.

“We identified a gap for new mothers who breastfed their children and stopped after a few weeks so we want to provide the access and support families need to persist and better understand the benefits of breastfeeding.

“I am excited to complete the workshop and gain skills that allow me to offer good support and information to help our families.

“We are also about to re-open Gilgali Buraay (the room at the Emergency Operation Centre Narrandera). We had to suspend the room due to the pandemic, and the reopening of this room is such a positive thing for our town. We will be holding a small event for the community with morning tea and Welcome to Country,” said Vivian.

We asked Vivian the things she loves best about her role and her town.

“I feel I am lucky to have a community like mine and it is a privilege to be able to contribute in this way,” said Vivian.

“I love my role here and seeing and hearing that I have helped my clients in one way or another- well there is no better feeling.

“I know there is still much work to be done to create real change for mob but I’m here for it, I am up for the task.

“I feel inspired by my family, my team, my Elders and our Ancestors that have paved the way for us.

“I love my community, the connection, the roots I feel here, the feeling I get being here. It is a deeply spiritual thing.” ■

BECOME THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

TALEA BULGER

Aboriginal Health Worker,
Tumut

Talea Bulger became the change she wanted to see.

“I was employed for 14 years as a Cultural educator with National Parks, teaching people about Country, cultural significance sites and helping school children to understand our history, the importance of the land for Koori people and teaching hands on traditional techniques.

A proud Wiradjuri Ngunnawal woman, Talea would spend much time on Country and with community.

However, a death in her community led Talea to pursue a career in health, so she could have a more direct impact on her people’s health and wellbeing, on their willingness to access social supports and health services around Tumut.

“Sadly, my community had lost a lot of faith in the hospital system, and there were many wrongs. I looked at what was happening around me, I wanted change and I wanted to be a part of it. So, when the position for MLHD Aboriginal Health Worker in Tumut was advertised, I was compelled to apply,” Talea said.

“We can only talk for so long. Action is key to everything.

Talea is currently studying her Certificate 4 in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health but feels that her strong family ties and experience on Country, teaching cultural awareness to both tourists and schools within the Riverina is one of the key factors that help in her role.

“My work is primarily about trust, and trust is something that is built on strong foundations. Nobody really likes coming to hospital, but especially Aboriginal people, there is much fear and much worry.

“It is very important to be recognised by your community, for them to understand where your heart is, so that they know you will do right by

them,” Talea said.

Tumut recently opened its new health service facility, and Talea is happy to see the provision of culturally safe spaces including a cultural garden.

“My time with National Parks allowed me to spend much time in the bush, participating in traditional activities. It is such an important part of Koori life, so I have tried to bring some of that into my job, helping with our new cultural garden, smoking ceremonies, that sort of thing. There's space for kids to run around in the garden. There's quiet culturally safe space for family to sit and be together.

Talea sees her role as an Aboriginal Health Worker essential to her community.

“Aboriginal families are large, there are so many relatives, and we are a huge extended network. To be able to be that face, the one to help support my community while they're sick or they're injured or they're worried is one of the best parts of my job.

“You tend to do that anyway as family, but to be able to spread that out a bit further as a job, it is really meaningful, and I think is really rewarding.

“Tumut Hospital has a large team of health workers who are Aboriginal, in Mental Health, Allied Health, nurses and pathology. But I would love to see more people. My dream is to see more Koori faces in every department here, managerial roles, health professionals but also reception, cleaning staff, the kitchen staff, the wards staff. They are often the people that you chat to while you're lying in bed at hospital. Imagine the difference it would make to my people who come here,” Talea said.

“We are excited to have a school-based trainee here this year, and its so important to give young school leavers a taste of all the different

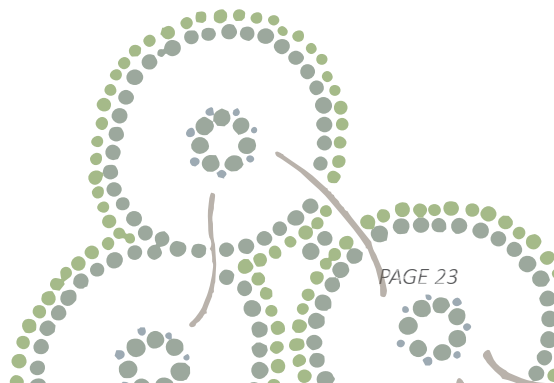


things available, to spend time with health professionals so they can find their passion. They are loving it so far, being offered jobs- and I hope that is just the start for them.

“I am a single mum with a very active five-year-old son, and he is about to start school this year. I’m lucky to have such a loving family around me and extensive ties to my community, all just around the corner if I need them.

“We actually have really good access to services here and lots of visiting clinics too, it is a matter of just helping people to access those things without feeling fearful.

“Things are slowly getting better here. With health professionals and staff who are part of the Koori community, it will help to drive the changes we need and I think that will help us to build more trust and close the gap.” ■





HIGH HOPES FOR SERVICES IN LAKE CARGELLIGO

Tenayah Kelly has high hopes for her little town, centred around making sure the people in her town have the very best access to health care and services.

Tenayah is a Wiradjuri woman with bloodline connections to Ngiyampaa and Barkindji people.

Tenayah previously worked in Wagga as an Indigenous student support officer for CSU, but suffered a cancer scare during her employment.

“I’d recently had surgery and radiation. I was trying to deal with all that, and felt I just needed to go home,” Tenayah said.

“When COVID hit, I had an opportunity to work remotely and moved back to Lake with my daughter and regroup.

When the role of Aboriginal Health Worker support worker for the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service (AMIHS) became available in Lake Cargelligo, it was the perfect opportunity for Tenayah.

“After years living and working in Wagga, and then being able to stay home with my extended family I realised that my heart was here in Lake.

“It was a chance to complete meaningful work in my hometown, so I applied and was really happy to be successful,” Tenayah said.

“I love living in this community, my family is here, we get to have quality time together doing outdoors things like camping, fishing and sport. There is time to do that as part of our lives, it’s not rushed.

“Our community is accountable to each other, and everyone looks out for everyone else.

Tenayah sees her roles with Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) as a health care support and advocacy-based role.

“My work is moulded around social work and ensuring my Aboriginal people’s health and emotional wellbeing is taken care of,” Tenayah said.

“I spend lots of time listening to people and assisting to refer them to the services they might need.

“I am really focused on helping vulnerable people, to talk to them about all the things we can do to help, who we can link them in with and what supports are out there. Tenayah said.

Tenayah identifies unique barriers associated with living and working in a rural community like Lake Cargelligo.

“It can be really hard some days, because a small town like Lake does not have all the services that a larger town like Griffith might have. Some people really do struggle to prioritise their health and to travel for help.

