

MURRUMBIDGEE

ISSUE 24 SPRING 2023

# MATTERS



Health  
Murrumbidgee

MAGAZINE



**FEATURE:**  
CELEBRATING  
EXCELLENCE

**IN FOCUS:**  
RENAL UNIT



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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 24th 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

Celebrating Excellence: winner of the Staff Member of the Year Award, Nigel Smith and Melissa Andrews

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### OUR VISION

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



# Celebrating Excellence

The Murrumbidgee Local Health District has celebrated the outstanding contribution of health professionals and volunteers from across the region at the 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards.

More than 200 staff and guests from the District were on hand to congratulate winners at the ceremony.

MLHD Interim Board Chair Adrian Lindner paid tribute to award winners for their tremendous contributions.

“It is a pleasure to be able to pay tribute to our award winners, who are working hard every day to make a difference to the lives of people in our region,” Mr Lindner said.

“At tonight’s ceremony, we have seen example after example of MLHD staff and volunteers who embody the values of excellence, innovation and collaboration which help improve the lives of people in their care.”

Winners were announced in 15 award categories. The evening culminated in the presentation of the Chief Executive’s Choice Award and the Board Chair’s Choice Award.

“It’s been such a honour to celebrate so many high calibre nominees this year,” Chief Executive Jill Ludford said. “And rewarding too, to see the number of activities happening across our District with sincere efforts to support our First Nations communities.”

“What an enormous pleasure it was to present Nigel Smith with the Staff Member of the Year Award. Over the last 12 months Nigel has been instrumental in the implementation of the Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Nigel is also taking a leading role in the implementation of the Dialectical Behavioural Therapy Program.”

Winner of the Keeping People Healthy Award was “Saving Sight is our Vision,” an ophthalmology project to improve access to eye care services to Indigenous people living in the Western reaches of the District.

“Improving access to eye care services through the delivery of high quality, sustainable, affordable, regular and culturally sensitive eye services has been Griffith Ophthalmology’s focus,” Ms Ludford said.

The MLHD School Based Apprenticeship program was awarded the Enhancing People and Culture Award.

“This program really contributes towards our Growing Our Own strategy to attract and retain a skilled health workforce in our region, with a specific focus on young Aboriginal students developing industry ready skills into health careers.”

# Congratulations to all our winners!



## ENRICHING CONSUMER EXPERIENCE AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of a team or service nominated for listening and responding to the needs of our consumers through consumer focused care and experience.

### Day Only Total Hip Replacement Program

Optimising recovery rates and enabling patients to recover in the comfort of their own home was the key driver behind the introduction of day surgery total hip replacement at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Murrumbidgee was one of the first regional LHDs in the state to implement this program, which allows patients to undergo total hip replacement and safely discharge from hospital in the same day. This innovative approach relies on a multidisciplinary collaboration between the surgeon, waitlist managers, theatre booking staff, anaesthetists, nursing staff, pharmacy and allied health.

Patients are able to receive their procedure in a more timely manner, reducing the need for overnight admission and also improving the patient recovery experience. Patients are able to go home immediately after their surgery and recover at home in comfort, achieving improved pain and functional outcomes at every step of their recovery.

Delivering locally led, financially sustainable patient centred rural healthcare.



## VALUE BASED CARE AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of an initiative that supports NSW Health's vision for a sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter to patients, care that is tailored to people's needs and is digitally enabled.

### Emergency to Community Initiative

The Emergency to Community Initiative provides an intervention for patients under the age of seventy who are identified as high Emergency Department (ED) presenters with chronic health and social care needs. The initiative targets patients who present to hospital EDs across ten or more times in a 12 month period.

Patients are identified via an online tool (the New Patient Flow Portal), contact is made, consent obtained and a full holistic assessment completed with the individual.

Interventions include engaging with and supporting patients to set individual health goals, access to a regular General Practitioner, engagement with appropriate social services and empowerment to improve and manage their own health and health awareness.

Evaluation shows this initiative has had a significant impact on the frequency of ED presentations, for those who engaged. Their quality of life has improved and they are better able to self-manage their health issue with formal supports in the community.



## EXCEPTIONAL ABORIGINAL HEALTHCARE AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of exceptional healthcare delivered, through strong partnerships that value and foster respect with Aboriginal consumers and communities and providing culturally safe and responsive care.

### Murrumbidgee Out of Home Care (OOHC) Cultural Events

A series of Aboriginal cultural events has improved the participation, confidence and trust of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently accessing the Murrumbidgee Out of Home Care Pathway.

Engaging with the Aboriginal Community, including local Elders, Griffith Aboriginal Land Council, Griffith Aboriginal Medical Service staff and Cootamundra Community Indigenous Co-op, and local artists, the team launched these new look cultural immersion activities and events in Cootamundra, Griffith and Wagga Wagga. Children were provided with bags with interactive play resources, stationary, Wiradjuri language pack, and health literature and participated in dance, weaving, art, music, cultural foods, and cultural environmental walks.

The cultural events have resulted in improved partnerships, shared understanding and beneficial relations with the stakeholders. The children have had an opportunity to connect to culture and develop trust and confidence in the health services team.



## PATIENT SAFETY FIRST AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of demonstrated commitment to continual improvement and an unyielding focus on safety, particularly caring for patients, consumers, residents and/or communities.

### Waterline Maintenance and Testing Regime: Reducing Biofilm

An innovative new process has been adopted by the Murrumbidgee Oral Health Service reducing testing time from days to just seconds!

A strict testing regime is necessary for patient safety to ensure the waterlines are clean. However, waterline testing using the traditional method takes up to 3-5 days for a result while the bacteria is grown on Agar plates, resulting in treatment chair down time until the results come back.

The Murrumbidgee Oral Health Team in collaboration with the SNSWLHD team were the first in state to trial the revolutionary technology to digitally test the waterlines – providing an immediate calibrated and reliable result – freeing up the dental chairs to be used for patients.





### INNOVATION AND RESEARCH AWARD

This award is presented to a team in recognition of their pursuit of excellence or innovation in any field.

#### Magseed technology improving breast cancer surgery

A tiny seed, no bigger than a grain of rice, is improving the surgical experience for breast cancer patients in the Murrumbidgee. Murrumbidgee was the first Local Health District in NSW to introduce the cutting edge technology making it available for the first time to public patients.

The Magseed- a tiny, metallic “seed” is implanted in a breast lump that is not palpable, to mark its location for surgery. Unlike traditional guide-wires the Magseed marker can be placed at any time ahead of surgery, reducing the time required for fasting and improving the overall surgical experience. The seed also provides greater accuracy and flexibility for the surgeon and radiologist.

Surgeries have been successfully performed at Griffith Base Hospital by leading breast cancer surgeon Dr Kate Fitzgerald since June 2022 and will soon be introduced at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.



### KEEPING PEOPLE HEALTHY AWARD

This award is presented to a team that promotes good health through awareness of healthy choices, preventing and addressing poor health, and works to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the community.

#### Saving sight is our vision!

Improving access to eye care services through the delivery of high quality, sustainable, affordable, regular and culturally sensitive eye services has been Griffith Ophthalmology’s focus.

Since partnering with the Gordon Eye Clinic, Saving Sight is Our Vision has resulted in better outcomes for consumers of the Western Region, by improving access to ophthalmic services through streamlined referral and assessment, improving communication between providers and improving access to eye clinic services.

The ophthalmology model of care has delivered excellent care and follow-up, for the consumers.

Griffith have been able meet the recommendations by The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists to improve health outcomes and access to public ophthalmology services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales, and achieve the District goal of Flexible and Responsible Healthcare in the Community.





