

NORTHEAST HEALTH FOCUS

AUTUMN 2026



HEALTH

COMMUNITY

CULTURE



WELCOME

It has been a busy and exciting start to the year at Northeast Health Wangaratta. Across our service, there has been a strong sense of momentum as we continue to invest in new initiatives and strengthen the way we deliver care to our community.

Inside this edition, you'll read about some of the great work already underway, along with a number of important projects we have recently launched. We have also been thrilled to launch our Workforce Plan and Disability Action Plan, as well as the early stages of developing our Community Engagement Strategy.

Each of these pieces of work plays an important role in shaping our future. Together, they reflect our commitment to supporting our people, improving accessibility and inclusion, and ensuring we are listening to and working alongside our community.

What brings this all together is our shared focus on delivering exceptional care. By strengthening our workforce, embedding inclusive practices and building stronger connections with our community, we are creating a health service that is responsive, respectful and ready for the future.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, partners and community for your ongoing support and contribution to this work. I hope you enjoy this edition.

Libby Fifis
Chief Executive Officer

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Northeast Health Wangaratta acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, the Bpangarang and Yorta Yorta people, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We respect and celebrate all forms of diversity. We welcome and value people from all walks of life to access our services and join our team.

BOARD UPDATE

Celebrating the NHW team and their amazing work.



Board Chair, Ruth Kneebone

Staff awards

My fellow board members and I were thrilled to attend the Staff Awards evening at the Gateway on 19th March. It was enlightening and inspiring to witness such obvious loyalty and passion being rewarded on the night. I felt privileged to be involved in the occasion. Big thanks to the organizing team, scholarship donors, nominators, award winners and length of service recipients. You are a credit to yourselves, NHW and our community.

Committees – Independent members

The board recently appointed several independent members to our committees. These include Rosie Koop and John Davis to our Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which brings our independent member numbers up to four, on this committee.

However, we can have up to eight independent members on the CAC, so if you know of someone who might be interested and would make a good contribution, please ask them to contact a member of the board or exec team. We also welcomed Allison Winters and Anthea Sloan to our Audit and Risk Committee.

We look forward to better informed decision making by leveraging the skill, external insights and community context these members will bring to these committees.

The Hume Local Health Service Network

We continue to collaborate and make progress with our partner health services in Hume to improve the health journey for our community. The focus areas for all Victorian networks are:

- Access, Equity and Flow
- Workforce
- Safety and Quality and
- Shared Services.
-

There are Hume network initiatives within each of these categories, that will benefit our consumers and staff in the very near future.



AWARD WINNERS

NHW Recognised with Gold Status for Stroke Care

Northeast Health Wangaratta has achieved Gold Status in the prestigious World Stroke Organisation Angels Awards, recognising outstanding improvements in stroke care and patient outcomes. The award follows a review of AuSCR data for Quarter 4 (October to December) 2025 and marks NHW's first World Stroke Organisation award.

Achieving Gold Status highlights the organisation's renewed focus and rapid progress in delivering high-quality stroke care.

The World Stroke Organisation Angels Awards recognise hospitals worldwide that demonstrate excellence in acute stroke care by meeting rigorous international performance standards.

The results reflect sustained quality improvement across the Emergency Department and Medical Division, underpinned by strong clinical leadership and collaboration.

Over the past 12 months, the service has delivered significant improvements in stroke care, including halving door-to-needle times and consistently performing below target benchmarks.

Northeast Health Wangaratta Chief Operating Officer Rebecca Weir said the achievement reflects the commitment of staff to delivering timely, evidence-based care for stroke patients.

"This recognition highlights the dedication of our Emergency Department and Allied health, Nursign and Medical teams, and the strong clinical leadership and collaboration driving sustained improvements in stroke care," Ms Weir said.

"The progress achieved over the past 12 months demonstrates why our long-term investment in stroke services, is so important for our community now and into the future."



NEW REGIONAL COLLABORATION

New partnership with Austin Health strengthens surgical services at Northeast Health Wangaratta

Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) is strengthening its perioperative services through a collaborative secondment program with Austin Health, welcoming eight perioperative nurses over a three-month period.

Four nurses commenced a six-week secondment this month, with a further four to follow in the coming months. The program is supporting NHW to maintain theatre capacity, address short-term workforce gaps and continue delivering safe, high-quality surgical care.

NHW Chief Executive Officer Libby Fifis said the initiative reflects NHW's commitment to deliver exceptional healthcare to North East communities. "Strong partnerships across Victoria's public health system ensure regional communities can access the care they need, when they need it," Ms Fifis said.

"This collaboration allows us to maintain surgical activity and service continuity while supporting our workforce and continuing to deliver exceptional healthcare to North East communities."

Perioperative Nurse Meagan Cornish, said the secondment has been a valuable professional experience.