“When you have spent lots of your life doing the hard yards and making ends meet and then to throw on top of that, bushfires, floods and the pandemic, it can be tricky to get people to focus on their health and wellbeing,” Tenayah said.



“Sometimes that involves travelling to a larger town like Griffith or Wagga, so lots of my role involves being able to really communicate well about what is going on, how it will benefit them and how we can help make it happen, so they feel safe.

“There is lots of fear around health and hospitals, it is a big deal, so helping someone to feel comfortable and a part of their own health intervention is really really important.

“Some days I feel like I am hitting lots of different roadblocks, but it’s the days that I get a good outcome for my patient, the days that I can see the difference I have made, that’s what keeps me going.

“I try to offer all the support I can, but in the end the person has got to want to participate in their own health care.

“When you make those breakthroughs, it makes all the difference,” Tenayah said.

Tenayah recognises helping to change people’s perspectives about their health and willingness to access healthcare services is something that will take time.

“In Lake we have an Aboriginal Health Worker as well as an Aboriginal Mums and Bubs health care worker and a midwife.

“We are starting to see people becoming more willing and confident about accessing our services here and that’s a really good start.

“But there is so much more to aim for, more services to entice here, and more to do to encourage my people to engage with the programs and services we do have, and it is something we are always working on in the background,” Tenayah said.

“As our population gets older we are seeing more people who would benefit from having specialist services do pop-up visits to our little town.

“I think that would help the people who tend to wait till there is a crisis before they ask for help. I just want to make it as easy as possible for them,” she said.

Tenayah has high expectations for herself and what she can achieve here for her people.

“It is a full-on job and I tend to jump all in and forget to sometimes switch off from it all.

“I want to do right by everyone, and if I say I will do something then I make sure I do it, and I suppose I can be my worst critic.

“I have to sometimes remind myself that I can’t do it all in a day, and to focus on the little things that I am doing that actually all add up to really big things,” she said.

“When someone comes to you to say ‘hey thanks, you really helped me with that’ it really makes it all worthwhile,” Tenayah said.

“When I remind myself of the relationships I have formed, the friendships and the trust that people have in me and in my role, then I feel that I am helping to do a good thing.

“But most of all I just want to show my daughter that it is how we treat each other, how we help each other not just in work, but in life- that is what matters, and that is always what makes a difference.” ■

CANDY DREAMS BIG FOR HER MOB



CANDY KILBY
Aboriginal Health Worker
Griffith Base Hospital

Candy Kilby is supporting her people's access to the best possible health care, regardless of their situation.

Be it in a traditional hospital or community setting, or within the Justice Health system, Candy has seen the positive impact that access to culturally appropriate healthcare can make.

Candy is a proud Wiradjuri woman with bloodline connections to the Wotjobaluk and Yuin Nations.

One of nine children, Candy was part of an extensive and tightly knit family unit steeped in culture and appreciation for her loved ones.

"So many in our community did the hard yards back then, but we all remained strong, we stuck together, we all helped each other. The love for our family and community was always there.

"A lot of my siblings have ended up working in positions that are there to support others, and we are really invested in that.

"My sister Cheryl is on the MLHD Board, and our community is focused on meaningful conversations and action change that help close the gap.

"Inter-generational trauma still impacts Aboriginal people today with past government policies and systemic racism still an issue.

"So I feel passionate about helping my community access culturally safe health services," Candy said.

Candy began her career in health in 2005 as an Aboriginal Health Worker with the Griffith Aboriginal Medical Service.

"I helped link clients who had chronic conditions with the services they needed and to also provide education to my community on how to stay well," Candy said.

Candy also worked as a case manager with Dyrri Bang-Gu Aboriginal Aged Care Service, helping people access services as part of their aged care package.

"Navigating the health care and aged care systems can be difficult at the best of times.

"But it is especially important our Elders are able to get the help they need and to be close to family and friends, because our connection to country and our culture is significant.

In 2019 Candy and her husband felt the need to broaden their lived experience and skills.

"My husband and I wanted to do something different and we both love meeting new people.

Candy accepted a position as an Aboriginal Health Worker with Justice and Forensic Mental Health Network in Sydney working in the Health Clinics at the Women's Correctional Centres.

"The first day working in the correctional centre was very confronting. It took me a while

to adjust to working in a secure environment," Candy said.

"But I knew I wanted to support women in custody to be that familiar face and just be there for them.

"The women I encountered were very vulnerable, and they have so much going on in their lives.

"Looking after their health was not their priority, with legal matters and social welfare issues often taking most of their attention," Candy said.

Candy remembers her first patient visit in one of the wings at Silverwater Women's.

"I sat there with her and just listened. There was so much she had to tell me, so much to unpack. I was so full of emotion for her circumstances.

"As much as I am wired to jump in and help with everything I can, I had to focus on making a positive difference with respect to their health and then link patients to the other supports available," Candy said.

"It can be tricky because you identify with the barriers your clients are talking about, what they may have faced, and you want to offer all the support across all the areas you can. It is so important to not be overwhelmed.

"I covered four different Correctional Centres around Sydney. If I could make my patients' overall journey more positive and their health journey a little bit easier so they can be as well as possible, then I think I've done my job," Candy said.

The enforcement of strict isolation rules during the height of the pandemic was the push Candy and her husband needed to return home to Country.

"The love of family and the unexpected passing of my younger brother Roger in 2020 was one of the hardest things I've had to deal with," Candy said.

“We have five children and four grandkids and being actively involved in their lives in person became our priority.

“We did not want to miss another birthday; or another important event and I felt my unique set of skills could reassure my family and community during such uncertain times.

“I said to my husband, ‘this is crazy, let’s just go home, we can work out jobs once we get there’!

Candy secured a temporary role with Murrumbidgee Local Health District as an Aboriginal Health Worker at Griffith Base Hospital.

“I was covering a maternity leave position, and really happy to be back in a more general role. I already knew many people in my community, from Griffith to Lake Cargelligo, Tumut to Wagga,” Candy said.

“I want to make sure that this is a culturally safe place for them to come if they need to be in hospital. I can support them linking to other services in the community as well.

Candy has now secured a permanent fulltime position as Aboriginal Health Worker with MLHD.

“I love my current role how we can support patients in the hospital, I feel a great sense of responsibility to my community.

“I enjoy the yarns that I have with the patients and to build rapport with them. It is important to find out what their issues are and to make the time to sit and listen.

Candy’s friendly personality and kindness shines through when you spend time with her and contributes to a feeling that hers is a safe space.

“I feel being present is reassuring for the patients and I hope they can trust me and feel able to raise any concerns they may have,” Candy said.

“A lot of the time an Aboriginal person will not fully disclose to a stranger, or a health professional what they are really feeling and thinking.