### DIGITAL INNOVATION AWARD

This award recognises a team or service who have developed innovative digital solutions, adapted interesting and innovative technology or have successfully implemented creative and results-oriented initiatives.

#### Establishing Mobile BreastScreen Assessment Services

BreastScreen NSW (BSNSW) provides free breast screening services to women aged 40+ across Murrumbidgee and Southern NSW Local Health Districts, providing approximately 31,000 screening mammograms per year. Approximately one third of these women are currently being screened in mobile vans in rural and remote regional areas.

Until August 2022, these tests could only be conducted at Albury, Wagga Wagga and Queanbeyan. The large geographical nature of the service means that clients recalled to assessment from remote and regional areas had to travel long distances to complete their care pathway.

Following consultation with key stakeholders and providers, BreastScreen NSW has conducted assessment clinics using remote telehealth on the mobile van, the first of its kind in NSW, saving clients who previously could not locally access testing hours in travel time and costs associated to travel.



### SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of a team or initiative which contributes to creating sustainable and resilient communities, environments, and economies.

#### Virtual Physiotherapy Service

The Virtual Physiotherapy Service has enabled hundreds of rural and regional patients access to physiotherapy intervention, saving time, travel and the environment!

Previously patients needed to travel vast distances to seek treatment at significant cost to the patient, the health system and the environment. Adapting the existing telehealth platform to suit virtual modality for physiotherapy using existing resources, while providing a timely, equitable services.

Patients in 13 of the District's facilities have already benefitted from the Virtual Physiotherapy Service on a regular or periodic basis. Inpatients, community and Aged Care residents have all benefitted from the virtual service with reported patient outcomes evidenced in reduced risk of falls, reduced length of stay, reduced risk of hospital admission or re-admission, and improved quality of life.





## ENHANCING PEOPLE AND CULTURE AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of team or service who showcases MLHD’s workforce at its best, one that has high levels of engagement, strong relational dispersed leadership and role modelling of the CORE values.

### School Based Traineeship Program

The School Based Traineeship (SBT) Program enables a supported pathway from school to work and contributes to the Murrumbidgee’s “Growing our Own” strategy.

The program provides financial and workforce support to engage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their education, including work at entry-level to the organisation.

Murrumbidgee is the only local health district in NSW to conduct a program of this size and nature.

Fifty four school based trainees are currently employed. The traineeships provide the opportunity for students to attain a nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training qualification and their Higher School Certificate while gaining valuable work skills and experience through paid employment.

Over the past four years this program has achieved great success with three students gaining entry into university to study medicine and 19 students gaining employment within the MLHD. 10 students who were at risk of leaving school in Year 11 are now motivated to gain their high school certificates.

## ALLIED HEALTH STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of an individual who demonstrates passion, dedication and makes contributions towards better health outcomes. The recipient makes a critical contribution in delivering patient centred care.

### Brianna Chown Allied Health Assistant, Temora District Hospital

Brianna’s passion for supporting older people in our community to continue their care at home is inspirational.

Since beginning in her role, Brianna has driven a marked increase in the use of Transitional Aged Care Packages (TACP) and has been a huge support to countless ageing consumers and their families when their loved ones return home after an extended hospital stay.

Brianna empowers and encourages ageing community members in managing their care at home and has also increased the occupancy of TACP use to over 90% in a matter of months at Temora, supporting a higher number of consumers to return home than ever before.

Empowering the patient is fundamental to Brianna’s approach. With her support, consumers collaborate with multidisciplinary teams and other care providers to achieve best possible health outcomes for every individual.







## NURSE OR MIDWIFE OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognises an AIN/EN/RN/Midwife who has made an outstanding contribution in providing and coordinating safe, quality and compassionate patient care and consistently displaying values of commitment, compassion, resilience, professionalism and collaboration.

**Rebecca Stimson**  
**Registered Midwife/Clinical Midwifery Educator**  
**Temora District Hospital**

Rebecca is described as an extraordinary Registered Midwife and Clinical Educator. Well respected and regarded by her peers Rebecca demonstrates and supports contemporary education that promotes best practice standards. As the clinical Midwifery Educator, Rebecca facilitates education, supports and mentors both new and experienced staff, including students and graduates.

Rebecca is constantly looking at ways to improve the functionality and working of the unit for efficiency and safety. She was instrumental in the remodelling of the labour ward and assessment room so that the workflow was more effective and efficient. Rebecca places the patient at the centre of care and is always keen to be involved in improvement opportunities and initiatives. She is a key stakeholder on the Maternity Model of Care Working Party, a participant in the monthly WHS meetings, and is the staff representative on the Temora Local Health Advisory Committee. She also works with the local high school to provide childbirth education for students in years 9 and 10.



## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of an individual who acts as a role model for volunteering in NSW Health, provides excellence support and engages with patients, consumers, residents, carers and families.

**Syd Dudley**  
**Chair, Finley Local Health Advisory Committee (LHAC)**

Syd is a prominent and highly regarded member of the Finley community who has tirelessly championed across a wide range of voluntary and advocacy roles over several decades.

As Chair of Finley LHAC since its inception, Syd has contributed enormously to the growth of Finley Hospital. He is approachable, committed to welfare of the community, welcoming, and invites and values the contribution of all team members. He has played a pivotal role in facilitating community consultation and providing feedback on the Clinical Services Planning and Hospital Redevelopment.

Syd contributes in all sectors of the community and has held positions with the Finley Regional Care Board for 10 years, Finley Chamber of Commerce for 25 years, Berrigan Shire Council Australia Day Awards for 25 years. He has been a member of the Finley Pioneer Rail Committee for spanning 20 years.

Syd was one of the team who insightfully attracted Medical Officer Dr Alam Yoosuff and his team and helped them transition into the local community and the district. The team of doctors at Finley's Medical Practice have been settled for over a decade and helped in the growth of the Primary Health Network model at the district level.





## STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award is presented in recognition of exemplary work and outstanding leadership from an individual, recognition of a staff member who has made an exceptional contribution through effective collaboration to the NSW Health system.

### Nigel Smith MSHA Services Coordinator for Aboriginal Peoples

Nigel is a mental health and drug and alcohol professional with over 13 years experience working in clinical roles, case management, management, clinical leadership, and strategic leadership roles.

Over the last 12 months Nigel has been instrumental in the implementation of the Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Nigel is also taking a leading role in the implementation of the Dialectical Behavioural Therapy Program.

Nigel is consistently committed to the mental health and drug and alcohol care of LHD consumers and to closing the gap for First Nations consumers.

Nigel demonstrates leadership, empathy, and courage wherever he works. As a Team Clinical Leader and then Team Manager at Deniliquin Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Service, Nigel led a service that had a holistic approach to mental health care, one that addressed not just the physical symptoms of illness, but also the emotional, social, and spiritual needs of consumers. His dedication, attention to detail and passion for helping others have inspired many to follow in his footsteps and make a difference in the lives of those with lived experience with mental health, including patients, carers and families.



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S CHOICE AWARD

This award is chosen and presented by the MLHD Chief Executive in recognition of an individual or team who have made an exceptional contribution to healthcare in the Murrumbidgee.

### The Murrumbidgee Model

The Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway was a pilot program developed in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District to address the chronic shortage of healthcare professionals in rural and remote Australia. Many rural towns in the Murrumbidgee region lack access to essential GP services. Local GPs are often reluctant to provide hospital services, making it difficult to recruit and retain doctors in these areas.

The Model is an attractive proposition for doctors wanting to become Rural Generalists, providing a tailored, coordinated pathway and offering the benefits of a single employer model. Remuneration and award entitlements align with other medical speciality training giving certainty and protection of the industrial award.

