

WE ARE

Issue 9 | SPRING 2023 | FREE

Southern

Excellence in Care

Family, friendship
and fitness at Go4Fun



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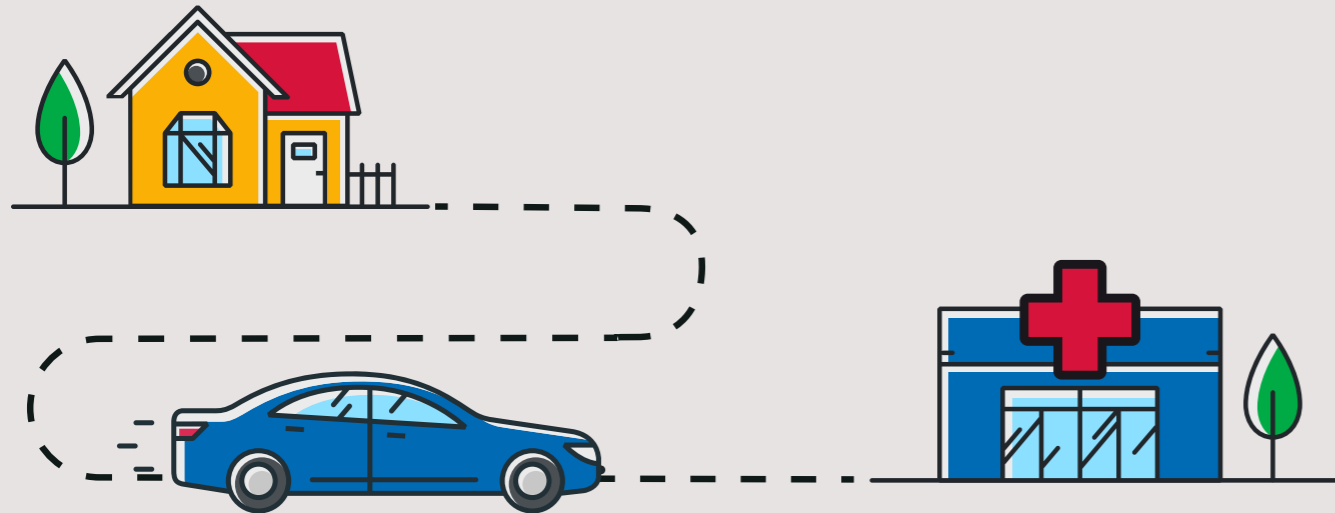


Southern NSW
Local Health District

Do you travel long distances for specialised healthcare?



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



To find out if you are eligible



Ask
your social worker
or healthcare team



Call
1800 478 227

or



Visit
iptaas.health.nsw.gov.au



Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme - IPTAAS

Scan the QR code to learn more.

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From our Board Chair

Southern's Board Chair, Beth Hoskins, shares why Acting Manager Goulburn Community Mental Health, Jenni Hudson was the recipient of this year's Board Chair Award at our Excellence Awards.

"Our 2023 Excellence Awards ceremony was a wonderful day of celebration with more than 1,000 staff members receiving an individual or team nomination across 20 award categories. I was really personally disappointed that I was unable to attend the event, but was pleased that a number of other Board members were in attendance.

I'd like to congratulate all nominees and thank you all for the extraordinary work you do for the people of Southern. This year's Board Chair Award went to Jenni Hudson, Acting Manager Goulburn Community Mental Health, and previously Southern's Mental Health School-Link Coordinator.

Jenni has made a significant contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of school-aged children across the District. She played a crucial role in developing the Cross Agency Communication and Response Protocol, which ensures a coordinated and consistent local response to support individuals, families, and communities affected by suicide or serious suicide attempts.

Jenni also led the development of the Share the Care program for schools, providing resources to help students with mental health issues connect with support services, and guiding parents and school staff about appropriate responses to mental health crises.



Southern's Board Chair, Beth Hoskins.

Southern NSW Local Health District 2023 Annual Public Meeting

Southern NSW Local Health District's Board extend an invitation to our community to attend our Annual Public Meeting.

Cooma Multi Function Centre
Monday 27 November 2023
5.00pm - 6.30pm
All welcome



The meeting will include:

- ✓ Overview of the District's performance, achievements and future plans.
- ✓ Opportunity for the community to ask questions.

Please submit questions in advance to SNSWLHD-YourFeedback@health.nsw.gov.au and these will be answered on the day.

Please register online:
<https://bit.ly/SNSWLHD-2023-APM>



Jenni's exceptional collaboration skills, dedication to improving mental health outcomes for school-aged children, and her ability to build strong partnerships with stakeholders in both the education and mental health sectors make her a very worthy winner of this year's Board Chair Award. Congratulations Jenni.

Southern's workforce provide exceptional care to our community members every day and we greatly appreciate all you do. An event like our Excellence Awards is a way to recognise and celebrate just some of those who make an extraordinary contribution."

Read more about our Excellence Awards on page 26.

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Southern NSW
Local Health District



Message from our Chief Executive

Welcome to the Spring edition of We Are Southern.

In this edition, we explore how we are fulfilling our promise at Southern to deliver excellence in care. I'm delighted to introduce you to some of the dedicated professionals who embody compassion and expertise, such as our inaugural Nurse of the Year, Elise Coppins, and Midwife of the Year, Hannah Bird.

Our cover features Queanbeyan's Kree Gibbs and her mother Kylie Singh, who were participants in the recent local cultural adaptation of the long-running Go4Fun program. In this edition, we share how this program is making a direct and tangible contribution towards improving health outcomes for Aboriginal families.

At our annual Excellence Awards in Batemans Bay in July, I was delighted to recognise and celebrate the remarkable commitment and innovation of our staff. Over 160 individuals and teams were honoured across 20 award categories.

Excellence in healthcare is not merely a goal, but a continuous journey of learning, adaptation, and collaboration. As simple as it might sound, we achieve excellence by using our talents to serve others, and embracing opportunities to improve quality, safety, and the patient experience.

This edition is full of examples of Southern's staff going above and beyond every day to serve others. What an honour and privilege it is to work in health care.

Margaret Bennett

MARGARET BENNETT OAM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Aboriginal Health Worker demonstrates artefacts during Reconciliation Week celebrations at Queanbeyan Hospital.

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Meet the team pulling them apart to find out

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

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

On the cover

Kree Gibbs, with her mother Kylie Singh, joined in the fun at Queanbeyan's first Aboriginal Go4Fun program.
Photo by Kyal Dorsett

Moruya students get up close to ancient artefacts



Students from Moruya High School visited the new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital site recently, granted special site access to learn more about the archaeological dig currently underway.



Ashleigh Keevers-Eastman with Moruya High School students.