“The medical talk can also be intimidating and is a real barrier, so it’s crucial we are there to support the patients.

Candy wants to inspire mob that they can achieve far beyond their dreams.

She describes her proudest moment as the day she graduated from the University of Sydney with a Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion in 2013.

“I never thought I would achieve a university degree. So, it was really the proudest day when I graduated, and all my family were there with me.

“My whole family supported me to do it, to make it possible, so we call it ‘Our Degree!’.

“To finish something, you never thought you could achieve is a real-

life lesson for me, my family, for my Mob, and it tells us that nothing is beyond our reach.

“You have to believe in yourself, and sometimes its just a matter of being offered the right opportunity and support to thrive and to do something you believe in.

“If I can help to inspire my people, especially the younger generations, we need them to come through and to dream big, Candy said.

“And I want all our Mobs to know that they can do it too!” ■



A VOICE FOR HIS MOB: RONNIE BAMBLETT

RONNIE BAMBLETT
Aboriginal Health Worker
Griffith Base Hospital

A proud Wiradjuri man, and a loving father to two beautiful children, Ronnie Bamblett had spent much of his career within health, dedicating his time to mental health, drug and alcohol support and peer support.

He completed his Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Healthcare.

However, it was a life-changing accident in 2014 and a long road to recovery, that showed Ronnie what his true passion and purpose in life is.

Ronnie's experience as a health worker empowered him to speak up and educate hospital staff on how to deliver better and appropriate care for people.

"It made me feel really passionate about helping others to be heard," Ronnie said.

"I was a mess when I got home, really depressed and had to stop working while I was recovering.

"You could see the physical scars, but I didn't really have time to address all the emotional stuff that was going on underneath all that," Ronnie said.

"When I did return to work, I became the project co-ordinator for the University of NSW regarding harm minimisation and alcohol, for my Mob. At the completion of the project, I began to work as a Mental Health Peer Support Worker and luckily identified, that I was not doing okay."

Ronnie took a step back and did some hands-on work at a vineyard to try and clear his head, although he still felt like a dark cloud was looming over him.

"I thought to myself, 'look if I can't help myself, how can I help others?'"

Ronnie enrolled in the Mental Health Recovery Program with Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD).

"It was very interesting, and it gave me great insight into what I was going through.

"When I was a kid there were major impacts and barriers that were stopping Aboriginal people from completing stuff.

"It was systemic, and we really felt like we didn't have a chance to succeed. That resulted in me being disengaged and troubled as a kid.

"Although I was interested in learning, I had been told I wasn't smart enough and it wasn't just me who copped the doubt, so many of the kids in my community suffered the same.

"Sadly, I got into trouble a bit and moved away for a clean break. My teachers at the new school I attended, believed in me, they saw I was interested and helped me study a range of different subjects.

"Their help and time made me feel like I could do my schooling and that I mattered. It made a real difference," Ronnie said.

"It spurred me on to finish my studies and I was one of the first in my family to finish my Year 12 certificate."

As well as completing school, Ronnie was a keen footballer, and was signed to play with the Rabbitohs in Sydney.

"I wanted to be a superstar footy player, and gave it a real crack, I was getting noticed. Unfortunately, I was miserably homesick, I called my mum and said, 'I'm depressed, I want to get out of here, I need to be home with my family.

"It's something a lot of the kids around here go through, showing that promise in sport, but not coping

with being away from country. It's another opportunity I suppose, for us to learn and to see how we can offer better support. Because cultural connection to family and country, really is central to our lives and there is no shame in that and never should be," Ronnie said.

Ronnie feels his role as both an Aboriginal Health Worker and as an Aboriginal man who has spent time as an inpatient in hospital, gives him a unique perspective to give meaningful feedback to peers and consumers alike.

"It is what inspired me to apply for the Aboriginal Health Chronic Care Worker position with MLHD. I felt passionate about helping my people access appropriate care in a culturally safe and welcoming environment, especially our Elders.

"My people just often nod and agree with what the doctor is saying, because they want to get out of there. Many of our Mob are fearful of government departments and hospitals and the experience can be confusing and frightening with all the jargon.

"They get to a point where they don't care what the results are and the possible outcomes- they just want to get out of there. It doesn't matter if they are really sick, or even dying, they just want to go home to their safe haven, to their community," Ronnie said.

"An Aboriginal Health Worker is the voice for the consumer because we can relay what it all means in their lingo, and they feel more confident to raise their concerns and issues with us.

"We have made good ground at Griffith Base Hospital now, so our mob know about us more and they understand why we are here, they will ask us to come and have a yarn with them.

"We also have built good relationships with the hospital staff to let them know our role and what we

are about. They can ask us for help and refer people to us if they identify or if they are concerned about someone. It means we're getting a better outcome for our patients, and that is really important to everyone here," Ronnie said.

Ronnie is looking forward to the redevelopment project at Griffith Base Hospital and has helped to design the courtyard to be a culturally safe space.

"I came up with the idea of making the shape of a big Gugaa (Goanna) because it is our totem and to have all native plants surrounding it, to give us a good connection to the area and to make it appropriate for important things like Sorry Business.

"I love coming to my job every day. It is about supporting and advocating for my community and Elders and making sure they have a voice and feel safe to ask questions. I want our people to know that they deserve the very best health care just like everyone else, we are all equal."

Ronnie is hopeful for the future, and for the opportunities that the younger generations in his community, are able to embrace.

"I suppose I'm out and about lots, and that's important to me to be involved in my town and to speak up.

"My family is so important to me, and I have two kids, so I want to show them the way.

"Finishing high school was hard at times because we still did not have the cultural understanding in society, nevertheless, I went on to do more studies. It's led to this career where I am helping my Mob.

It is a big driving force for me.

"Now there are four of us in my family who have finished Year 12 and gone onto further study, and I am so proud of them.

"I want that for my children, for the children in my community, I want them to believe in themselves.

It means we keep the lines of communication open, and that policymakers are prepared to listen and engage with us.

"Our services, especially education and healthcare, need to be culturally appropriate."

Ronnie is open about sharing his story with the youth in his community, to hopefully inspire and reassure them to stay focused on their dreams and not to give up.

"I'm always really honest with them and tell them about my own struggles and how I reached out for mental health support after my accident. I say: 'Look, I was there, and we can help. But in the end, it is really up to you and how much you want to work, it's up to how much you want to do it.'

"To be honest, if I didn't speak out and ask for help, I'd be just another statistic in society because that's where I was headed. I was in a pretty bad, dark place.

"After I reached out, so many people let me know I was not alone and that I mattered, and that was really something to me.

"I was scared to talk about my depression, so I didn't talk about it. But now I'm open because it helps me to release, to manage it and to heal.

"And if my story helps one person to speak up and to share their story, and their journey, then it's all been worth it.