The Model has been successful in attracting and retaining Australian trained junior doctors in the Murrumbidgee and helping address critical workforce shortages in regional towns. Rural Generalist trainees are able to transition seamlessly between work in local general practice and the hospital setting.

The Model is now entering its third year with ten graduates all residing and practicing within the Murrumbidgee region.

The innovative model is now set to be rolled out state-wide following recommendations by the NSW Regional Health Inquiry. This model bridges the workforce gap and sees state and federal government working together to fund training positions under a single employer, and provide regional communities with access to highly trained GPs who understand the unique needs and circumstances of rural and remote areas.



### Strong Bones - Strong Staff

Over the years Orthopaedics at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital have welcomed Graduate Nurses within their team. The ward offers constant opportunities for learning and development of clinical skills during the steep learning period at the beginning of their nursing career. The Orthopaedic unit has been able to provide those learning opportunities but have also provided much more valuable support in the form of psychological safety, compassion, support, and leadership to welcome graduate nurses for their six-month rotation.





## BOARD CHAIR'S CHOICE AWARD

This award is chosen and presented by the interim MLHD Board Chair Adrian Lindner in recognition of an individual or team who have made an exceptional contribution and reflect the values of the organisation: Collaboration, Openness, Respect and Empowerment.

### Enhancing consumer experience with the Remote Medical Consultation Service

The Remote Medical Consultation Services (RMCS) employs state of the art digital technology platforms to deliver a 24/7 service for patients presenting to Emergency Departments (ED) outside of Wagga Wagga and Griffith Base Hospitals.

Connecting with ED personal via phone or video link, the RMCS delivers sound medical advice to ensure patients receive the treatment they need when they need it. RMCS clinicians can prescribe medical treatments, provide first aid advice and identify when further care is required.

The RMCS is an integrated model that works in partnership with onsite medical services to ensure all patients have access to experienced emergency medicine specialists with expertise and knowledge in telehealth and currency of practice in emergency medicine.

Wrapped around this medical model is specialist nursing support provided by the Patient Flow Nurse Coordinators with advanced critical care skills.



## THANKS TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS

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## THANKS TO OUR AWARD SPONSORS





## Carla Bailey A/Chief Executive

**MLHD has been the focus of a number of strategically important health forums over the past few months.**

In July, we welcomed representatives from across Australia to the Single Employer Model (or as I like to say, The Murrumbidgee Model) Forum. The forum examined the Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway (MRGTP) which trains general practitioners with the advanced skills they require to work in our rural hospitals.

In August we held our second annual LHAC Forum, this time in Deniliquin, for our Local Health Advisory Committees across the region. The theme was "Strengthening and Empowering LHACs". These forums are enormously important and contribute to our understanding of health needs in our region. Our LHACs are passionate health advocates and a vital source of information about community perceptions, needs and concerns.

In September, we will host the Country Mayors Rural Health Forum in Wagga Wagga with an opportunity to showcase the innovative work going on at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

The visit to the Murrumbidgee Local Health District by Minister for Health and Regional Health Ryan Park was a highlight for July for our team. Over two days, the Minister visited Jerilderie, Deniliquin, Narrandera and Griffith.

While in the District, the Minister made two substantial announcements. The first was an expansion of the rural generalist pathway, in which he acknowledged that the expansion of the single employer model was based on the innovative Murrumbidgee model.

The second announcement by the Minister was of the appointment of Luke Sloane, the former Coordinator

General, Regional Health Division at NSW Health, as Regional Health Deputy Secretary.

Our Executive team has also been busy refreshing our organisational goals under our four key priority areas.

Five shared organisational goals have been established, which set our direction and efforts for the financial year 2023-24.

Our goals are aligned with NSW Health priorities and our four strategic directions; holistic health and wellbeing, lifting health outcomes, locally led reform and workforce at its best. They reflect the areas that are really important for us, and where we will place effort over the next 12 months. The goals require a collective effort from everyone one of us, working together to achieve better outcomes for our people and region.

These goals are below:

### **HOLISTIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Work as a complete care team with people to improve their health and wellbeing and address the causes of poor health.

#### **Goal 1 – Elevating the consumer experience**

Our Objective: Improve consumer experience by enhancing engagement and fostering care outcomes reflective of their values.

### **LIFTING HEALTH OUTCOMES**

Focus efforts to improve health inequities and wellbeing for all; in particular for Aboriginal people, children, older persons and those with mental health needs.

## Goal 2 - Safe accessible and responsive healthcare for Aboriginal people

Our Objectives: To provide culturally safe, and equitable healthcare, free of prejudice and inequity for Aboriginal people. Healthcare that acknowledges the holistic view of health; encompassing mental, physical, cultural and spiritual aspects of health, that are impacted by connections to country, family and community.

## Goal 3 - Optimising care closer to home: a home and community first approach

Our Objectives: Care pathways provide alternatives to hospital care, with an increased focus on ambulatory care, including primary and community models.

## LOCALLY LED REFORM

Locally led reform - Making change that matters to our communities, that is safe and pushes the boundaries of innovation for better health outcomes

### Goal 4 - Foster innovation for efficiency and sustainability

Our objectives: We aim to be a financially capable organisation, focused on sustainability. We are addressing how we can improve our performance and efficiencies to achieve better consumer and organisational outcomes. Clinical and financial sustainability drives investment in clinical services for the whole District. This goal supports the delivery of the MLHD Value and Improvement Plan, including the many Efficiency and Improvement Projects that sit within it.

## WORKFORCE AT ITS BEST

Investing in leadership, culture and high performing teams, who are connected and compassionate, and striving for excellence.

### Goal 5 - Attract and retain a workforce that is supported to be its best

Our objectives: To nurture a culture where our workforce is capable, engaged and human centred, reflecting the needs of our community.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations to all the winners of our 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards. 84 nominations were received across nine team award categories and four individual award categories, I am very proud of each and every finalist and winner. Congratulations to you all!

I'd also like to thank the sponsors for their generosity and in helping us to make this a true night of celebration, and reward the winners with professional development funding. Thank you!

Carla Bailey  
Acting Chief Executive



In Narrandera with Deputy Secretary for Regional Health Luke Sloan, NSW Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and NSW Minister for Mental Health Susan Pearce and Minister for Health Ryan Park.



In Finley with Minister for Health Ryan Park, Helen Dalton MP Finley Hospital Manager Parveen Kaur, VMO Mohan Sankaralingam and Medical Director Prof Len Bruce



In Wagga Wagga at the Single Employer Model forum, with Dr Michael Holland, Principal GP Gundagai Medical Centre Dr Paul Mara, Principal GP Finley Regional Care Dr Alam Yoosuff and Medical Director Prof Len Bruce.



The MLHD Board Directors and acting Chief Executive Carla Bailey visit the Rapid Access Clinic in Wagga Wagga



# Introducing

## Glynis Ingram Board Chair

Welcome to my first contribution to 'Murrumbidgee Matters'.

In July this year, I was appointed to the role of Chair of the MLHD. At this time, I thought I would introduce myself and talk about aspects of Board activity.

As I considered what this appointment might mean and how best I might fulfill the responsibilities of the role, I reflected on the values of the MLHD, its purpose, the role of the Board and the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan.

I have lived in the Riverina and worked for over 25 years, as a regional leader of a large government agency, working with communities across inland NSW. These diverse settings, each had their own strengths and challenges. Individuals and communities were at times buffeted by environmental, economic and social change which tested their resilience and adaptability.