Moruya High School Teacher, Bridget Mullany, who works with local Aboriginal students, heard about the work being undertaken on site, and saw an opportunity to expose local students to the dig.

Bridget reached out to good friend and SNSWLHD ICT Project Manager Judy Kennedy, who lives locally, to see if something could be arranged.

Fortunately, archaeologist and Senior Heritage Consultant, Ashleigh Keevers-Eastman, was available the following week and was able to

meet the students on site to show them around and explain the process undertaken to identify artefacts.

They were shown a range of small items that had been unearthed during the dig including sharpened silcrete, chert and quartz as well as flakes, cores, and tools.

Year 9 student, Crystal Heycox-Butler said seeing the artefacts first-hand made her think more about her cultural connection to the area and its history.

"I thought it was interesting seeing what they dug up. There was so much. I was amazed at how many people were cleaning and sorting the artefacts." Crystal said.

"Being on site - it made me feel important and realise how important my culture is. Before I did the dig, I didn't feel very interested in going but then when I was onsite, I realised how important it was in a historical sense."

Find out more about the visit and the students' reactions to visiting a live archaeological site: eurobodallahs.health.nsw.gov.au/



Archaeologist Ashleigh Keevers-Eastman shows the students some of the findings.



Archaeological investigations have discovered hundreds of culturally significant items at the new hospital site.

Goulburn Hospital artwork celebrates culture

A new artwork celebrating the rich Aboriginal culture of the Goulburn-Mulwaree region has been unveiled as part of the Goulburn Hospital and Health Service Redevelopment.

The collaborative artwork was facilitated by Monica Bridge representing significant places in the Goulburn area.



Created by Muruwari and Ngemba woman and contemporary Aboriginal artist, Monica Bridge, the artwork represents an interpretation of the Goulburn-Mulwaree area including the mountains, hills, and rivers.

The artwork, which is located in the reception area inside the recently opened main entry, celebrates culturally significant places of the region.

Locations from across the region are reflected in the artwork including the Wollondilly and Mulwaree rivers, men's place at Rocky Hill, burial grounds near Lansdowne Estate, camp sites around Goulburn and along the river, the Corrobboree site at Goulburn railway station, artefacts found at Tall Timbers, and Wombeyan Caves outside the Goulburn area.

Native plants such as snow gums have been used to represent men, while plants such as Yam Daisies are used to represent significant places for women.

Chair of the Goulburn Hospital and Health Service Arts and Health Working Group John Gale said Mrs Bridge was selected to create the artwork following an Expression of Interest process, in close consultation with local Aboriginal representatives.

"Mrs Bridge's appointment to the project was not only informed by community, the way in which she developed the artwork was also extensively shaped by community stories," Mr Gale said.

Mrs Bridge's commission completes the Arts and Heritage Integration Strategy for the Redevelopment, which includes two major stairway commissions, Springfield Place historical exhibition, and refurbishment of existing art and heritage collection items throughout clinical areas of the new service.

A fond farewell to Kathy

In August, Goulburn's maternity unit farewelled one of its most well-known midwives, Kathy Staines, after 31 years of service to the hospital.



Left: Kathy started her career at Goulburn Base Hospital as an Enrolled Nurse. Right: Kathy (right) has supported many women to birth in Goulburn.

Kathy commenced her journey at Goulburn Base Hospital three decades ago as an Enrolled Nurse,

but it was the maternity unit and paediatrics ward where she made her most notable contributions.

"Kathy has serviced the Goulburn community with dedication and will be remember for her warm smile and kind heart," said Rebecca Hosey, Clinical Midwifery Educator.

"Her smiling face has been there to greet many a birthing woman over the years and she has been fondly remembered by her former woman and their families as 'Aunty Kathy'."

"It has been a pleasure for all of those that had the privilege to work beside her, and she will be greatly missed."



Board Member Jennie Gordon and Executive Director of Operations Fiona Renshaw plant a Hickory Wattle with Gardener Andrew McLaughlin.

Room renaming honours Ngunnawal language

A Hickory Wattle and Silver Banksia have joined the Peppercorn trees in the courtyard of Peppertree Lodge this week, to mark the renaming of our meeting rooms in Southern's administration building, as part of our Reconciliation Week celebrations.

renamed after local plants found in the Queanbeyan region.

'Nummerak' is a Ngunnawal word and represents plants used for feeding, healing and living - Silver Wattle, Hickory Wattle, Black Wattle and Blackwood, while the ubiquitous banksia flower is known in Ngunnawal as 'Dhulwa'. The exterior of the Nummerak Room features a large 'meeting place' artwork, designed by Jessica Johnson of Nungala Creative, after Alison Simpson's Partnership

Building on a suggestion from our Senior Health Promotion Officer, Skyan Fernando, and following consultation, each meeting room has been



The new room names were launched with a commemorative planting during Reconciliation Week.

and Collaboration (2016), for our previous Reconciliation Action Plan.

The new names and plantings play a small but respectful role in honouring Queanbeyan's traditional owners and preserving the Ngunnawal language and serve as a reminder for those using the meeting rooms of Southern's commitment to Reconciliation and to Closing the Gap.

Hospital-level care at home

Queanbeyan Hospital in the Home (HITH) service welcomed its first patients earlier this year.

HITH is a hospital replacement service that allows patients to receive hospital level care in their home, instead of on a hospital ward.

For Queanbeyan's Tim Haines, it meant he was able to spend more time at home with his family, instead of at the hospital.

After a week on the inpatient ward, Tim was able to continue his treatment at home. He received intravenous antibiotics at home twice a day, with the assistance of the HITH nursing team - Donna, Helen, Martha and Amy - to treat persistent cellulitis.

"HITH is an opportunity for patients to receive care in their own environment," said Samantha Sherd, Acting Site Manager at Queanbeyan Hospital.

"Providing this option for patients who are suitable to be treated in HITH saves the patient an unnecessary stay in hospital and makes sure we have beds available for patients who need to be in hospital for their care."

Although the service is well-established in other areas of our District, the service was previously provided in the Queanbeyan area by ACT Health.

As well as daily visits from highly skilled nurses, patients are remotely monitored using technology, giving round the clock virtual care.



Tim Haines was one of Queanbeyan Hospital in the Home's first patients.

Kindness in cups at morning tea

The Cancer Council Biggest Morning Tea at Goulburn's People & Culture office proved to be an inspiring celebration of community, where kindness and creativity united in making a substantial contribution to the charity's cause.

Claims Officer Katie Matthews inspired her colleagues to unite for the cause. Katie's enthusiasm was infectious as she got everyone on board to donate gifts, items, and services for a charity auction.