"It's all about giving people a voice, to feel heard and to feel mattered. Because they do." ■





FOCUSSED ON BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

JAYLA NIX
Aboriginal Health Team Leader

Jayla Nix is a proud Wiradjuri woman.

With blood ties to Wellington, her Great Grandparents came from the Nanima Mission in Wellington, as known to them as the town “Common.” Jayla has

grown up hearing her family’s stories of survival and strength.

Her sense of belonging and family ties drives her to better understand how she can help and what her people need.

“I know so many people in community and have high expectations of myself and how I can assist them. It matters to me,” said Jayla.

Jayla previously worked as an Aboriginal family support worker for a disability service aimed at early intervention for children with disability, assisting families to access the support they needed.

She wanted to ensure her contribution at work made broad and lasting positive changes for her people, so applied for a position with MLHD as an Aboriginal Health Worker in 2013.

“I felt very connected to my people and their stories. I loved to stop and have a yarn and really listen. I felt pulled into a role that was focused on helping my people access better health services,” Jayla said.

“ I felt very connected to my people and their stories... [and I can] focus on helping my people access better health services... ”

"I felt like I had a good grasp about the allied health services available, as I had previously worked alongside physios, OT and speech pathologists.

"But it was a big eye opener in applying my skills to a hospital setting and understanding how everything links into that."

"I was thrown in the deep end and loved the complexity of the role. I was able to see up close how the little changes we facilitate, help to have huge impacts," Jayla remembers.

Jayla described her role as an Aboriginal Health Worker as similar to a social worker with an Aboriginal Health lens.

"We are focused on the delivery of health services that are culturally appropriate, as well as providing that social and emotional support. We link people into other services and help to follow things through for them.

"We assist with many things like assistance at specialist appointments. It could involve so many things like, lack of transport, or even needing a support person there with them to help make sense of it all.

"All the small things can add up to really big things for my people," Jayla said.

For Jayla the end game is navigating the complex issues around closing the gap, and helping her people stay healthy and out of hospital.

"There is no point sending someone home with a health plan they are not comfortable with and cannot do, because they will just end up back in hospital

"It is so important to ask questions and to understand where people are coming from, what their experience is.

"Not to go off on a tangent about what you might think they need," Jayla said.

"It's more than just overcoming tangible obstacles, because sadly sometimes my people feel a kind of shame about asking for help, a worry, and it stops people reaching out.

"Our team is crucial because it has become one of the trusted points of contact my people can reach out to," Jayla said.

Recognising she could not be everywhere; Jayla found the opportunity to support others to be empowered in their roles as Aboriginal Health Workers across the district.

After 5 years as an Aboriginal Health Worker, Jayla was appointed the MLHD Aboriginal Health Team Leader.

"Having experience working in the role has really allowed me to better understand how I can support my team so they can get on with doing the doing," Jayla said.

"Although I am not on the ground as much, I am still in the background asking "Hey have you tried this? Can we do that too?" I cannot help myself!

"I find great satisfaction in helping my team and have the utmost trust and respect for their commitment. They do great work every day, they just get it done," Jayla said.

"We really do make such a difference in such a broad range of ways, so I am hopeful to be able to further expand our team so we have the resources and reach to contribute more," Jayla said.

For Jayla the drive to keep asking questions, to keep seeking better outcomes for her people is deeply personal.

"I grew up very connected to my nan. She is the eldest of 4 and a real survivor. Many in our family are part of the stolen generation, and she was the only one who was able to go to school regularly.

"My nan helped to take care of everyone in her family, carried the burden of hiding her brother because he had light skinned.

"She had so much on her plate, and lived the hard times, but embraced the opportunity of education she was given.

"I've watched my grandmother and now my mother and how they deal with these issues, how to process the past and current pain and that we see."

"That has always stayed with me.

"I think that is why I am so passionate about educating and empowering others to make informed choices about their health care.

"Now that my nan is elderly and does not really understand health and all the services and interventions we have, being an Aboriginal Health Worker gives me the opportunity to really help her.

"For me it is important that Aboriginal people are able to access services that they need.

"There is still so much work to be done, so many inroads to make, and trust to build, and I feel so privileged to be a part of that story." ■



WELCOME

NEW STAFF APPOINTMENTS



SARAH PITHER
Activities Officer & Physio Assistant, Lockhart MPS

Sarah started her career with MLHD in 2017 in the HealthShare team, assisting with duties in the kitchen and as a cleaner.

"It was a really good role actually and I really enjoyed it. You have to be great at your job, and be a good people-person but not get too distracted, because our beautiful patients and residents are always up for a chat!"

"Lockhart is a lovely small town, and so I know most of the people here. When I worked as a cleaner I just loved having a chat with everyone as I did my work and helping out whenever was needed," Sarah said.

Sarah had been working in her role as a cleaner for three years when she decided to broaden her horizons and apply for a

role as an Allied Health Assistant at the Lockhart MPS.

"When the scholarship came up to study as an Allied Health Assistant, everyone was telling me to go for it because I'm such a bubbly person and was loving my work so much, and I thought why not?!"

"I was thrilled when my application was successful and set about my studies while I kept working.

The program supports training for Allied Health Assistants (AHAs) seeking to further develop their knowledge and skills.

"This role involves planning meaningful and fun activities for the residents of our MPS to participate in.

"It's a really important role because we want our people to feel happy and engaged with what is going on around them. I love to take them out for coffee and have a chat, and to organise fun outings.

"We are all about helping people to stay as healthy, happy and independent as possible, so these roles really help with that.



RACHAEL BARSOUM
Pharmacist, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

Rachael knows too well the importance of family when raising a child.

It is the sole reason she and her husband left the beautiful beaches of the north coast, to relocate back home so their daughter could get to know her aunts, uncles, and cousins.

"Both my husband and I grew up in Wagga, and while we both loved living and working in Port Macquarie, we felt that our daughter needed to be able to form those important bonds, to have those memories with her relatives.

Rachael commenced her role as Pharmacist at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in December last year.

"The team at Wagga Base is extremely welcoming and supportive, and although Wagga just feels like home, it is sometimes a bit nerve-racking to start in a new role with a new organisation.

"I am enjoying the varied aspects of my work, every day brings something different, and I just love the feeling of helping to make a change in people's lives."



SABA FARBIZ
Clinical Pharmacist
Corowa Health Service

Saba and her husband Amir swapped their busy city lifestyles two years ago when they moved from Melbourne to Rutherglen, and then onto Wodonga.

"It was so different moving to the country. Besides the quieter lifestyle, the conversations are different. Everyone was talking about farms, sheep, cows and crops!"