It was in this context that I came to understand rural and remote service delivery. Service design and provision required very different features to achieve similar outcomes and standards of service to those provided in more dense population settings.

It was critical to develop creative alternate ways to ensure accessibility to services or professional expertise, achieve timely intervention and create sustainable, quality services.

In regional NSW, the importance of partnerships with others who share common goals and purpose cannot be underestimated. Through our partnerships we can utilise resources more efficiently and effectively and reduce duplication. We can streamline pathways to service and address the underpinning factors that impact our individual and collective health and well-being. Together with our partners, we can build a body of evidence of rural and remote practice and innovation.

Working within a large multifocal government agency required a commitment to robust governance approaches, implementation of evidence-based policy and practice frameworks and strong public scrutiny. It also required advocacy, adaptability and a willingness to try innovative approaches to achieve our desired outcomes.

Over many years I had worked alongside and actively partnered with MLHD in whole of government or cross agency collaboration focused on building improved social and health outcomes and addressing disadvantage.

Joining the Board of MLHD in January 2023, gave me the opportunity to draw on these skills and insights and brought me into close collaboration with my fellow Directors, led at the time by our interim Chair Adrian Lindner. The Board is cohesive, considered, and focused.

As Board Directors, we come from diverse backgrounds, have a variety of life experiences, skills and interests. We are independent and come together to provide oversight of the MLHD to ensure effective clinical and corporate governance frameworks are in place to support the maintenance and improvement of standards of patient care and services. We monitor the financial, clinical and operational performance of the District to achieve the targets set within the MLHD Service Agreement with NSW Health.

Our relationship with the MLHD Chief Executive supports a clarity of vision and purpose embraced by the Executive team and the dedicated clinicians and staff of the MLHD.

The Board focus on our strategic plan and the alignment of the numerous initiatives and plans seeks to achieve sound, thoughtful implementation that delivers results. The importance of equitable application of resources and the delivery of world class health services to our communities is at the heart of our deliberations.



We have 47 Health facilities in communities across the District. The Board recently considered our Asset Strategic Plan to enable the MLHD to submit our 'Top 5' priority projects for the coming years and endorsed a 5-year strategy for emerging Priority Projects.

In all asset projects the MLHD looks to the Asset Management Unit in NSW Health to ensure our facilities are environmentally sound, thermally efficient, use local labour where possible and create culturally safe spaces and welcoming healing places beyond the 'built form'. Heritage considerations are important to us all and in this we are guided by Local Government, Local Health Advisory Committees, and relevant government bodies.

We know from our own experience and feedback from staff and communities what a difference the redevelopment of our facilities makes to a local population and the sense of optimism it can offer. Our facilities do not exist in isolation, in themselves they reflect our commitment to being a hub in communities that welcomes those that need our care, and which reflect the local community in which they are placed

Attracting and retaining our professional, administrative and technical staff remains a constant challenge not just for our LHD.

As part of the package of support to attract and retain staff, MLHD has incorporated stand-alone accommodation units in our facility designs and accessed the rental market to ensure accommodation that meets the needs of our staff, and their families is available in communities across our District.

Having modern health facilities and staff accommodation available are only part of the equation. The capability, wellbeing and enthusiasm of the people who work within our facilities and the comfort, wellbeing, and confidence of those for whom we deliver care are both our focus and our purpose.

Providing contemporary or 'state of the art equipment', a safe and engaging workplace which offers a positive culture, good supervision and support with ongoing clinical



skill development and career progression helps to retain our staff base. Keeping our people and their families connected to and supported by their communities often means our services flourish and the trust between community and our service is enhanced.

I had learned early on in my career that true consultation is about listening and that expectations need to be explored and outcomes clearly spelled out. Trust is earned and alliances strengthened in respectful, relationship-based engagement.

The MLHD Board champions the engagement of patients, communities and providers and receives the views of others through many different opportunities. We receive reports from patient feedback, Local Health Advisory Committees and forums with community partners or Local Government representatives. We engage in site visits across the District and meet the dedicated clinicians and staff who contribute their expertise and passion to improving the health outcomes of our population.

We use information and data to continue meaningful and practical engagement with consumers in the

*PHOTOS:*

*Top: presenting the Sustainability and Environment Award to the Virtual Physio team at the 2023 MLHD Excellence Awards.*

*Bottom: Meeting with the Tumut LHAC Hansie Armour (Chair) and Deb Sturt during a site visit to Tumut Hospital.*

design, delivery and operation of our services. We value feedback of peoples' 'lived experience' of our services.

Like any large complex organisation, we may not always get things right. We are committed to listening, to understanding and analysing the issues and look to create solutions that improve our performance, the quality of patient experience and improve the delivery of our models of care or services.

I look forward to sharing our progress and results in the coming months.

Glynis Ingram  
MLHD Board Chair



# Renal Stream Services

Murrumbidgee Local Health District's Renal Services are here to support consumers at all stages of kidney failure.

The multidisciplinary team includes a Nephrologist, Nurse Practitioner, Home Therapy Trainers, Specialist Renal Nurses, Renal Dietitians, Social Workers, Pharmacist and an Aboriginal Health Worker.

The service aims to help consumers maintain maximum kidney function, slow disease progression and provide care, education and support.

If kidney disease is found early, medication, combined with diet and

lifestyle changes, can prolong the life of your kidneys. When it comes time to choose a treatment for kidney failure, our team are here to support you through your options which may include home therapy, conservative treatment options, unit dialysis and transplant.



## How will the Renal Stream Service help you?

- We will maximise your wellness by preserving kidney function.
- We use the lowest level of interventions possible.
- We provide a standardised approach to accessing information for individuals and health care professionals.
- We empower you to be actively engaged in the decision making and to take leadership with your care.
- We aim for the best outcome, more choice and promote independence.

## Extreme leader- outstanding in the field

Kelly-Anne Marcioni is the Renal Stream Manager for Murrumbidgee Local Health District.

A recent finalist as Staff Member of the Year in the MLHD Excellence Awards, Kelly is insistent that she would not be where she is without the amazing support of her team.

“Being selected as a finalist has been very humbling, but it is not about me. I have a great team and that's why I think we're having such great outcomes for our patients,” she said.

Kelly's role oversees all renal services across the district.

“That includes patients with chronic kidney disease that have been referred into our service that are at a later stage of their disease process,” she said.

“We navigate them through the disease and treatment options and how best to look after themselves and stay well for as long as possible.”

The MLHD renal team focuses on patient-centred care and ensuring people understand their choices.

“Kidney disease is a chronic disease, however, people who are

diagnosed have many options. We like to provide home therapy where possible, to help people stay well if they're at home and to really educate them and assist from a holistic point of view,” Kelly said.

“We're a multidisciplinary team. So it's not just nurses, it's not just doctors, it's allied health, pharmacy and Aboriginal health workers.

“For our patients attending dialysis, it can be very time consuming, up to 60 hours every month, so we find we have a special capacity to really connect with people, we become like their second family.”

Kelly admits keeping up with the demands of a growing service can be challenging.

“As more people are diagnosed with chronic kidney disease each year, the need for this service grows. People are reaching out to us earlier because they know that we exist. We are supporting more and more people every day so we are really focused on making sure we maintain the connection and help as many communities as possible,” she said.

“We have just extended into a



*Kelly-Anne Marcioni, Renal Stream Manager Murrumbidgee Local Health District.*

smaller site in Tumut, which is a newer model for us. But we have great leaders, great senior clinicians that support us while we're bringing on a junior workforce to try and fill those challenging pockets.

“We're seeing some really good outcomes and some quality improvements and expansion of our services but we're just scratching the surface and there's a lot more to do.”