The event featured a creative auction, where generous donations from staff and even Katie's mother's handmade soap packages were up for bidding. Among the unique offerings were delectable cupcakes, babysitting services, and an exhilarating joyride in a Mustang, which fetched an impressive \$150.

The bidding was brought excitement and camaraderie, resulting in the auction raising over \$1,000 for the charity. With personal connections to loved ones affected by cancer, the meaningful impact of the occasion was deeply felt.

Event organiser Katie Matthews.



Kellie Batten, Emily Coats and Katie Matthews with the auction items.



The pink eucalyptus flower/tree.

What you need to know about Voluntary Assisted Dying

Preparations are underway at Southern for Voluntary Assisted Dying to become an end-of-life option from 28 November this year. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022 passed through NSW Parliament on 19 May 2022, with the legislation providing for an 18-month implementation period.

Michaela Tyrrell is leading the implementation of Voluntary Assisted Dying in Southern, and has been visiting LHD sites, GPs and aged care facilities around the District to help them understand the new legislation.

“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 that cannot be relieved in a way they deem tolerable,” explained Michaela.

“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 and place they choose. The substance must be prescribed by a doctor who is eligible to provide voluntary assisted dying services,” she added.

‘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.

“Your doctor or treating medical team is best placed to discuss your personal situation and any support services that could help you.”

For more information, visit health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying, or contact Michaela Tyrrell, Voluntary Assisted Dying Project Lead on 0460 874 453 or michaela.tyrrell@health.nsw.gov.au.

Reading information on voluntary assisted dying and thinking about end of life care can be distressing for some. If you need support please call:

- Lifeline on 13 11 14 - provides telephone or online support and counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 - available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Laura finds balance on the coast



Laura Murray joined Southern earlier this year, and is a Registered Nurse working on the Medical Ward at South East Regional Hospital. We asked her why she made the move to Southern and what she loves about her new role.

“My name is Laura, I moved to Australia in January on a temporary skill shortage visa from Essex in England. I have visited Australia a couple of times before and fell in love with the south east coast of NSW.

I have been a Registered Nurse for ten years in various fields within the United Kingdom’s National Health Service, working over 55 hours a week on a regular basis.

My main reason for moving to work for NSW Health has been the work/life balance. I now work fewer hours, get paid more and have more time to spend with family and friends exploring this beautiful country on camping trips, hikes and days at the beach.

Everyone has welcomed me and made me feel immediately part of the team. Moving to Australia was honestly the best decision I could have made.”



My main reason for moving to work for NSW Health has been the work/life balance.”



Laura made the move to Southern

Goulburn welcomes Hepatitis C pop-up event

As part of Hepatitis Awareness Week in July, Southern proudly collaborated with Hepatitis NSW to raise the #HEPCURED awareness message in Goulburn.

Around 40,000 people in NSW are living with hepatitis C and remain unaware of game-changing treatment options and pathways.

At a pop-up community hub, our team of nurses spoke with the community and provided dried blood spot testing. The event was supported by Hep C peer workers, who play a key role in building a bridge between members of the community and clinical staff. Peer workers help to reduce the fear of stigma, explaining the testing process and benefits, and ease, of Hepatitis C cure.

A special guest at the event was the #HEPCURED mobile mural - a bold travelling billboard artwork on the back of a truck, which is getting the #HEPCURED message on the road, into communities across NSW, for people to see.

People who may be at risk of hepatitis C are encouraged to talk to their GP or sexual health nurse about testing or order a self-collected testing kit at DBStest.health.nsw.gov.au

Goulburn hosted the Hepatitis NSW #HEPCURED mobile mural in July.



Maternity staff recognised in Parliament



Left to right: Alexandra Reynolds, Steve Whan MP and Dr Amy Daly.

Steve Whan MP, Member for Monaro, visited Queanbeyan Hospital's maternity team in June to honour two exceptional health professionals, Alexandra Reynolds (Midwife) and Dr Amy Daly (Obstetrician).

Local parents Alexia and Shane Ivimey contacted Mr Whan to share their deep appreciation for the extraordinary care they and their newborn received when Alexia gave birth to son Wallace at the hospital in April.

Mr Whan decided to recognise the outstanding efforts of the team, both in Parliament with a Private Member's Statement, and in person.

During his visit, Mr Whan presented Alexandra and Amy with certificates to honour the expert care and support they give to families in the Queanbeyan community, containing an extract of the Hansard with the Private Members' Statement.

Family, friendship and fitness at Go4Fun

Southern's Aboriginal Go4Fun program has produced its first graduates. The Term 2 Queanbeyan program was the first time Southern has delivered Aboriginal Go4Fun, a culturally-adapted version of the long-running Go4Fun program.

Children participating in the program received great healthy lifestyle information, all delivered in a culturally tailored way for Aboriginal families and communities, encouraging the whole community to join in.

Go4Fun is a free healthy lifestyle program for families with children aged 7-13 years, which for 10 weeks over the school term. The program is run by trained health and community professionals and is a fun way to encourage healthy eating habits, increase fitness and build self-esteem towards a healthy lifestyle.

"Our leaders know the community dynamics and families and understand family kinship ties. All of this knowledge helps to create culturally safe and supportive environments for families to feel welcome," said Senior Health Promotion Officer, Skyan Fernando.

The program was delivered in partnership between Southern, PCYC Queanbeyan, and Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council.

Registrations are now open for Term 4 Go4Fun programs in Bega and Goulburn, along with Aboriginal Go4Fun in Queanbeyan. Families are also able to register their interest for further programs in the Bega and the Eurobodalla in 2024 or for Go4Fun Online. To register, visit go4fun.com.au.



Partnership puts a lid on life-threatening bleeds

A collaborative initiative between Southern, Canberra Health Service Renal Network and NSW Ambulance Service is improving first aid management of rare, life-threatening bleeds for local end-stage kidney failure patients on haemodialysis.

The ‘STOP the bleed – Use a LID’ initiative is based on a successful program created in the UK. Patients, carers, paramedics and other health workers are taught how to use a bottle top lid to effectively stop a bleed until the patient can be transported to hospital for urgent review by specialist vascular surgeons.

Clinical Nurse Consultant Pip O’Reilly said the program is being rolled out across all Renal Units in the District.

“While very rare, bleeds from an arteriovenous fistula or graft can result in significant blood loss, and even death, without fast treatment,” said Pip.

“Since most life-threatening bleeds occur in the community, outside of a dialysis unit, it is vital that patients, carers, paramedics, Emergency Departments and other health professionals know what to do.

“This is a game changer for haemodialysis patients and their caregivers, giving them peace of mind that they have a quick and effective treatment ready if a bleed occurs.”

Haemodialysis patient Allan Turner agrees, saying that the simplicity of the STOP the Bleed Use a LID treatment strategy is what makes it so effective.