"It's been a privilege to work alongside the team at Northeast Health Wangaratta and contribute to patient care in a regional setting," Meagan said. "The team has been incredibly welcoming, and it's been a great opportunity to share skills and learn from each other."

Kristie Mackenzie, Chief Nursing Officer at Austin Health, said the partnership reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the public health workforce across Victoria.

"This is a great example of our nurses supporting regional health services when they need it the most. These secondments provide valuable professional development for our nurses while helping ensure communities across the state continue to receive high-quality care."

NHW's perioperative team delivers a broad range of surgical services to Wangaratta and surrounding communities. Programs such as this secondment strengthen workforce partnerships and ensure patients across the North East continue to receive high-quality care close to home.



MATERNITY UPDATE

Expanded pain relief options strengthen growing maternity services

Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) has expanded its maternity services with the introduction of a new labour pain relief option, further strengthening choice and access for women across the North East.

From 6 February 2026, remifentanyl patient controlled intravenous analgesia (PCIA) has been available for women during labour. The medication is administered through a drip connected to an electronic pump, allowing women to self-administer small doses during contractions. It works quickly, with effects usually felt within 20 to 30 seconds, and wears off rapidly. Women are closely monitored by trained midwifery and medical staff throughout its use.

While remifentanyl does not remove all pain, many women find it helpful. It may be suitable for women who cannot have an epidural or prefer an alternative option.

The introduction comes at a time of strong growth in NHW's maternity program. The service welcomed 770 babies in 2025, reflecting increasing demand and community confidence in local maternity care. NHW continues to offer a comprehensive range of birthing options, including antenatal care with midwives and obstetric doctors, shared care arrangements with GPs, and Midwifery Group Practice for women seeking continuity of care. The health service has reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining safe, exceptional birthing services locally, ensuring families can access care close to home.



NHW Chief Executive Officer Libby Fifis said, “Demand for maternity services across our catchment continues to grow, and with that growth comes a responsibility to ensure women have access to safe, contemporary and evidence-based care close to home,” Ms Fifis said.

“The introduction of remifentanyl PCIA gives women another option when planning their birth experience. Every labour is different, and having a broader range of pain relief choices supports more personalised and respectful care.”

The new service followed extensive staff training and clinical governance processes to ensure safe implementation. NHW is also undertaking a prospective study examining remifentanyl use in a regional hospital setting, contributing valuable insights to maternity care across regional Victoria. Women planning to give birth at NHW are encouraged to speak with their midwife or doctor about the full range of birthing and pain relief options available.

CLINICAL TRIALS UPDATE

NHW launches first clinical trial for diabetes management

NHW recently opened its first clinical trial for diabetes management, OPAL 2, which is exploring the user experience of a new insulin delivery system for people living with Type 1 Diabetes.

The new system, Omnipod, is tubeless and designed to simplify diabetes management. Omnipod delivers insulin without needing to carry a device connected with tubes or having to administer insulin by multiple daily injections.

OPAL 2 is being conducted at NHW by Dr Robert Krones, alongside Diabetic Educators Rebecca Humphreys & Michaela Ivone.

Participants in the trial are randomised to either receive the Omnipod system for a period of 6 months or continue their usual delivery method. The trial aims to determine whether the Omnipod system, compared to standard methods, improves sleep and quality of life for people living with Type 1 Diabetes. Participants randomised to usual care will have the opportunity to use the Omnipod at the end of the study.

Kerrie Barker (pictured) was the first participant to be randomized to the Omnipod at NHW. Just one week into treatment and she is already expressing lifestyle benefits!



The Omnipod system is currently not subsidized in Australia and affordability can be challenging for many people living with Type 1 Diabetes. Findings from the OPAL 2 trial may help support future applications for subsidization, potentially improving access to the technology.

OPAL 2 is being conducted as part of a Teletrial partnership with St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and supported by the Australian Teletrial Program. These partnerships play a vital role in enabling regional communities to access innovative clinical trials locally.



Clinical Trials and Research



NHW welcomes participants to new clinical Space

The Clinical Trial Research Support Service welcomed its first participant to their newly adapted clinic space in December 2025. Located on Clark Street and within the Dorevitch building, the new clinic provides dedicated space for the team to provide clinical trial related care.

With new equipment acquired through a grant from the Australian Teletrial Program, the Clinical Trial team can now complete most aspects of a clinical trial visit in a single location – improving both efficiency and participant experience.

Since January, 6 new clinical trials have commenced, and the availability of a dedicated clinic space will significantly increase the team's capacity to support participant involvement.

Jodie Long (pictured) was the first clinical trial participant to attend the clinic rooms. Jodie is a participant in 2 clinical trials and has appreciated attending appointments in a quieter environment, away from busy clinical areas.

The rooms offer a private and quiet space for conversation, education and support while also accommodating the clinical assessments if required as part of clinical trial participation.