Engaging with Murrumbidgee Local Health District's Renal Team gave Leeton's Gus Laruffa the precious gift of time by helping him to slow the progression of his kidney disease.

It was symptoms of unexplained weight gain and swelling that prompted Gus to see his GP.

"The doctor said it was probably my kidneys. At that point I was around 110kg and had type 2 diabetes. I was like a wine barrel," Gus said.

A tip from a work colleague led him to seek out a renal dietician, and he was soon in touch with Jodie Ridley, Murrumbidgee Local Health District's Senior Renal Dietician.

"That was twelve years ago, and through Jodie's help with my diet I found out what I should eat and drink and what I shouldn't. With the dieting I did, with Jodie's help, my kidney function went up from 17% to 33% and my diabetes was gone!"

Jodie sees clients across the district in kidney failure, before they start dialysis, once they start dialysis or transition to a different type of dialysis, and even through to transplant and beyond.

"We need to be realistic about what we're asking our clients to do, because it is really hard and there is no perfect diet, everyone is different," Jodie said.

"They're often seeing multiple doctors, who are all asking them to do multiple things and it can be really overwhelming. If I give a client two or three things to work on, and they go away and do that, then that is a success because even small changes can make a big impact."

With Jodie's advice, and the support of his wife, Gus has made changes in his diet that are realistic and sustainable.

"You've got to make some sacrifices, you can't have all the things you like," Gus said.

"I used to love my beer but now I just have one now and again, not twenty like I used to! And no more bananas, I used to have a couple a day but now I know the potassium in them is no good for me."

"Jodie also instructed my wife about what to cook, and how to cook things. Instead of processed meats from the deli for example, you can cook a roast and have that as your cold meat."

Gus said it was Jodie's bright outlook and sensible advice that put him at ease.

"Jodie is very easy talk to. She listens and she explains things well. She's always friendly and always has a smile on her face, which is comforting."

"Following Jodie's advice gave me about 10 years before I needed to start dialysis. And I took notice because the option is, if you don't take her advice, you'll be six foot under."

Jodie has been with MLHD for 15 years and loves seeing the journey that her clients and families go on.

"To see clients like Gus have 10 years of normality without dialysis, then moving on to dialysis which then gives him even more time. He got ten extra years at work, and he's still a competitive lawn bowler. The impact on your clients and their families is huge."

"Seeing that impact, when clients realise that dietitians don't just do weight management you actually save lives, it makes my role so rewarding."

# *In a league of their own*

Therese Bartley's journey with the Wagga Base Hospital Renal team began 21 years ago when she was diagnosed with kidney disease.

"To be honest I would rather not have this condition, but now that I do, I cannot imagine having a better team of people to help guide me and offer the care that I need each week," Therese says as she sits in her dialysis chair.

Therese's diagnosis came as a shock and she found it confronting to understand that her health would gradually decline each year, but the support of the renal team has been instrumental in her managing her illness and taking care of her mental health and wellbeing effectively.

With access to a specialist multidisciplinary team, including a specialist doctor, nurse practitioner, nurses, dietitian, pharmacist, social worker and admin staff, Therese feels like the team is 'in a league of their own.'

"I only had to start dialysis two years ago, so I feel fortunate to have been able to access the education, interventions and care that delayed dialysis for so many years," Therese said.

Now requiring dialysis three days a week for 5 hours a day, Therese still finds the silver lining when considering her prognosis and her treatment.

"I suppose I feel lucky in a way, you do what you can on the days that you do not require dialysis, and I have great support from my family, friends and the renal team.

"I get four good days each week where my health is not too bad, whilst other people managing serious illnesses may not get that luxury, they may feel unwell every day.



"I have been blessed with beautiful children who give me continuing support and I am well enough to still enjoy outings."

Passionate about helping others, Therese is mindful to contribute to causes that are focused on helping others.

As a member of the South Wagga Wagga Lions Club the past 15 years, she is grateful for the opportunity to help raise awareness and funds for the people in the community who are living with kidney disease. The Lions club donated a new Prime Transport Chair to the Wagga Dialysis Unit this year, which assists patients to commute to and from their method of transport.

"The generosity and kindness that the people of Wagga have for each other is lovely to see, and I feel fortunate to be a part of the Lions Club, who work tirelessly to help raise money for the community of Wagga as well as the Renal Service," Therese said.

"Some days are harder than others, but you have to just keep going, and try to look forward to the quality time you are getting with your family and friends, and there is always somebody worse off than you.

"I would tell others who are newly diagnosed with kidney failure to stay strong within themselves and to have faith in the incredible staff and to trust in their knowledge and care."



# Transplant gives new dad Todd a fresh start

Todd Rice was 19 when he began a health journey that has lasted for almost two decades.

Despite this, recent months have brought huge changes to Todd's health.

The Griffith signwriter and new dad recently underwent a pancreas and kidney transplant at Sydney's Westmead Hospital. The successful surgery has allowed Todd to return to work in the business he runs with wife Zoe and focus on newborn son Alexander.

Todd was 19 when he became seriously ill with a virus. It was during this period that he was also diagnosed with brittle diabetes. As is the case with brittle diabetes, Todd found his blood sugar levels were difficult to regulate.

"It didn't matter whether I ate sugar or not, my sugars would be just all over the place. I could get up one morning and be perfect and have breakfast and 10 minutes later I'd be through the roof, but the next day I could get up and have a bit of a shocking reading, then eat breakfast and then 10 minutes later be low," he said.

"We even went through years of my wife waking up at two o'clock in the morning and checking my sugars while I was sleeping and things like that.

"At one point, I even ate pretty much the exact same meal every day to see if that helped."

Despite the complexities of managing his diabetes, Todd continued to focus on living life.

But about three years ago, he began to develop issues with his kidneys.

"I began to notice that my legs were swelling up, holding a lot of fluid," Todd said.

"I went to the doctor and tests showed my kidney function had dropped. I think then it might have

been in the high 30 per cent then.

"We spent probably the best part of two years, changing diets, doing everything we could, to try to sort of stretch out the length of the kidney, but also see if the kidney would heal itself and whatnot.

"But it didn't matter what we did. As each month went by, it just kept sort of dropping, percentage by percentage."

For Todd, the physical symptoms of his condition became more severe.

"It got to a point where I couldn't even work more than sort of half a day," he said. "My legs would swell, I couldn't bend, couldn't put clothes on properly in the afternoon and things like that. I was constantly out of breath.

"I could work in the mornings and then have to come home in the afternoon and put my legs in the air to let the fluid sort of wash away to be able to walk around."

Around December 2021, Todd began working with staff at Griffith Base Hospital's Renal Unit, where he began undergoing haemodialysis. Undergoing the haemodialysis brought improvements in Todd's health almost immediately. He underwent dialysis three days a week, with each session taking close to six hours.

"Dialysis is not fun, but the difference I felt was amazing. Once I started, I was able to work better, function better. Everything was a lot better.

"The only thing obviously was the time it takes. I was losing hours from work and losing days in the week and whatnot. But my wife and I sort of made it work.

"Obviously it wasn't fun, but it was helping me cope with everything, and get me through the day."

About a year after he began receiving haemodialysis, in December 2022, Todd and Zoe travelled to Sydney so

they could meet the transplant team at Westmead.

"They said to me that it would probably be within the next 6 to 12 to 18 months that something could come up," he said.

But Todd's waiting time turned out to be shorter than that.

"I got the phone call on the 24th of February 2023 at about 5.30 in the afternoon and had to be at Sydney by 7am the next day," he said.