“It really is so simple – anyone can do it. There’s just a few easy steps to follow to help protect yourself or your family member if there’s a bleed.”

“You never really know when a bleed could happen,” said Allan. “Having such an easy plan to follow takes away the guesswork. I know what to do and how to do it. It takes away so much of the fear and stress for everyone.”

As part of the ‘STOP the bleed – Use a LID’ rollout, local haemodialysis patients and their carers, as well as ambulance and health staff, receive face-to-face support, training and education resources, which includes an information leaflet, fridge magnet and a Dialysis Access Alert Card.



Left to right: Emma Harrington, Alison Broadbent and Leanne Ovington.

International recruitment success

Earlier this year, Southern’s District Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Alison Broadbent, traveled to the UK and Ireland with Southern colleagues, Leanne Ovington and Emma Harrington, to interview pre-screened applicants, with the intention of securing suitable candidates to support and complement Southern’s current nursing and midwifery workforce.

“At Southern, we recruit most of our employees from within Australia. However, in some areas we recruit experienced registered nurses or registered midwives from overseas,” said Alison.

“We’re looking forward to welcoming up to 80 nurses and midwives later this year, with our dedicated Working Group helping every step of the way in their journey to work with us in Southern, from sponsorship to visas, to travel logistics and orientation.”

Allan Turner and Renal Clinical Nurse Consultant, Pip O’Reilly at the ‘STOP the bleed – Use a LID’ launch in Queanbeyan

Painting a path to recovery with Operation Art

Specially selected artworks from the state’s premier children’s visual arts exhibition will be on display in hospitals across Southern NSW Local Health District, after a selection of 18 artworks were presented to the District at the program’s touring exhibition at Ngununggula in Bowral in July.

The 18 Operation Art artworks are on permanent loan from the collection of The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, and will be displayed at Goulburn, Yass, Crookwell and Queanbeyan Hospitals.

“Operation Art is a unique contemporary children’s exhibition that encourages students from Kindergarten to Year 10 to create artworks for children in hospital,” said Ivy Baddock, Art Curator at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

“The exhibition focuses on creating a positive environment to aid the healing and recovery process of young patients.”

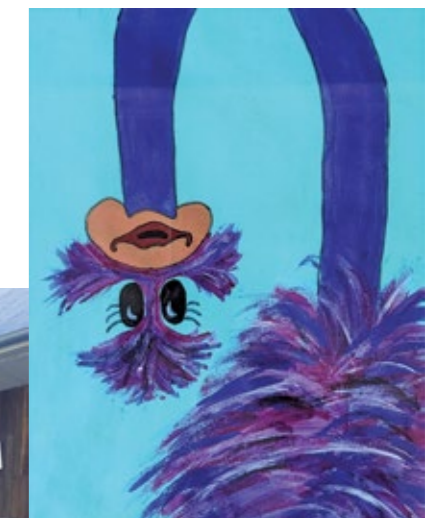
‘Ozzie the upside-down Ostrich’ by Olivia Perrett in Year 6 at Gunnedah South Public School was a finalist in the 2021 exhibition and has been selected for display at Yass Hospital.

When submitting her artwork to the competition, Olivia explained: “I wanted to put a smile on someone else’s face. I thought a colourful ostrich would make visitors to the hospital happy. Purple is my favourite colour, and I thought the teal colour went well with it, making the bright artwork stand out.”

Operation Art is an initiative of The Children’s Hospital at Westmead in association with the New South Wales Department of Education.

Goulburn Hospital’s Dr Tagiilima Sio-Vaeau and Kelly Watson

‘Ozzie the upside-down Ostrich’ is on display at Yass Hospital.



Left to right: Ivan Goolagong, Heidi Willsher, Emma Woolley, Ivy Baddock and Kyal Dorsett



‘Stray Friend’ by Evie Heckmann, Kendra Rogers and Deshaun Dean from Kellyville Ridge Public School is on display in the maternity unit at Queanbeyan Hospital.



Occupational Therapist features in campaign

Coastal Network Occupational Therapist **Joanne Flannery** featured in **Palliative Care Australia's 2023 National Palliative Care Week** campaign. The week ran from **21 May to 27 May** and aimed to put 'Matters of Life and Death' front and centre in Australia's consciousness.

Death and dying can be a difficult subject matter for people to talk about and engage with. Palliative care is high quality health care and support for people living with a life-limiting illness and their families.

Palliative care identifies and treats symptoms and issues associated with life-limiting illness, which may be physical, emotional, spiritual or social. It is a family-centred model of care, meaning that family, loved ones and carers can also receive practical and emotional support.

Palliative care is about maintaining quality of life - the focus is on living as well as possible, for as long as possible.

This care can be accessed from diagnosis of a life-limiting illness so you can receive the holistic end-of-life care that you deserve.



Brenda Matthews' story provides insight into the impact of past policies.

Brenda inspires in documentary screening

Southern recently hosted a highly-anticipated screening of 'The Last Daughter' documentary at The B in Queanbeyan, in partnership with Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council and other community partners.

'The Last Daughter' follows the remarkable journey of proud Wiradjuri woman Brenda Matthews, who grew up within two very different families and cultures, and her quest to discover where she truly belongs.

After the screening, the audience had the unique opportunity to engage in a captivating Q&A session with Brenda herself. This interactive segment allowed attendees to delve deeper into the film's themes and gain insights into Brenda's experiences and her ongoing journey.

"We all have a story that connects us to this Country. In uncovering my own story, I found healing and a place to belong," said Brenda.

As a former student of Queanbeyan Public School, the return to Queanbeyan for the screening was particularly poignant for Brenda, who now lives on Bundjalung country in Queensland, with her husband Mark.

"I'm on a quest to help bring our two worlds together. Two halves, that together, can create a powerful whole."



Jerikye Williams entertained the crowd at the Moruya Elders Luncheon



The winners of the Best Dressed competition cut the cake at the Moruya Elders Luncheon

Photo Gallery: NAIDOC Week

This year's NAIDOC Week across Southern brought communities together in a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Along with morning teas held at sites across the District, local events provided opportunities for connection and cultural celebration.

At Cooma Hospital, a community barbecue celebrated the week in a relaxed setting, while in Moruya, an Elders Luncheon honoured traditional knowledge keepers, with entertainment from Jerikye Williams. The best-dressed winners had the honour of cutting a fabulous cake, adding to the joyous atmosphere.

Our Aboriginal Health stall at Mogo's Big Day Out proved a hit with children and Elders alike, with some fun games and great prizes up for grabs. Additionally, Queanbeyan's community day

featured multiple stalls from our Aboriginal Health teams, adding to the excitement of the week.