SHAPING OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Help shape the new Women's Health Clinic in Wangaratta

We are inviting community members to have their say as it develops a new Community Engagement Plan that will guide how the health service listens to, works with and responds to the people it serves.

The initiative aims to ensure the voices of patients, families, carers, staff and community partners help shape the future direction of healthcare services across the region.

Community members are encouraged to share their thoughts through an online survey or by calling the NHW directly.

The survey will be open from Tuesday 10 March to Tuesday 7 April, and feedback will help NHW better understand community priorities, strengthen partnerships and ensure decisions about services and programs reflect the needs of the region.

Northeast Health Wangaratta Chief Executive Officer Libby Fifis said hearing directly from the community is critical to delivering responsive, exceptional healthcare.

“Our community is at the heart of everything we do,” Ms Fifis said.

“We want to better understand how people would like to connect with us, how we can strengthen partnerships and how community voices can help guide decisions about the future of healthcare in our region.”



Community members can share their ideas by completing the surveys at:
www.northeasthealth.org.au/have-your-say

Or by scanning the below QR Code:



For more information and updates, visit www.northeasthealth.org.au.



“This engagement process is about listening. We want to hear from patients, families, carers, local organisations, businesses and community groups so we can build a plan that truly reflects the needs and priorities of our region.”

NHW Board Chair Ruth Kneebone said community input would play an important role in shaping how the organisation engages with the region into the future.

“Our health service exists to support the wellbeing of our community, and meaningful engagement is essential to that,” Ms Kneebone said.

“By sharing their experiences, ideas and feedback, community members can help ensure our services continue to evolve and meet the changing needs of people across the North East.”

NHW is encouraging everyone who lives, works in or accesses healthcare in the region to take part.

Community members can share their ideas by completing the surveys at:

www.northeasthealth.org.au/have-your-say

Or by scanning the QR Code:

For more information and updates, visit www.northeasthealth.org.au.





VISITOR MAP

35-47 Green Street, Wangaratta
Phone: 03 5722 5111

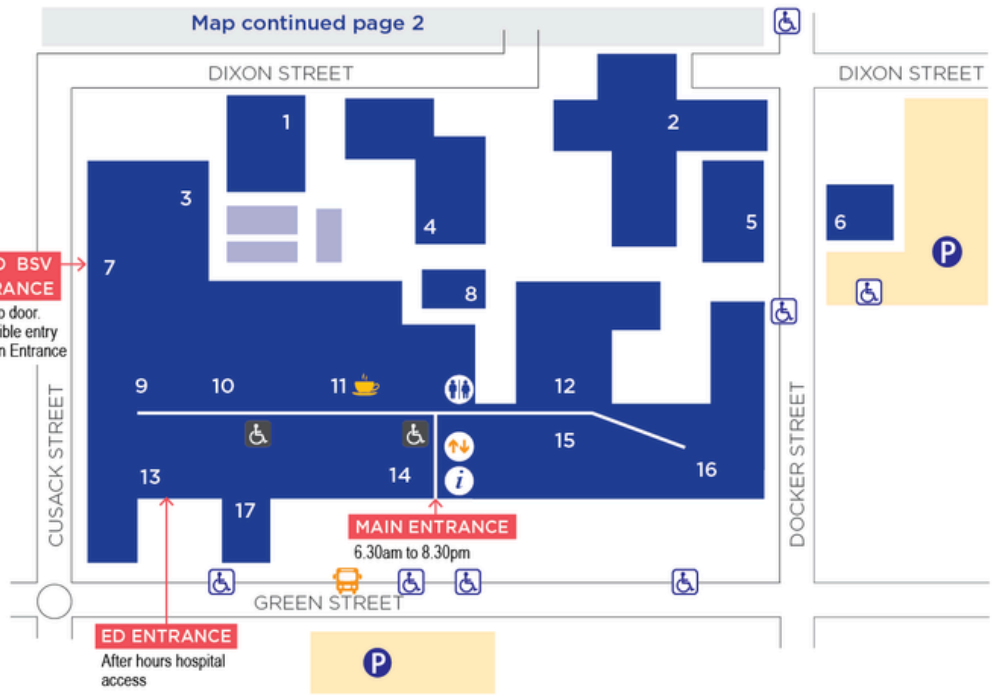
GROUND FLOOR

Café	11
Cashier/Reception	14
Department of Rural Health	5
Emergency Department (ED)	13
Facilities & Maintenance Department	4
Human Resources	3
ICT Services	6
I-MED & BreastScreen Victoria (BSV)	7
Kerferd Unit	2
Medical Imaging	9
Medical Ward	12
Pharmacy	10
Short Stay Observation Unit	17
Spiritual Sanctuary	8
Supply Department	1
Thomas Hogan Rehabilitation Centre	16
Transit Lounge	15