"Zoe was just over 36 weeks pregnant and needed to get clearance to travel, so I called my parents as well."

Todd and his parents headed off to Sydney by road, while Zoe flew after receiving a clearance to travel. Zoe spent three days with Todd immediately after his surgery before returning home to Griffith on medical advice. Todd remained in hospital for 10 days, then spent a few more weeks as an outpatient as he underwent follow-up appointments.

With Zoe's due date approaching, the couple were hoping Todd could be back in Griffith before their baby's birth. He made it back home to Griffith with two days to spare and was on hand when baby Alexander was born. Having undergone both a kidney and pancreas transplant, Todd is no longer having to deal with diabetes or dialysis. In the weeks since his transplant, Todd has been healing, adjusting to life as part of a family of three and planning for the future.

But he found time, almost immediately after his return to Griffith after his transplant, to pay a visit to the Renal Unit and thank the staff for their care.

"When you are having dialysis, you spend a lot of time there. The staff feel like friends," Todd said. "And no matter what is going on, the staff members are there with smiles on their faces, caring for their patients."



“Dialysis is not fun, but the difference I felt was amazing.”



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## Voluntary assisted dying

### Information for the community

The Parliament of New South Wales passed the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022 (the Act) on 19 May 2022. This Act will allow eligible people the choice to access voluntary assisted dying from 28 November 2023. People cannot access voluntary assisted dying in NSW before this date. From now until November 2023, NSW Health will plan for and implement voluntary assisted dying in NSW. NSW Health will provide ongoing information to the community throughout 2022 and 2023.

#### What is voluntary assisted dying?

Voluntary assisted dying means an eligible person can ask for medical help to end their life. The person must be in the late stages of an advanced disease, illness or medical condition. They must also be experiencing suffering they find unbearable.

If a person meets all the criteria and the steps set out in the law are followed, they can take or be given a voluntary assisted dying substance to bring about their death at a time they choose. The substance must be prescribed by a doctor who is eligible to provide voluntary assisted dying services.

'Voluntary' means the choice must be the person's own. Only the person who wants voluntary assisted dying can ask for it. It is against the law to pressure someone to ask for voluntary assisted dying. The NSW legislation has safeguards in place to make sure the person is protected.

#### What's happening locally?

Murrumbidgee Local Health District are developing a district wide service that will enable people within the community to access voluntary assisted dying close to home.

Voluntary assisted dying values a person's choice in medical treatment and offers compassionate care and seeks to optimise quality of life for terminally ill patients.

The local care navigator service will provide holistic, person centred care to eligible people locally ensuring continuity of high-quality end of life care.

#### To find out more visit:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying>

#### Contact:

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Voluntary Assisted Dying Project Manager | Integrated Care and Allied Health  
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mob: 0436 351 311  
Email: [annie.skipworth@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:annie.skipworth@health.nsw.gov.au)

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→ [study.csu.edu.au/pg-nursing](https://study.csu.edu.au/pg-nursing)

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## Wagga Base's storerooms get a DeliverEASE makeover

Staff at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital's Emergency Department are enjoying their newly re-organised storerooms and at-the-shelf ordering system, following an intensive two-week visit by Healthshare's DeliverEASE team.

The DeliverEASE team – nicknamed the 'Blue Fairies' thanks to their distinctively bright blue T-shirts – visited the Hospital in March and worked closely with staff to transform ED's two storerooms and instil best-practice stock management principles.

For Sam Green, Clinical Support Officer at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, the DeliverEASE approach to stock management, combined with ordering from the shelf via the StaffLink Requisitions and Receiving Mobile (STARR) app, has made his job "150 percent easier".

"It's a brilliant system," said Sam who joined the team at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in 2022.

"The storerooms are laid out in an accessible and visual way that is very pleasing. Each section has colour coding; it's just a great layout; a great system.

"It also helps when you are ordering through the STARR app – it lets you know when something is on back order, so it's easy to understand what to order."

Prior to DeliverEASE implementation, the process of placing a weekly order for ED could take up to a full day. Nurses wrote their orders on a white board and volumes were calculated by visual estimate, before being transferred to a large spreadsheet and entered manually

*Photo: The DeliverEASE team and the Emergency Department team at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. (L-R) Sara Crook, Louise Coldwell, Emma Daisley, Kristy Watson, Ben Lenthall and Steven Crook.*

into iProcurement.

Using the DeliverEASE framework, Sam said his ordering time has reduced to around two hours on a Monday, and an additional hour on Wednesday for "top-ups".

Sam is using the STARR app to order directly from the shelf, scanning product barcodes via an iPad. DeliverEASE dashboards on StaffLink enable the tracking of key stock management principles, including the visibility of stock levels between maximum and minimum amounts, with auto alerts when anomalies occur.

"It's a really smooth, intuitive system," Sam said.

"We're loving it," said Emma Daisley, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital's Acting Nurse Manager, of the new DeliverEASE framework.

Emma said the flow-on effect for ED nursing staff is that they can now quickly and easily find what they need in the storeroom, giving them time back to focus on patient care.

"Now, it's going to be easier for staff to get the stock they need; it's clearly labelled, it's easy to find and storerooms are well laid out."

The DeliverEASE team are now working to transform the rest of the hospital's storerooms.

# Want to know about studying Medicine?



Dr Lily Hogan

## Destination Medicine© rocks it with stories from locals who have

A project with modest aspirations to provide information on rural medical careers has become an unexpected hit!

In 2018 the Riverina Regional Training Hub based in the Notre Dame Rural Clinical School (Wagga Wagga and Griffith) and the three USYD Regional Training Hubs began a collaboration to create and share stories about rural and regional medical students, doctors in training and experienced clinicians.

Our producers thought we would do well to attract 100 downloads to our podcast. Over 20,500 downloads later we have brought stories from around rural and regional Australia together. Lots of local talent have contributed to over 80 episodes and there's more in the pipeline. The stories are inspiring, sobering and funny. Storytellers explain how they entered medicine – sometimes after many attempts. Hear why they have studied, trained and are working rurally and regionally, or how they

are longing to return when they finish their training. Here are some of the local legends who are already part of the series. Hear more of their stories, and many others at Destination Medicine [www.destinationmedicine.com.au](http://www.destinationmedicine.com.au). Here's a taste...

### **Lily Hogan – Helping with lambing triggered an interest in medicine**

When Lily Hogan was growing up on her family's sheep and cropping farm at Bethunga in the Riverina, she had no-one to influence her towards medicine. But the idea of applying to medical school drew her while she was still at school and she decided to go for it. Why? She learned early, on the farm, how the right care can resolve dangerous situations.

Dr Hogan is now working in Wollongong Hospital but is hoping to come to train in the region as a rural generalist.

### **Asha Heffernan – Following her dream back home**

From Wagga Wagga originally, Asha spent time in Sydney and India

before accepting a place in the UNSW Rural Medical School back in her home town. She was cautious about returning to study here, but her decision has been vindicated, providing great clinical experiences and support from family and friends. She shares what she learnt while applying for medical school.

### **Dr Marty Ryan – Inspired by community spirit in the country**

Marty is a Cootamundra lad who went to school there and after introductory years in Sydney for medicine, gratefully came back to Wagga Wagga to complete his degree and continue his training at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Marty is working as a rural generalist trainee now at Temora. His is a story of growing up as a country boy, getting into medical school and now doing all his vocational training as a rural general practitioner close to home. Marty's episode is inspiring medical students to apply for training in and around our region.