At Queanbeyan's Peppertree Lodge, it was tongs at ten paces as four teams of Southern staff used bush tucker ingredients to create healthy, modern dishes in the Koori Cook Off.

Southern is committed to building cultural awareness, understanding, and respect, and we are proud to support our Aboriginal workforce and community.



Four teams battled it out at the Koori Cook Off in Queanbeyan



Lucky competition winners at Mogo's Big Day Out

Southern's shining stars

Southern inaugural Nurse of the Year and Midwife of the Year were announced at a special event in Braidwood to celebrate the local nursing and midwifery workforce for International Day of the Midwife (5 May) and International Nurses Day (12 May). Three of our staff are also finalists in the upcoming NSW Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards 2023, acknowledging their passion, dedication and contribution.



Elise was presented with the Nurse of the Year Award by Board Chair Beth Hoskins.



Hannah was presented with the Nurse of the Year Award by Board Chair Beth Hoskins.

Elise Coppins

Southern's 2023 Nurse of the Year

As Southern's Blood Management Clinical Nurse Consultant, Elise diligently promotes a culture of continuous improvement and best practice across the District and is actively driving evidence-led solutions to improve clinical processes and patient experience.

Elise commenced her career with Southern back in 2012 as a Registered Nurse in Braidwood. Since then, she has worked across numerous wards in Goulburn and Queanbeyan hospitals, and as a child and family nurse in the community. Elise has also worked in leadership roles across a broad range of specialities including clinical care, education, management, research, and health service delivery.

Elise is a passionate patient advocate, always prioritising the needs and wellbeing of those in our care, and has a strong understanding of rural life, living on a sheep and cattle property herself.

Hannah Bird

Southern's 2023 Midwife of the Year Finalist, NSW Midwife of the Year

Hannah has spent the past 10 years dedicating herself to getting the best outcomes for women in the Southern NSW LHD, heading the Maternity Unit at South East Regional Hospital, as well as serving as a midwife at Pambula District Hospital.

She says she was destined to be a midwife from her teens when she observed her best friend's mother's work with pregnant women, birth and newborns. Her deep understanding of what it takes to deliver quality care in regional and remote areas began in 2003 during a year-long graduate nurse program in Central Australia.

Colleagues admire Hannah's professionalism, compassion, resilience, and ability to promote happiness among the staff. Her commitment ensures that all women, regardless of their location or background, have access to safe maternity care.

Leanne Ovington

Finalist, NSW Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Award

Leanne is an outstanding Nurse Manager and she has consistently led her teams to achieving excellent patient outcomes, alongside improved staff satisfaction. She lives by the motto "be the best you can be" and leads by example.

Leanne's leadership style is characterised by empowering others and collaboration. She truly listens and takes on feedback from staff, stakeholders and management, and an example of the success of her approach can be seen in Southern achieving the highest rate of Indigenous people vaccinated for COVID-19 in Australia.

Passionate about career progression, Leanne encourages all nurses to work at the top of their scope of practice, with many advancing to senior roles. Her collaborative spirit also shines when overcoming staffing challenges, building strong ties with nursing agencies.

Sharelle Anderson

Finalist, NSW Aboriginal Nurse/Midwife of the Year Award

As the first Aboriginal midwife to hold the position of Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service (AMIHS) midwife for Southern, Sharelle understands the importance of cultural safety and awareness when working with families, bringing a compassionate, patient-centred and individualised approach to care.

She goes above and beyond for her patients to ensure women feel supported and cared for, advocating for patients internally by educating colleagues on cultural differences, and externally as a conduit between patients and external services. Sharelle is exceptional at working collaboratively with these internal and external organisations to create a strong foundation of physical health, whilst providing advocacy and support to families requiring intensive family support.

Sharelle is a professional, caring midwife and is responsible for many positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and their babies.



Leanne Ovington is Southern's Nurse Manager Workforce and Planning



Sharelle Anderson (centre) with Liam Farina and Arcadia Fernando with baby Yilaalu (left) and Tenica Ryan and Chris Gifford with baby Michael (right)

The 2023 NSW Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards will be held on 16 November at Parliament House. Share in the celebrations at health.nsw.gov.au/nursing/enma/



From dental assisting to nursing: a journey of perseverance



Goulburn Hospital and Health Service's Megan Cudaj embarked on a remarkable journey from dental assisting to nursing, opening up new avenues for personal growth and professional fulfillment.

"I fell into dental assisting quite by accident," said Megan.

"My mother was a Dental Assistant who had previously worked with one of the private dentists in town and so I got a job at his clinic. I saw a Dental Assistant Scholarship Program advertised at Westmead Hospital. I applied for it and was accepted, and so moved to Sydney and lived in the Westmead nurses accommodation whilst completing that traineeship full-time."

A diverse path: Megan's professional journey:

Megan came to Southern in 2013 as a Dental Assistant at the Goulburn Community Health Dental Clinic. Inspired by the variety and opportunities in nursing, she embarked on a decade-long journey to shift her focus towards the profession, and a career in community nursing.

"I needed to upskill my qualifications with a Bachelor of Nursing degree. I completed a unit of study through the Australian Catholic University which bridged into the degree. Commencing the degree proper in 2016, I studied the first and second years part-time but then decided to complete the third year full-time in 2020 to complete it before having my fifth (and last!) baby in mid-2021."

Since finishing her degree, Megan has worked as a Graduate Registered Nurse, with two



Megan's perseverance has paid off with a role as a Community Health Nurse

six-month rotations within the Goulburn Community Health Nursing team and the Goulburn Base Hospital Perioperative Unit.

Balancing work and study

Balancing work and study was no easy feat, as she continued her role at the dental clinic while simultaneously attending nursing placements. Her family's support, along with the assistance of her managers, enabled her to persevere and overcome the challenges along the way.

"I used my annual leave and leave without pay for my nursing placements, so while it looked like I took a lot of time off work, I certainly wasn't taking a holiday! I'd then work more in the uni break to save up more leave for the next year."

"My family helped - my mother and sister would help me with the drop-off and pick-up of my eldest three children when I was on placements in Canberra. When I had my fourth child in late 2017, I was able to take him to uni with me as ACU encourages mothers to do so, and so I was able to continue studying whilst on maternity leave."

"In 2020 a lot of the uni classes moved online due to COVID, which was a lot easier for me without all of the travel. Overall, it was challenging and looking back, I don't think I ever really achieved what you'd call 'balance', but it all got done!"

Discovering the joys of nursing

As Megan embarked on her new role as a Graduate Registered Nurse, she quickly discovered the profound impact nursing can have on patients' lives. Witnessing clients experience improved health and enhanced quality of life brought her immense joy and a sense of fulfillment. Despite the challenges and responsibilities that come with being a new graduate, Megan credits her managers and educators for providing invaluable guidance throughout her nursing journey.