Saba smiles, "I look back now and laugh. I had not imagined I would be talking about those things, but it is a big part of my patient's life. It is very interesting to learn more and to appreciate the things that are important to the people in this community.

"Corowa is a gorgeous little town and I love my patients at Corowa Health Service. I make sure to really talk to them and their family, learn everyone's names and build that rapport. It is so valuable in my role because I need to know what medication my patients are taking and why, and if that medication needs reviewing," Saba said.



SARAH THOMAS
Aged Care Lead Pharmacist
Wagga Wagga Base
Hospital

Sarah is an experienced pharmacist who has worked across community and hospital pharmacy settings.

In addition to assisting all MLHD aged care facilities to maintain medication management accreditation standards in line with MLHD strategic direction and priorities in aged care, Sarah will work with MLHD contracted aged care pharmacists to support consistent and evidence-based medication management.

She will oversee and support aged care residents to transition safely through the healthcare system including acute, residential, primary and community care, from a medication management perspective. Meanwhile, Sarah will continue her current clinical pharmacist role in WWBH on part-time basis.

Over the past six years, Sarah has worked across a variety of clinical wards at WWBH and completed her Master’s Degree of Clinical Pharmacy, specialising in Geriatric Pharmacy Practice and Geriatric Disease Management, Palliative

Care, Infectious Diseases and Management of Future Pharmacy Practice.

As MLHD’s Aged Care Lead Pharmacist, Sarah’s specialised knowledge and skillset will help ensure that our patients’ medications are appropriate, and to successfully lead the delivery of high-level healthcare in our district into the future.

Passionate about advocating for older people with a clear career goal to further her specialisation in aged and palliative care, Sarah is dedicated to improving patient health and wellbeing among older patients.

“Our older people are at a very vulnerable stage of their life so delivering safe, effective and timely geriatric medicine pharmacy services is imperative to their overall health management outcomes,” Sarah said.

Sarah has already been involved in a number of quality improvement initiatives within MLHD, in consultation with doctors and geriatricians, aimed at reducing multiple medications to lower falls risk in older patients as well as implementing medication reviews for residents within aged care facilities, with a focus of deprescribing opiates, benzodiazepines and anti-psychotics.

Sarah is also involved in the staff advisory committee for MLHD and developed a detailed business proposal for extending the existing pharmacy services for Wagga Wagga to align with the strategic vision of MLHD.



CARLY SILBERBERG
Facility Manager Junee MPS

Carly is a registered nurse and former Director of Critical Care Nursing for a major city hospital when she decided to throw caution to the wind and relocate with her family to the quaint country town of Junee.

“Our city lifestyle had become tedious, the long commute to and from work, the expense of a huge mortgage, the cost of living and then trying to factor in quality time for our family activities.

“I said to my husband, let’s just go, so we packed up our family for historic Junee, and have not looked back since.”

Carly has over 18 years’ experience as a registered nurse and manager, specialising in intensive care, and was not concerned about finding work within the Riverina and was appointed Facility Manager Position at Junee MPS.

A country person at heart, her friendly personality and attitude, has ensured she has been able to build positive relationships with staff, general practitioners and her community alike.

“I grew up in Queanbeyan, where my mother was also

a Mother-craft nurse at the local hospital and everyone said, ‘Hello, how are you? How can I help?’

“It is just natural to me to also be that way, my office is situated in the heart of the hospital, open and accessible where I can welcome passers-by and have the situational awareness,” Carly said.

In her 20th year of nursing, Carly’s role as Facility Manager has not interfered with her passion and dedication to practising nursing daily.

“I love caring for others and find it is a privilege to look after people, particularly when they’re incredibly vulnerable. To be able have a meaningful impact in other people’s lives, as part of your working day, well it is the reason I get out of bed each morning, to be able to give to the community in that way.

“I’ve come from a large tertiary hospital, so there’s not much I haven’t seen in 18 years as a critical care /ICU nurse. I want to share that knowledge and experience with the team here at Junee,” Carly said.

“Working in a rural remote setting gives you that sense of community and that you probably make a significant difference to people’s lives every single day. I feel really privileged to work with some amazing people in the team, who just want what’s best for our community.”

FIND MORE PROFILES

VISIT: <https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/about-us/newsroom/staff-profiles>

Rural, Regional and Remote Nursing & Midwifery conference

Are you interested in addressing the inequities in rural, regional, and remote healthcare?

If you're in the area (or planning a trip!), we're hosting a conference with the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association in Port Macquarie in March.

The conference theme is Progressing Rural, Regional and Remote Nursing and Midwifery Careers and will bring together industry leaders and researchers to showcase innovative

care models and share ways to advance nursing and midwifery outside the major cities. This conference provides CPD hours for Registered Nurses and Midwives.

PORT MACQUARIE

Progressing rural, regional & remote nursing & midwifery careers

THURSDAY 30 MARCH
9AM – 4PM

Ticket price: \$50
Undergraduate nursing and midwifery student: Free

Lunch provided, including morning and afternoon tea

The NSWNMA and Charles Sturt University have collaborated to bring this empowering event to Port Macquarie. Hear from inspirational industry leaders and researchers as they showcase innovative models of care and ways of advancing nursing and midwifery capabilities in rural, regional and remote health.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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REGISTER YOUR SPOT NOW!
nswnma.info/rrr-edu

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: TRISH LEMIN

Trish's nursing career has taken her from rural emergency departments to being deployed to fire zones and to Wuhan, China early in the pandemic. Working as a district trauma clinical nurse consultant is where Trish found her true passion in the nursing profession. Trish also has experience in academia as a nursing lecturer and researcher.

As recipient of the 'NSW nurse of the year 2021' award in recognition of her work in Emergency management, Trish's goal is to ensure patients with severe injuries receive the best care in regional and rural hospitals. She believes this will be achieved by increasing nursing skills and capability in regional NSW around disaster preparedness. Trish currently works as the disaster nurse manager within the Mid-North Coast LHD.

PROGRAM

- NSW parliamentary inquiry into rural, regional and remote (RRR) healthcare – outcomes and recommendations
- Nurse Practitioners – improving holistic care in RRR communities
- Supporting nurses and midwives to stay rural
- Health workforce retention in rural and remote regions
- Educational pathways to support rural, regional and remote career progression
- Midwifery care in regional and rural contexts
- Panel discussion – your opportunity to speak to our presenters
- Implementing allied health interventions for rural patients
- Keeping up with your CPD - all you need to know for recording and reflecting on your continuing professional development.
- Opportunity to tour Charles Sturt University's state of the art clinical simulation facilities.

When: 9am-4pm, Thursday 30 March 2023

Where: Charles Sturt University, Port Macquarie Campus

You'll hear about topics including health workforce retention in rural and remote areas, career progression pathways, implementing allied health interventions for rural patients, and tips for recording your continuing professional development. You'll also have the chance to ask questions at a panel discussion and tour Charles Sturt University's state-of-the-art clinical simulation facilities.

Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided. ■



Did you know?

Charles Sturt University's new [Graduate Certificate in Nursing \(Rural and Remote Nursing\)](#) was designed in consultation with Western NSW Local Health District. This course is one of a kind in NSW and one of only 2 in Australia.

Currently available with Commonwealth supported places (CSP), you can save more than 71%! That means you could save up to \$8,688 on your fees.

And there is more good news. You can complete the Graduate Certificate in Nursing in as little as 8 months of part-time study, while you continue to work, and gain credit into our Master of Nursing (with specialisations). Sounds like a good deal to us!

CSP places are also available for the following courses:

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These courses are available part-time and 100% online, giving you the freedom and support you need to fit study around your lifestyle. At Charles Sturt University, the industry-aligned nursing postgraduate courses are designed to help you build your nursing career and make a real difference to communities so apply now to take your nursing career to the next level. ■



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Learn more

→ study.csu.edu.au/pg-nursing

☎ 1800 275 278

A PASSION FOR RURAL HEALTH

Dr Juliet Chan is interested in musical theatre, is an accomplished dancer and initially dreamed pursuing an acting career.

But a trip to a Uganda Mission set her on a different path, laying the foundations for her interest in medicine and a passion for rural health.

“As a teenager it was very confronting to visit one of the poorest nations in the world, and in particular access to adequate health services and the lack of infrastructure within the hospital setting. It made me take stock of my aspirations and realign them to a more meaningful life centred around others.

“Once you have seen that kind of poverty it is hard to look away. I wanted to do something meaningful with my life, to make a real difference. I had witnessed suffering for myself, and I thought-‘well what are you going to do about it?’

“I was interested in science and was a good student, and I had lived experience with my mother who suffered from a chronic illness and the complexities of her ongoing care, so I decided to study medicine instead,” Juliet said.

Dr Chan is one of 28 Interns who commenced at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in 2023, in a pathway tailored to rural and regional medical practice.

This involves a two-year training program with networked hospitals throughout the state, providing formal and on the job training across different specialties during the intern year, including surgery, medicine and emergency medicine.

As a medical graduate, Dr Chan felt that Wagga Wagga Base Hospital was a standout in providing the necessary

opportunity and support to complete her supervised year of practice in order to become an independent practitioner.

“I chose Wagga Wagga Base Hospital because I have a passion for rural health, and Wagga is a pioneer in its training program for junior doctors.”

“It has a really good reputation for looking after junior doctors and I knew I would benefit from that kind of support. You tend to build closer professional relationships with your bosses, and they seem to be more invested in your professional development and they have more time to spend with each intern,” Juliet said.

“I have travelled around quite a bit already as a junior doctor and worked in many rural facilities across NSW, and I think it is a good opportunity to travel around and experience all the opportunities in rural and remote settings.

“It can be more complex and diverse, and you practice in a much more general scope, rather than being limited to a single niche speciality.

“I am considering the Rural Generalist Training program and looking at GP Obstetrics in the future. I feel there is a gap there and to be able to practice as a community doctor with a speciality is another way to make a positive impact here.

“I am really enjoying it so far, and I love the culture at Wagga Base Hospital and within the community.

All the Junior Medical Doctors here are new, but we are all looking out for each other and feel really connected already.

“My husband is a GP and has finished his training, so I am lucky he was able to follow me in his career as well.



“We have joined a local church, and everyone is welcoming, inviting us for dinners and social events, we feel like Wagga is home already.

“My faith as a Christian has given me the encouragement and strength to keep going, even when I think I do not have much left to give.

“Your first years as a doctor can be extremely busy, stressful and overwhelming, but I feel my life experiences and my faith have directly led me to a vocation that involves making a positive and meaningful impact in others’ lives.

“Once you understand the situation in rural areas, it is really hard to turn away from it. There are both positive and negative experiences for people when navigating the health system, particularly in a more rural setting where access to specialists can be more difficult, and I want to be a part of the solution.

“I feel needed here, you are part of the community, and they really care about you. I feel quite privileged to be serving people who live in our regional communities, I feel like I am meant to be here.” ■

Imaging Associates welcomes new MRI machine

Imaging Associates Wagga Wagga recently welcomed the arrival of a new state-of-the-art Philips Elition 3 Tesla MRI- the fourth MRI for the city of Wagga Wagga and the second at the clinic. The state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging machine was craned into the first floor in late 2022, where construction was undertaken to make room for the 6-tonne apparatus.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a non-invasive medical test that clinicians use to diagnose and treat certain conditions. A great advantage of MRI is that it doesn't use ionising radiation (X-Rays) and provides detailed information on structures that may not be seen as well on X-Ray, Ultrasound, or CT. MRI is recognised as being the gold standard in medical imaging.

The increased capacity supplied by the second MRI machine will see waiting periods reduced, providing the community of Wagga Wagga with faster access to high-quality services. Currently, the clinic is able to offer same day/next day MRI appointments to local referring practitioners and their patients.

The new MRI machine is fully accredited with a Medicare license, enabling Medicare rebates on eligible scans. MRI appointments require a referral from a medical practitioner and Imaging Associates can accept all referrals from a referring doctor.



Imaging Associates has a history of imaging excellence in the Riverina with leading sub-specialised radiologists, a focus on patient comfort and care and fast turnaround for reports and images.

The team at Imaging Associates look forward to offering improved access to their services. ■



Why Imaging Associates?

- Reduced waiting times for MRI scans
- Two MRI machines including new state-of-the art Philips Elition 3T MRI
- Industry leading sub-specialised radiologists ensuring expert diagnosis
- Medicare rebates on all eligible scans



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“ Everything I do as a consumer health advocate is to effect change and improve the health outcomes of our consumers. ”



Garth Hungerford, Chair, Wagga Wagga Local Health Advisory Committee

LHAC CHAIR SHINES IN NSW HEALTH AWARDS

Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) was thrilled to congratulate all the winners of the 24th Annual NSW Health Awards, especially Wagga resident and Chair of the Wagga Wagga Local Health Advisory Committee Garth Hungerford.

Garth was declared winner in the Volunteer of the Year Award category.

Garth has been an integral member of the Wagga Wagga community as a health advocate and advisor.

"Everything I do as a consumer health advocate is to effect change and improve the health outcomes of our consumers," Garth said.

"Winning the *NSW Health volunteer of the Year Award* helps shine a spotlight on partnering with consumers, patient centred care and the development of new models of care."

Contributing his time and knowledge of the local community to multiple councils, committees and working groups within the Murrumbidgee Local Health District as a community representative, Garth has been an active member of the Wagga Wagga Local Health Advisory Committee as committee chair.