*Dr Marty Ryan*



*Asha Heffernan*

### **Dr Imogen Hines – How Lucky am I to be Here**

Now working and training in orthopaedics, it was not speaking Norwegian that changed Imogen's entire career path! She was a city girl and professional cyclist who found a passion for rural medicine. This brought her to Wagga Wagga where she spent two years as a medical student and then three years as a junior doctor. It's also where she meet a fellow medical student who is now her husband. Both want to return as soon as their medical training allows.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

If you know anyone who is thinking about studying medicine, wondering what training pathway to consider or would just like to hear great rural stories, please share Destination Medicine@ with them. These stories can be supported by current information about applying in the Maybe Medicine brochure. Just ask for a copy.

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Wagga Wagga | NSW 2650



*Imogen Hines*

## Imaging Associates- Supporting the community of Wagga.

Established in 2014, Imaging Associates Wagga Wagga is a community focused imaging practice, providing services throughout the Riverina area. Led by a collective of over 40 local and passionate staff, they are committed to delivering unparalleled care, compassion, and service excellence to patients and their referring physicians.

Beyond their medical role, Imaging Associates is an advocate for the local sporting community, providing support to a number of sports clubs, their team members, families, and the broader Wagga community. Imaging Associates take pride in their long-term partnerships with Wagga Netball, MCUE Football/Netball, Southern Inland Rugby, RSL Cricket and AFL Riverina.

President of the RSL Cricket Club, Shaun Perry, commented that “Support from sponsors like Imaging Associates is invaluable to a local cricket club like ours, helping us to develop our junior talent. Their staff come to support our teams, be it through active support during matches or their spirited participation in events”.

Since opening their doors, Imaging Associates Wagga Wagga have cared for over 80,000 local Riverina patients, growing every day. Their team of sub-specialised radiologists and medical health professionals are leaders in their respective fields, known for their gentle and empathetic approach to patient care, coupled with strong communication ties to referring doctors.

To find out more information about Imaging Associates Wagga Wagga, please visit <https://imagingassociates.net.au/> or contact the clinic directly on 02 6971 6100.



*Imaging Associates Wagga Wagga Team*

## Hillston community to benefit from generous donation to Hillston MPS

Hillston MPS has received a generous donation of \$55,000 from the Hillston Hospital Auxiliary and local Bendigo Bank branch.

Hillston MPS Facility Manager, Courtenay Fensom, said the donation facilitated the purchase of a new portable ultrasound machine.

She praised the tireless efforts of the Hillston Hospital Auxiliary volunteers and Bendigo Bank.

“We feel privileged and are extremely thankful to the community, the Hillston Hospital Auxiliary Volunteers and the Bendigo Bank for their continued support in providing additional funds, and helping us to purchase additional resources for Hillston MPS,” Ms Fensom said.

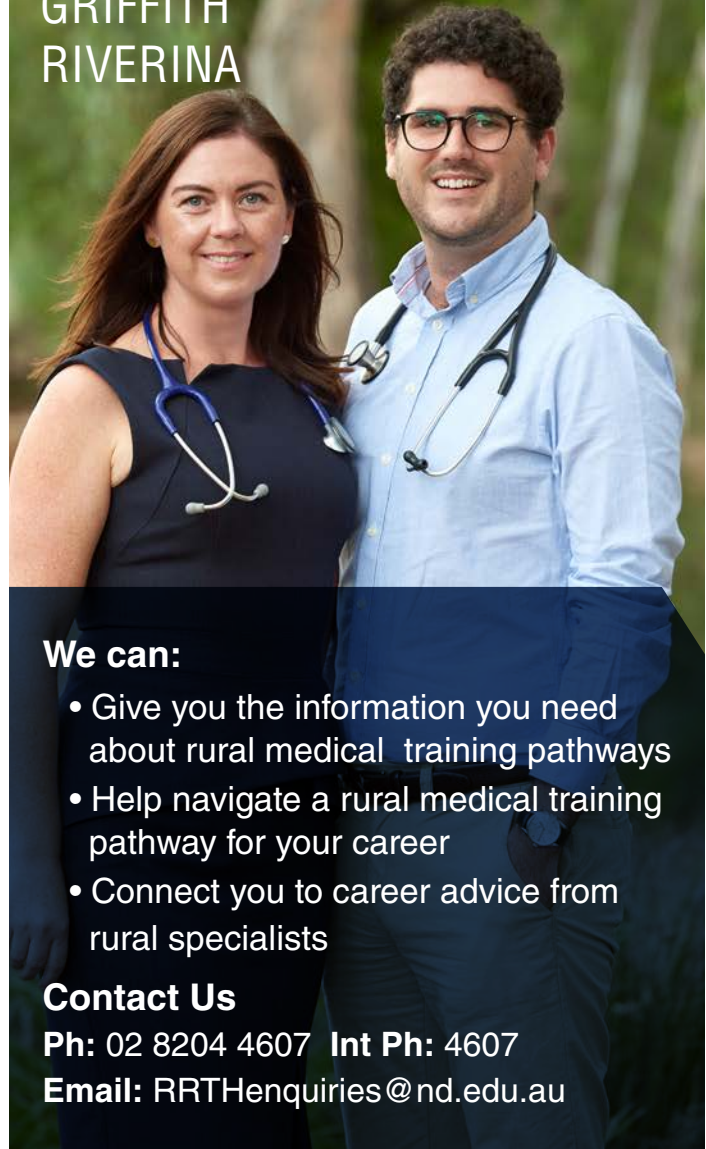
“This new ultrasound machine was presented to the hospital last week and will be used as a diagnostic clinical tool for care and assessment of emergency presentations to our facility, that assist our staff and ultimately improve patient care.”



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## DYING TO KNOW DAY

Raising awareness around end-of-life decisions

Dying to Know Day was in the spotlight this August. Murrumbidgee Local Health District's palliative care team partnered with Local Health Advisory Committees (LHAC) across the region to draw attention to important conversations about death and dying.

Dying to Know Day is an annual campaign that empowers all adult Australians to be strong self-advocates for their own personal planning when it comes to their future.

It encourages adults of all stages to take individual action, hold events, gatherings at home, and much more, all to improve their knowledge around choices for their end-of-life.

Nine events were held across the District with 240 community members taking part.

Griffith LHAC Chair Margaret King said they were thrilled to be contacted by Stephanie Dunstall from the MLHD palliative care team to partner for an event to promote awareness.

"We organised guest speakers from our local palliative care team, grief and bereavement counselling and a funeral director to present a well balanced and informative information session on how to have those difficult conversations with family members on end of life planning and the benefits in doing so," Ms King said. "The presentations were thought provoking and generated excellent questions from the small, but engaged group who attended."

Deniliquin LHAC partnered with U3A to bring the event to Deni.

"The presentations by the palliative care team were very informative,

*Above: Deniliquin LHAC co-hosted hosted a Dying to Know Day event with U3A.*

the sessions interactive with great participation by attendees," Deniliquin LHAC Chair Lourene Liebenberg said. "The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and the collaboration with U3A was a great success."

The Wagga Wagga LHAC cooked a BBQ lunch for the 40 people who attended their event.

Wagga Wagga LHAC Chair Garth Hungerford said they supported the initiative because it helped put advocacy right back in the hands of the consumer.

"It's such an empowering conversation to have, to know that you have discussed your wishes with your loved ones and that you have



*Above: Peter Woodward (Griffith Regional Funeral Services), Emma Bordignon (Palliative Care Nurse), Sheridan McGregor (MLHD Grief and Bereavement Counsellor), Griffith LHAC Chair Margaret King*



*Right: Leanne Horne and Garth Hungerford from Wagga Wagga LHAC prepare the BBQ lunch.*



Above: Berrigan LHAC dying to know day guest speakers Maria Erasmus Palliative Care Nurse, John Taylor (solicitor), Laurie Walsh (funeral director) and Stephanie Dunstall.