Surprises and new bonds

Megan reflects on the professional yet light-hearted approach, and unwavering support for one another that she has found as part of her nursing experience, making her appreciate the profession even more.

"The genuine friendships and camaraderie between the nurses in both units where I've been placed has been a lovely surprise. Nursing can be a tiring and at times very stressful job but absolutely all of the nurses that I've worked with have been lovely- professional but with a great sense of humour!"

Support and encouragement along the way

Megan acknowledges the immense support she received during her transition. Her managers, including Lou Fox, Amanda Woodlands, Jeremy Gilchrist, and Elizabeth Hogan, played pivotal roles in granting her the necessary time off for her nursing placements.

"Registered Nurse Dianne O'Connor was somewhat of a mentor in the early days, giving great advice whenever I sought her out."

Additionally, assistance and guidance from colleagues Kristy Wilson and Bec Miles significantly influenced her placement experiences and future opportunities.

A journey of endless possibilities

Although Megan misses certain aspects of her previous role in oral health, she says that her dental assisting experience continues to benefit her nursing practice.

"My aim was to become a Community Health Nurse and I've been lucky enough to secure a permanent position in that team."

Megan was supported to continue her studies while growing her family who are so proud of her achievements.

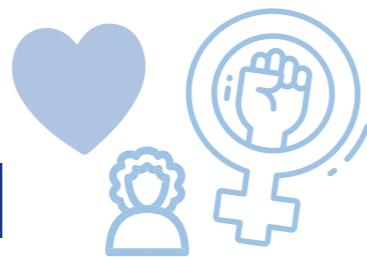
Megan's long-term goals include completing a Child and Family Health post-graduate certificate and becoming a certified nurse immuniser. With nursing's vast array of opportunities, Megan is excited to explore the endless possibilities and make a positive impact on the lives of her patients.

When asked her advice, Megan has some encouraging words for those considering upskilling or retraining in a different profession.

"The time will pass anyway so you might as well spend it chasing your dreams and making this one life that we get the best that it can be. Get some advice from someone that is working in the field that you want to get into about the best/current pathways there and have a chat with your current manager to get them on board - you're going to need their help and support."



Empowering women to stay well



After more than 20 years of caring for women, Fiona Tuckerman, from Cooma Community Health Service knows how hard it can be for some to put their own health needs first.



Women's Health Nurse Fiona Tuckerman

That's why she offers everyone she sees in her capacity as Cooma's dedicated Women's Health Nurse a safe and supportive space where it can be "all about them". Even if just for that one hour in their day.

"Women often focus on the care needs of their children or loved ones and don't feel they have capacity to prioritise their own health. So when I see women, either in person or via Telehealth, the appointment is all about them," said Fiona.

"I schedule an hour for the appointment and ask a range of questions about their family history, past health and gynaecological health and offer

opportunities to discuss anything of concern. But the most important thing I can offer women is my time and the flexibility to talk about any health issues on their mind - big or small."

And you don't have to be "unwell" to access the service.

"Ours is a 'well woman' service," said Fiona. "Sometimes within the course of a consultation a health issue is revealed. This may require a follow up by a GP or a referral to another service or health professional. In these circumstances we can offer guidance about options available and help navigate access to the care they need."

“The most important thing I can offer women is my time and the flexibility to talk about any health issues on their mind - big or small.”

"You most certainly do not need to have a specific health issue to come and see us. All women are welcome to make a free and confidential appointment to come in to chat about any health concerns they might have."

Fiona has worked for Southern NSW Local Health District for 20 years as a nurse, midwife, child and family nurse, lactation consultant and for the last three years as a Women's Health Nurse servicing Cooma and its surrounds.

It's a role she's passionate about.

"I really like the flexibility of my role, from education to clinical work for women of all ages and stages of life. No day is the same and I feel we can offer holistic care that really makes a positive difference. Best of all we offer a free and confidential service, and there's currently no waitlist to make an appointment."

Fiona recommends regular check-ups, including cervical screening and breast examinations for all women.

"Regular check ups are so important to the preventative side of health. Conditions caught early always assist with good results and improved lifestyle and health outcomes."

Reflecting on the advances she's seen in women's health during her career, Fiona nominates the introduction of self-collected cervical screening as "something of a game changer".

"The self-collected specimen is possible due to the identification of the cause of cervical cancer-human papilloma virus, which catches the risk of cervical cancer at a very early stage. Australia has as a goal the elimination of cervical cancer, a nasty preventable cancer which in collaboration with vaccination and now self-collected cervical screening is becoming a rarity."

Self-collection screening also provides a level of control and choice for patients, removing barriers to screening participation.

"The more options we can offer women to help inform and prioritise their own health choices the better."

How our Women's Health Nurses can help you

Southern's team of Women's Health Nurses provide free and confidential services for women. No referral is required. Services available include:

- cervical screening tests
- contraceptive advice
- period problems
- family planning and pregnancy options
- pregnancy tests
- postnatal checks
- pelvic floor and continence support
- sexual health screening
- menopause advice and support for midlife changes
- breast health
- domestic and family violence support.

Visit snewlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/our-services/womens-health-child-youth-family or contact the Community Health team in your area to find out more.



Women's Health Week 2023

Women's Health Week is celebrated from 4 to 8 September. The theme in 2023 is Grow your Knowledge, which focuses on supporting and empowering women to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Visit jeanhailes.org.au/womens-health-week to find out more.



‘Know me, understand me’: Grant awarded for digital stories in dementia care



The life stories and personal preferences of individuals living with dementia in aged care facilities will be recorded as part of a four-year \$1.35 million project to help provide more personalised care and support.



Southern's Clinical Psychologist Dr Katrina Anderson is the study's chief investigator.



Sometimes a small piece of information about the resident's life can help staff to head off distressing interactions; knowing someone has a fear of dogs, for example, can change the activities offered to that person."

The project will educate healthcare students to conduct reminiscence sessions with individuals living with dementia in residential aged care. Students will use a range of resources to evoke memories and stories from the individual's past. The students will then produce a four-minute life story video and poster to capture the resident's identity and preferences. The video will be easily accessible through a QR code on the poster.

The research team will compare this approach with usual care to find out if the life story videos help aged care and health staff understand more about the resident so they can provide personalised care and support.

Chief Investigator, Dr Katrina Anderson from the Aged Care Evaluation Unit (The Australian National University and Southern NSW Local Health District) anticipates that this will improve the quality of life of the residents and their family carers.