"I volunteer on many committees, both locally and at state level, but near and dear to my heart is the Wagga Wagga Local Health Advisory Committee," Garth said.

In response to a concerning spike in youth suicide within the Riverina region, the Wagga Wagga Local Health Advisory Committee (LHAC), under Garth's leadership designed and developed a silicone wrist band which has a QR Code, allowing the user to visit associated mental health help and wellbeing websites.

"Our project last year was focussed on youth mental health by developing multi-coloured silicon wrist bands with the words 'head here for help' and a QR Code which directs students to a dedicated website to access information on their own time or with their peers," explains Garth.

The bands were produced in a variety of vibrant colours attractive to all ages including the Aboriginal flag colours.

The LHAC worked with local Wagga Wagga High Schools and the local media to distribute the wrist bands to local school children in Years 7 and Year 8.

Approximately 5,000 wristbands were distributed with significant interest by local students.

Other LHACs across the district have joined in the initiative in 2023, and will distribute wristbands to school students in the Snowy Valleys, Hilltops, Finley and Griffith. ■



Top: Garth Hungerford, winner of the 2022 NSW Health Volunteer of the Year award.
Above: Silicon wrist bands with 'Head here for help' and QR code.

PHOTO GALLERY



WAGGA WAGGA: Official Opening of the Wagga Wagga Health Services Hub



Tumut: MLHD staff supported our colleagues at NSW Ambulance recently at the opening of the new Ambulance station in Tumut



WELCOME to our 28 new Junior Medical Officers



TUMUT: Official Opening of the Tumut Hospital Helipad



HARDEN-MURRUMBURRAH: Staff Farewell for Clinical Nurse Educator Marilyn Wales



COOTAMUNDRA: Fran Trench from the University of Notre Dame Rural Training Hub (Sponsor) presents the 2022 MLHD Exceptional Rural Healthcare Award to Occupational Therapist Katherine Donoghue.



GRIFFITH: Medical team at Griffith Base Hospital

2023

MLHD EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence

Murrumbidgee Local Health District's brightest stars are being given the chance to shine, with nominations now open for the 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards.

The awards celebrate the achievements of health professionals and volunteers in their pursuit of excellence and commitment to improving the lives of others.

"Our 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards are an exciting opportunity for us to acknowledge the great work that is being done across the District," said Chief Executive Jill Ludford. "During my site visits across the region, I see so many great initiatives and projects, and excellent delivery of quality service that it's great to see these staff rewarded for their efforts at the Excellence Award celebrations."

Murrumbidgee Local Health District is one of the largest employers across the region with more than 5,000 healthcare staff working in 33 hospitals and 12 primary health care centres across our region. While around 50 per cent of staff are nurses, the district also

employs doctors and allied health staff, as well as a range of corporate service, support and maintenance staff. MLHD is also supported by a wide range of volunteers.

Awards are available in team and individual categories. More information about the categories and criteria is available in the Awards Guidelines on the MLHD website here: <https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/about-us/newsroom/events/mlhd-excellence-awards-2023>

Alternatively scan the QR Code below or you can obtain a nomination form by emailing MLHD-feedback@health.nsw.gov.au

Nominations will close on Friday 21 April 2023. The Awards presentations will take place at a gala presentation evening on Friday 16 June 2023. ■

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NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

2023 MLHD Excellence Awards

Nominations close: 21 April 2023

*Celebrating the achievements of individuals and teams
for their pursuit of excellence and commitment to
improving the lives of others.*

TEAM NOMINATION FORMS



INDIVIDUAL NOMINATION FORMS



TEAM AWARDS

Enriching Consumer Experience
Value Based Healthcare
Exceptional Aboriginal Healthcare
Patient Safety First
Innovation and Health Research
Keeping People Healthy
Digital Innovation
Sustainability & Environment
Enhancing People & Culture

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Volunteer of the Year
Staff Member of the Year
Nurse or Midwife of the Year
Allied Health Staff Member of the Year

MORE INFORMATION
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MURRUMBIDGEE
Local Health District



HANDS ON EVERYWHERE FOR VISITING MEDICAL STUDENTS



Medical students Harry Hamblin and Brenden James spent two weeks on the Bush Bursary placement.

Forty medical, nursing and allied health students were sponsored by the CWA and local councils recently to spend two weeks in rural and regional NSW as part of the NSW Rural Doctors Network Bush Bursary program. Locally, 10 spent time in Griffith, Hay, Leeton Lockhart, Narrandera and Wagga Wagga.

Just before Christmas medical students Harry Hamblin and Brenden James spent two weeks on a Bush Bursary placement that combined time in Lockhart and Wagga Wagga. Both are current University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) medical students based in Sydney. Harry is a local whose family is from Young, and while Brenden is a city lad, he has rural family connections down Woomargama way.

Warmly welcomed by the Lockhart community their experience started with a tour of Lockhart and time on farm with well-known locals Fran and

Max Day, whose family were in the midst of harvest. The following days at the Lockhart Multipurpose Service and Lockhart Medical Clinic provided them with wonderful hands-on experiences. Both students were so excited by how much they learned as local health teams involved them closely in each day's activities, not all of which were routine! Outside of working hours found them playing trivia, attending the Lockhart Hospital Christmas party and at the mercy of the Osborne Cricket Club.

The second week of the placement continued in Wagga Wagga with local general practitioners and their teams at Hammond Health and the Aboriginal Medical Service (RIVMED). At Wagga Wagga Base Hospital involvement was again hands-on, with experienced clinicians encouraging engagement and questions. Harry and Brenden spent time in the ED department, in the Geriatrics and Mental Health

Units. One highlight for Harry was the day he spent with Prof Kerin Fielding, Orthopaedic Surgeon. As he summarised, "spending a day in the theatre not only gave me the opportunity to see surgeries but to also learn how to scrub in and how the whole surgical team worked together throughout the whole process. I believe this experience will be very valuable for me when I start my clinical years. Throughout the surgeries, Prof. Fielding was very active in asking me clinical anatomy-based questions and answering any questions I had about the surgeries and medicine in general. "

Brenden's experience in Wagga Wagga Emergency department was "awesome, as the registrars were so welcoming and keen to throw us into the mix where safe. Even though they were incredibly busy, they took the time to explain things and educate us. There was the diversity of experience, presentations were so broad and varied that I learnt a great deal more than I expected I would. The team in the ED were all so keen to get me to do stuff and teach me, that I ended up staying 11 hours!"