## Dying to Know Day Key Messages

Dying to Know Day seeks to encourage the 'tough conversations' now, to reduce the anguish, distress and grief experienced by loved ones later.

Australians can 'get dead set' by proactively planning to:

- Capture their choices in writing.
- Have conversations with people important to them.
- Prepare your send-off.

considered the options and made some steps towards preparing for the inevitable," Mr Hungerford said.

Berrigan LHAC Chair Tony Taylor said their day was very well attended by residents.

"A lot of useful information was passed on by the speakers, and feedback after the session was that it had been very well received and the attendees thought it was of great benefit. Additionally, the morning tea put on by the CWA ladies was excellent and that alone was worth the attendance!" Mr Taylor said.

Dying to Know Days were held in Berrigan, Batlow, Cootamundra, Culcairn, Corowa, Coolamon, Deniliquin, Griffith, Hay and Wagga Wagga.

"We are hopeful of building on this event next year to something bigger as we believe it's a very important topic to raise awareness around," Margaret King, Griffith LHAC Chair said.

## In the News...



Above: Stephanie Dunstall, Kerry Sterling and Rebecca Hill at the Deniliquin Dying to Know Day. Above Right: Local residents turned out to find out more at the Berrigan Dying to Know Day.



# Brain Injury Awareness Week 2023

Brain Injury Awareness Week is held annually to raise awareness of brain injury and its impact.

One in 45 Australians live with a brain injury. It's an invisible disability, as there is often no physical evidence of the injury, but it affects how people think and feel as they recover and reintegrate into everyday life.

Murrumbidgee Local Health District's South West Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service provides support to assist people affected by brain injury to regain skills required so they can participate in home, school, work and community activities.

South West Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service's Transitional Living Unit, Tarkarri provides a bridge between hospital and home for people learning to live with a traumatic or acquired brain injury.

"Tarkarri is an Aboriginal word that means 'creating futures'," said Jenny Goodfellow, an Occupational Therapist who coordinates the Transitional Living Unit program.

"After suffering a brain injury it's common to act, feel and respond differently to situations as well as experience changes in your behaviour, personality and thinking.

"These changes can make it difficult to return to work, sport or activities you enjoyed before. It can also put pressure on your relationships with family, friends, co-workers and other people in your life.

"At Tarkarri we work with clients who have an acquired or traumatic brain injury to work on the skills they need to get back to life, including independent living skills, life roles and responsibilities and individual goals, so that they can create the future that they want."

Tarkarri is a welcoming, home-like environment that operates just like a normal house.

"Everyone has their own bedroom so they have their own space when they need it. We all pitch in and do the housework, we cook meals together and plan our activities and outings," said Jenny.



*Jenny Goodfellow, Coordinator of Tarkarri Transitional Living Unit and clients Cooper Maher and Adam Scott during Brain Injury Awareness Week, 21-28 August 2023.*

Albury's Adam Scott has spent time at Tarkarri following an assault that left him with a brain injury.

"The team at Tarkarri taught me about brain injury, and how it can affect you. Once I understood what was going on with me, I was able to manage my symptoms better and start looking towards the future," Adam said.

"The team also work with your family to help them understand what's going on with you, what's changed and how they can support you."

Adam wants to encourage anyone with an acquired brain injury who could benefit from spending time at Tarkarri to give it a go.

"When you're coming out of a brain trauma unit and you've been told some very confronting things, and you've seen some very confronting things and you're basically told you have to start your life again, you don't know how to take it. But here it's completely different.

"I didn't know what to expect when I came to Tarkarri, but walking in here was the best thing I have done. The support, the trust and everything you get here has just made my recovery so much easier," Adam said.

"Re-learning the basics of everyday living has been confronting and challenging. I may not be able to go back to doing everything I was doing before, but Tarkarri has opened my eyes to what I can do. I've set myself some goals and I have people to

support me to achieve them."

Adam says the theme for this week – Brain Injury is more than you see, think and feel – can help to raise awareness of the invisible nature of a brain injury.

"The big thing that has changed for me is my confidence, and I also have a lot of anxiety as I'm living a very different life and trying a lot of new things. It's hard to explain to someone that, not only can you not do the things you used to do, your perspective on life has also changed," Adam said.

"Here at Tarkarri, I'm learning to talk about my injury, and to live with it in a positive way."

Clients who come to stay at Tarkarri, or attend the house for a day program, may come from hospital or may have been living in the community for a while.

"We'd love to invite anyone who would like to see what we have to offer here, to come for a visit and see if our program is something that may benefit you or your family member," Jenny said.

"Once you walk through the door you'll realise it is not a hospital by any means. We have fun – we work hard, and the clients work really hard! It's a very enjoyable and supportive environment and an amazing team. People get so much out of their time here, and that's just beautiful to watch."





**UNSW**  
SYDNEY



UNSW Rural Clinical Campus, Wagga Wagga

# Preparing you for the future of health!

## Thinking about studying to become a doctor?

Did you know you can complete your whole B Medical Studies/ Doctor of Medicine degree right here in Wagga Wagga? At Wagga Wagga's UNSW Rural Clinical Campus located on the grounds of the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, you can learn to become a doctor through teaching and clinical experiences within an expert and diverse local medical community.

Offering small class size with individual attention the program is taught by a dedicated academic team based on campus as well as by practising clinicians at the forefront in their specialist field. Students experience state-of-the-art learning facilities including the high fidelity simulation laboratory with human patient simulators and the most technologically advanced anatomy visualisation and interactive systems available.

Embedded in our health services community from the start students are immersed in experiential learning; simulations and clinical training provided through partnerships with hospitals, GP clinics and a variety of other health service providers.

Besides learning in and contributing to medical care in a regional setting, students also undertake placements in surrounding smaller centres to develop skills and understanding of local health needs of more rural and remote communities.

If you are interested in Clinical Programs in Allied Health, UNSW Sydney offers the following programs:

- Bachelor of Applied Exercise Science/ Master of Clinical Exercise Physiology
- Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Medicine/ Master of Pharmacy
- Bachelor of Nutrition/ Master of Dietetics and Food Innovation

### **Educational access schemes are available.**

Further information: Contact our Future Student Advisers

[unsw.edu.au/study/help/contact-us](https://unsw.edu.au/study/help/contact-us)

**Experience a world class medical education  
program right on your doorstep!**

# PHOTO GALLERY



Above: Professor Martin Jude Neurologist, and Katherine Mohr, Stroke Care Coordinator, lead an outstanding team of medical, nursing and allied health professionals at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital's Stroke Unit.

## STROKE WEEK

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital's Stroke Unit has once again been recognised as one of the best in Australia for exceptional patient care, delivered by highly skilled and experienced staff.

The latest accolade for the Unit is its certification as a Primary Stroke Centre by the Australian Stroke Coalition (ASC). It is one of the first Stroke Units in Australia to receive this recognition, and the first in NSW. The certification is part of a pilot program that aims to ensure consistency in care, staffing and data collection so that all patients have access to quality stroke care, regardless of location.



BreastScreen Director Veronica Scriven welcomes new Board Chair Glynis Ingram to the BreastScreen Services in Wagga Wagga



Acting Chief Executive Carla Bailey and new Board Chair Glynis Ingram visit staff in Albury



Acting Chief Executive Carla Bailey and new Board Chair Glynis Ingram visit Mercy Care in Albury with Robynne Cook and Chris Magrove

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- **Fast and easy to do**  
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