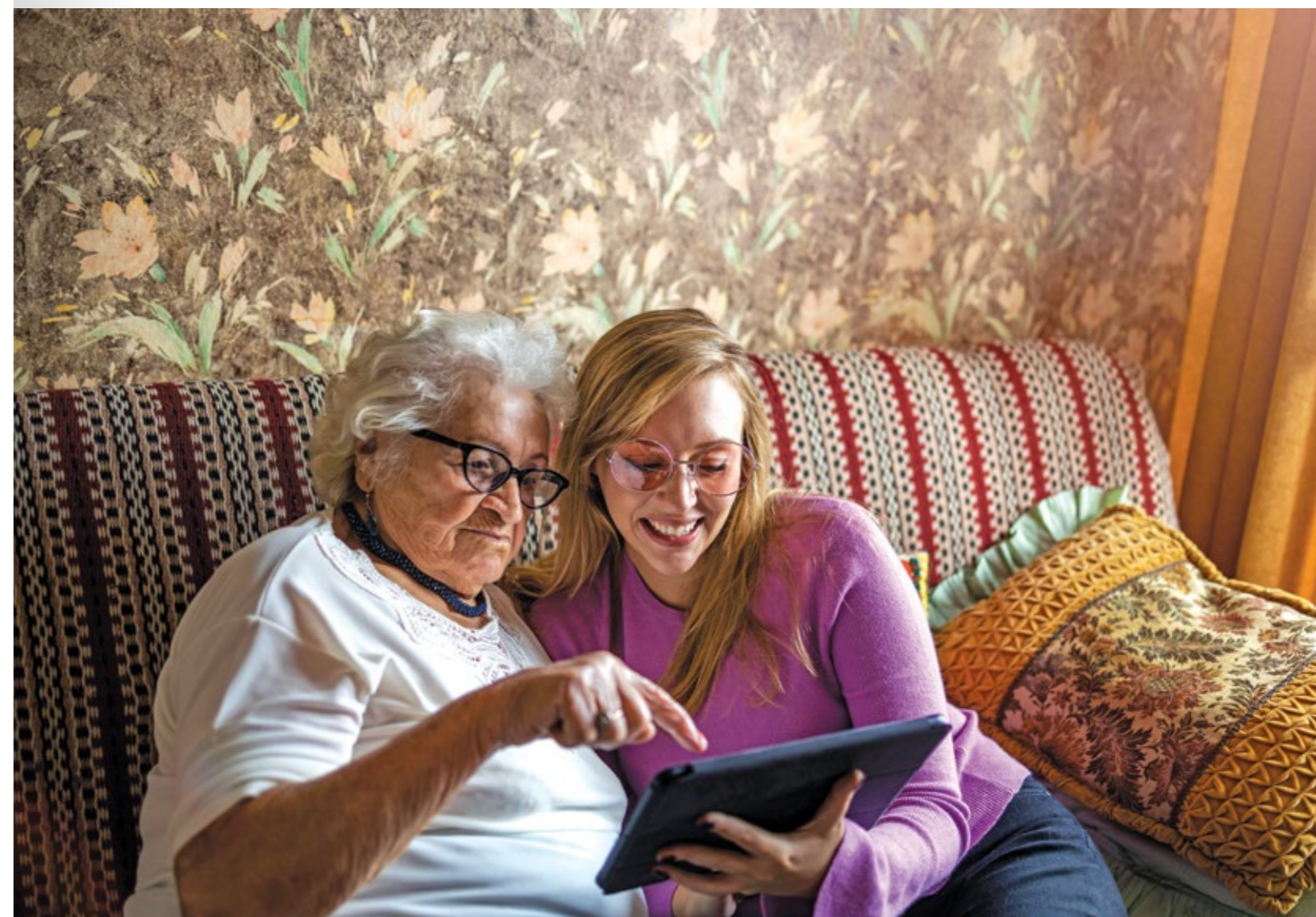
"This project was born out of our clinical experience in aged care homes. Time pressured care staff often have little information about the person behind the disease when individuals living with dementia first relocate to residential care," Dr Anderson said.

"Sometimes a small piece of information about the resident's life can help staff to head off distressing

interactions. Knowing someone has a fear of dogs, for example, can change the activities offered to that person."

Professor Victoria Traynor from University of Wollongong's (UOW) School of Nursing is leading the UOW effort on the project.

"Having national funding to undertake research with two of our local aged care providers is an excellent opportunity to showcase partnerships across UOW campuses that make a difference. It has long been known that life story work improves the quality of care for individuals with dementia. This project is extending the impact of life stories through contemporary approaches."



The project will teach healthcare students to conduct reminiscence sessions with individuals living with dementia in residential aged care.

"This project uses the untapped potential of digital media and the perspectives of young people to showcase life stories like never before," Professor Traynor said.

The study evolved from long-standing partnerships with community members with experience of the aged care system, as well as aged care providers Sapphire Coast Community Aged Care and Warrigal. Advice on translating the project into usual practice will be provided by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the Australian

Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

"If they had something like this when my mother was in care, it would have made the world of difference," consumer representative Elaine Todd said.

More than 50 per cent of residents in aged care homes currently have some form of cognitive impairment, usually dementia.

These individuals often enter care with little warning and may transition rapidly between the care home and hospitals.

The research team hopes the short videos will assist staff in any setting to quickly get to know the person with dementia and what works for them.

The four-year, \$1.35 million Medical Research Future Fund Dementia Ageing and Aged Care Grant was awarded to a team of researchers from The Australian National University, Swinburne University of Technology, The University of Sydney, University of Wollongong, The University of Queensland and Southern NSW Local Health District.



This project is extending the impact of life stories through contemporary approaches. This project uses the untapped potential of digital media and the perspectives of young people to showcase life stories like never before."

Photo Gallery: 2023 Excellence Awards

Southern hosted our annual Excellence Awards at Bay Pavilions in Batemans Bay on 21 July 2023. Over 160 individuals and teams were honoured across 20 categories, with a strong focus on quality improvement and patient safety.



Guest speaker Dr Arnagretta Hunter with Margaret Bennett



Attendees were welcomed to the event with a smoking ceremony by the Muladha Gamara Dancers.



The Excellence in Aboriginal Healthcare Award was awarded to Breastscreen's 'Trusted Locals Encourage Screening' project.

Donna Saddler and Sam Mundi were jointly awarded the Care and Kindness Award.



Dr Pramesh Ghimire, Jennifer Mozina and Chelsea Maxwell are presented with the Keeping People Healthy Award by Jennie Gordon.



The Eurobodalla Palliative Care Volunteer Service team won Volunteer of the Year.



Event organisers Niccola Follett and Ben Hodgson.



Sue Rowley and Rebecca Miles accept the Chief Executive's Award from Margaret Bennett on behalf of the Safe Care Project.