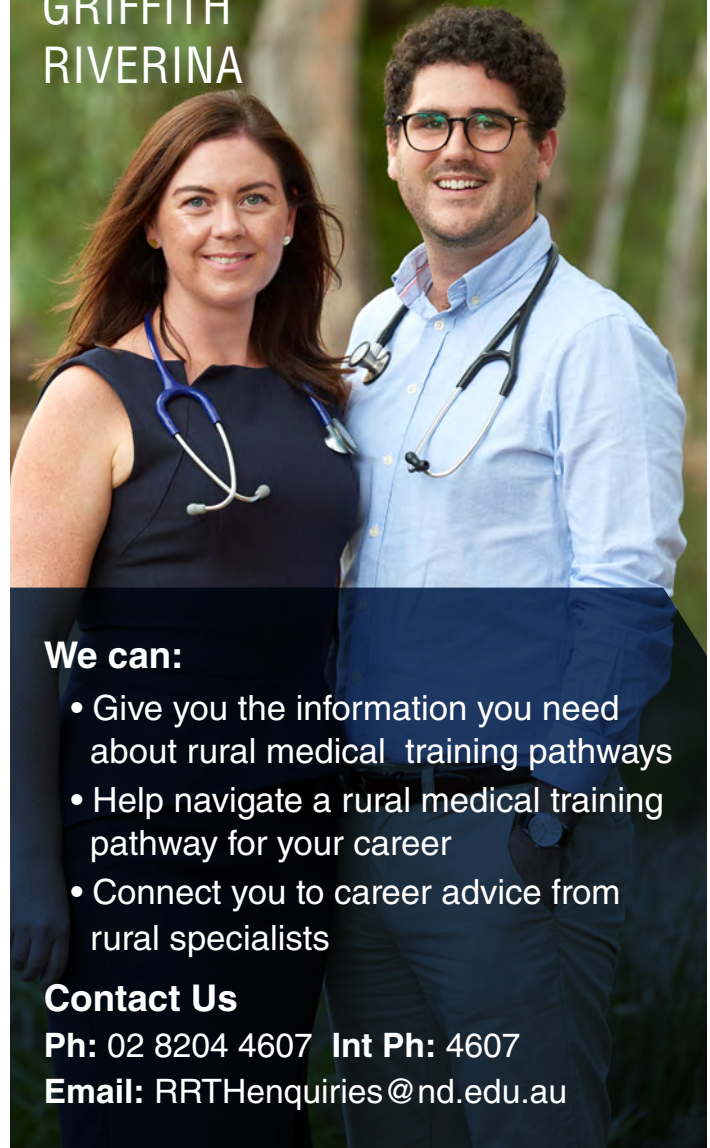
The value of experience in two such different locations, even though only forty-five minutes apart, was clearly appreciated by both young men who were amazed at how much they learnt, both about rural medicine and regional living. They had the chance to talk with local practitioners about possible rural training pathways and get involved in community activities.

The Riverina Regional Training Hub collaborated with the NSW Rural Doctors Network (RDN) to arrange time for both Hamblin and Brenden with Wagga Wagga clinicians and health workers and Lockhart Shire

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The whole rural and regional experience for Bush Bursars.

Council undertook this in Lockhart. A very wonderful undertaking for everyone involved, made possible by the generosity of local communities and health teams. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ALAM STRIKES PERFECT WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN FINLEY

When Dr Alam Yoosuff moved to Australia from Sri Lanka in 2006 he had the choice of going to Darwin, Ipswich or Finley.

He wanted to move to Darwin, but his wife chose Finley in the Riverina area of NSW, population 2,000 people.

Eighteen years later, Alam Yoosuff, his wife and two children, aged 12 and 7, are firmly entrenched in Finley.

The tight-knit community welcomed the Sri Lankan-born general practitioner with open arms, providing accommodation, a vehicle and a secure support network.

Dr Yoosuff said he wanted to work in a regional area because of the variety he gets in his work and it's always challenging.

"I like to do general practice, looking after people in the community in a room, sitting and doing consultations," Alam said.

"I like to do emergency medicine, looking after people when they are in a dire state, I like to look after my patients, when they are hospitalised in an inpatient unit.

"I like to look after my patients when they can't live in their own home and go to aged care."

"From the day you are born to the day you die there will be a space where I can look after my patients in this town."

For the past three years Dr Yoosuff has been running the Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway. A MLHD, UNSW's Murrumbidgee Rural Training Hub, NSW Health and federal ministry of health initiative to establish the innovative program.

"I was involved in negotiating and collaborating with general practices around the Murrumbidgee area including Deniliquin, Young, Cootamundra, Temora, Gundagai and Narrandera to get the pathway operationalised.

"The most important difference with the Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway is that the general practice registrar is employed by MLHD and therefore have all the same employment benefits as other hospital-based registrars employed by NSW Health. This is not heard of in general practice," said Dr Yoosuff.

The rural generalist training pathway gives GPs a four-to-six-year contract working across hospitals and GP clinics throughout the MLHD.

The doctors thrive as they are faced with different challenges while working in more remote settings than many are used to.

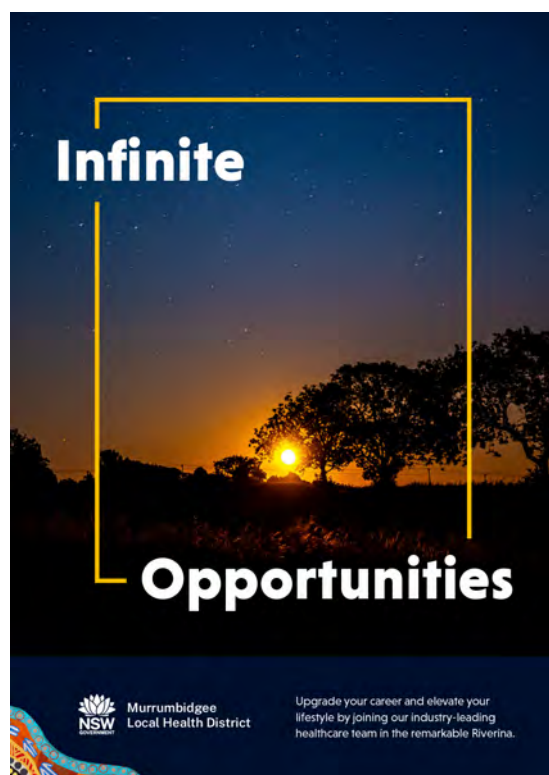


Alam says it's a joy to be part of the program.

"Now with MRGTP we've got this opportunity to identify really talented, rural interested medical students or interns and then grow them in our own system." g



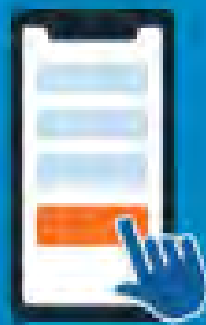
Find out more about Dr Alam Yoosuff and the Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway:
<https://youtu.be/YJjMrLArG5s>



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