Uncle Bunja Smith welcomed attendees to Walbunja country.



Graduates of the Clinical Excellence Commission's Applied Safety and Quality Program

View the full list of winners:



This volunteering life



Anne, a volunteer with the Queanbeyan-Monaro Palliative Care Volunteer Service, shares her reflections of the deep personal connections made through the service.

“My memories of my first volunteering job still make me cringe! Three other students and myself were given a task by the Society of Saint Vincent DePaul to wallpaper a single mother’s flat in a poor suburb of Dublin. None of us had a clue about pattern matching and the paste got the better of us, but the lady never complained. We gave ourselves the sack!

Twenty years later I found myself working as a volunteer in a hospice. I was tasked with morning tea and lunch delivery to patients and families. The hospice also had a drinks trolley that offered alcohol to the residents. I was harried and hassled with the logistics of food so that I often forgot to serve the alcohol. Nobody complained.

On reflection, if I was a palliative care patient needing to cope with impending death, I would be requesting a double shot of any spirit available. I did not get the sack but was offered a job as a healthcare professional in the facility.

Thirty years on and now retired, I am back in volunteer mode, accepted by palliative care, again. This time, I am trusted with making a fortnightly home visit to an individual client. We had a supervised visit with the volunteer coordinator present to see if we were a match and so far, I have not got the sack!

The client and I agree that we are social people and just hit it off, as they say. We enjoy each other’s company and happily chat, one more so than the other!

An anecdote worth mentioning to illustrate my point - a teacher’s solution to her chatterbox student at the tender age of five was to have strips of pre-cut tape at the ready to shush her. Needless to say, the short-term solution did not work.

We fill in the gaps in our lives and share. She is no stranger to hardships even before the cancer diagnosis. I now have a new understanding of how difficult it is to be a carer for a tone-deaf mother and then a much-loved partner. He died unexpectedly - bloody cancer!

I listen in awe at her life story, she should get a medal just for being a caring grandmother, compensating for an un-caring mother. She still provides a sympathetic ear, at any time of the night for one of her grandchildren - of adult age.

I put her up on a pedestal and on par with our Prisoners of War (POW).

She has battled her cancer for over ten years and subsequently has a great relationship with her medical team - oncologist, GP and nurses alike. She has been invited to join them for a coffee at the hospital cafeteria if spotted and is deeply cared for. There is a mutual regard and admiration.

Did I mention that she lives alone and faces the threat of eviction if a sale of her property is approved? Transport issues and costs are her bugbears. The medical fraternity are beginning to ‘cotton on’ to her struggle as she hauls her oxygen condenser on wheels, like a suitcase, into her autoimmune therapy sessions.

She is a survivor with a strong will and indomitable spirit, not too unlike our POWs.

Her weekend work is her lifeline, and she goes, sick or not.

How does one unpack such resilience?

I see volunteering as a two-way encounter, a shared humanity.

Such is life - a shared life.”

This story has been printed with the permission of Anne’s client.



I see volunteering as a two-way encounter, a shared humanity. Such is life - a shared life.”



Become a Palliative Care Volunteer

Southern is recruiting volunteers for our Palliative Care Volunteer Services. Our Palliative Care Volunteers visit people in their homes and residential aged care settings to provide social, emotional and practical support to clients, carers and their families.

No qualifications are required, but life experience, compassion and listening skills are beneficial. Volunteers receive comprehensive training and ongoing support from a dedicated coordinator.

For more information, or to apply, visit:
snswhd.health.nsw.gov.au/get-involved/volunteer



What's inside that vape?



We hear a lot about the dangers of vaping, but what's actually inside them? NSW Health Pathology's Clinical and Environmental Toxicology laboratory has been tasked with finding out.



Vapes are packaged and flavoured to appeal to young people.

As parents, we often worry about our children's eating habits. We want to make sure they are healthy and protected from harm.

The federal government has announced it will ban recreational vaping and limit the sale of vapes to pharmacies, with health experts concerned about the rise of vaping, particularly among children.

NSW Health evidence suggests children are accessing nicotine vaping products in increasing numbers and many adults are also accessing illegal nicotine vaping products.

Since 2015, NSW Health Pathology's Forensic & Analytical Science Service's Clinical and Environmental

Toxicology Laboratory has been testing e-cigarettes (or vapes), to determine their contents and assist the NSW Ministry of Health with its surveillance and public health investigation activities.

Laboratory manager Irimi Roumeliotis explains the need for caution when opening the devices to test the contents.

"We have to use tools and a fair amount of force to get them open. Some products have sparked and caught alight when we've taken them apart for testing," Ms Roumeliotis said.

"As a result, the team has developed a safe work procedure, ensuring there is always a second team member present during disassembling of devices.

"Sample preparation is also very labour-intensive and involves lots of dilutions for each sample.

"Sample extracts are typically diluted to between 1 in a million and 1 in 4 million to ensure the devices used for analysis are not overloaded with nicotine, causing contamination issues."

Most of the devices tested are found to contain nicotine, even though many contain no reference to nicotine on the label.

The typical concentration of nicotine found in vapes is 5 to 400 mg/cartridge or 20,000 - 50,000 mg/L. The average cigarette contains about 12 mg of nicotine.

Ms Roumeliotis says in addition to nicotine, other chemicals and metals found inside vapes include:

- Flavoursants such as diacetyl & Diketones flavourings
- Volatile organic compounds, VOCs (such as benzene)
- Aldehydes (e.g., formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, and acrolein)
- Heavy metals, such as Mercury, Lead, Chromium, Cadmium, and Arsenic.

"There is a perception in the community that vaping is a safer alternative to smoking tobacco cigarettes. However, introducing

any chemicals into the human body, especially directly to the lungs as vaping does, is not safe," Ms Roumeliotis said.

"The newer vape devices are also typically getting larger in size and more potent, containing higher concentrations of nicotine."

Findings "a wake up call"

Respiratory Physiologist at Avondale University and expert in the field of nicotine addiction Professor Renee Bittoun said the results of the laboratory testing should be a wake-up call.

"The use of these products among school-aged and young

people is of great concern," Professor Bittoun said.

"E-cigarettes containing nicotine are addictive. There is limited evidence that vapes help people quit smoking but are in fact becoming a gateway to smoking tobacco in adolescents."

Professor Bittoun said all vape users are exposed to chemicals and toxins that have the potential to cause harm and more research is needed to measure how much is being inhaled by young users.

With thanks to NSW Health Pathology



Left: Breaking open vapes for testing can be difficult and dangerous.



Right: The contents of a vape.



Preparing samples for testing.

“The newer vape devices are also typically getting larger in size and more potent, containing higher concentrations of nicotine.”

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