I-MED BSV ENTRANCE
Stairs to door.
Accessible entry via Main Entrance

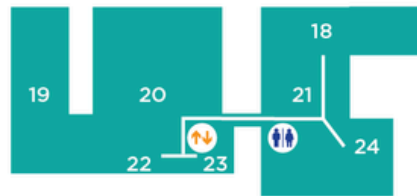
MAIN ENTRANCE
6.30am to 8.30pm

ED ENTRANCE
After hours hospital access



FIRST FLOOR

Admissions & Day Stay	22
Dialysis	23
Intensive Care Unit	19
Maternity Ward	24
Paediatric Ward	18
Surgical Ward	21
Theatre Suite	20



LEGEND

- Parking
- Disabled parking
- Bus stop
- Disabled toilet
- Visitor toilet
- Information
- Lift & stairs
- Stairs only
- Cafe

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03 5722 5111

4-12 Clark Street, Wangaratta

Community Rehabilitation	27
Dental Service	26
Oncology Unit	28
Outpatient Clinics	25

Learning & Teaching Centre

Auditorium
Tutorial Rooms 1 & 2

Margaret Boyd Education Centre

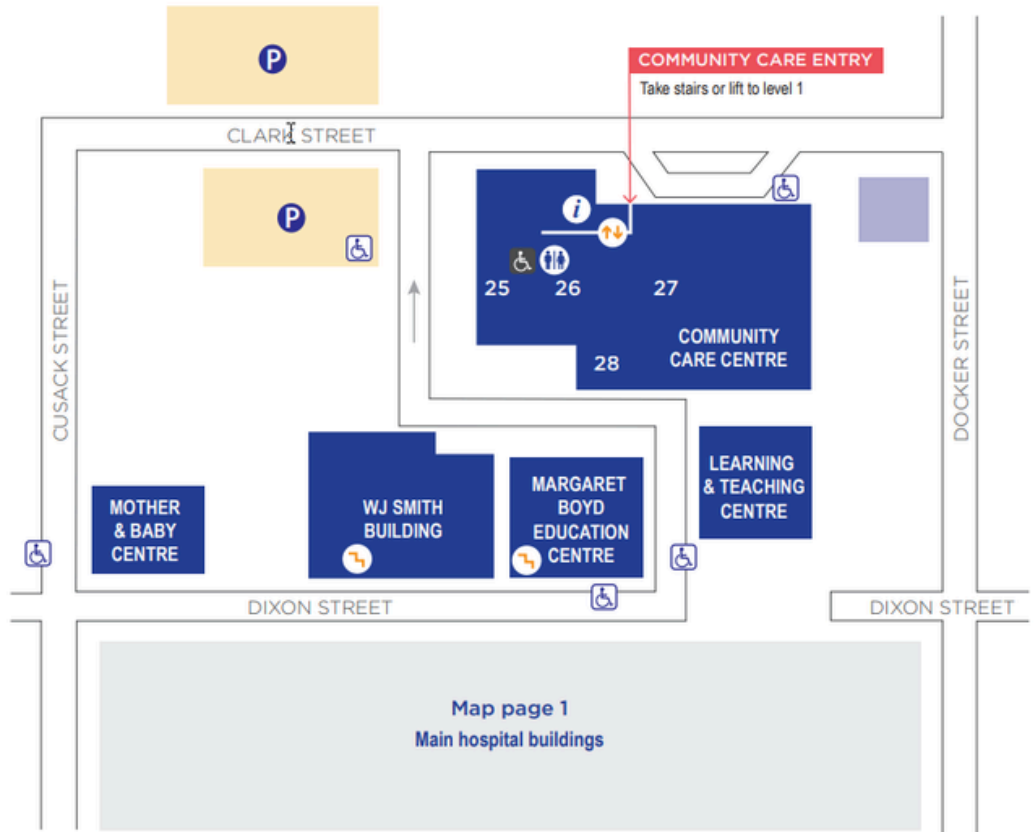
Community Nursing Services
Education & Research Unit (lower floor)
- Conference Room
- Clinical Skills Room
- IT Training Room
- Seminar Room
- Tutorial Rooms 4 - 6

Mother & Baby Centre

34 Cusack Street, Wangaratta
Lactation Clinic
Midwifery Group Practice

WJ Smith Building

Marketing & Media
Volunteer & Philanthropy Services



Map page 1
Main hospital buildings



VICTORIAN VIRTUAL
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
Northern Health

The Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED)
is a public health service for non-life-threatening emergencies.

You can access emergency care from anywhere in Victoria,
24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You will be connected to doctors and nurse practitioners,
who are trained to assist you.

Interpreter services are available for patients who prefer
to speak in their own language.

To access visit www.vved.org.au

REMEMBER if your situation is life-threatening
call Triple Zero (000)

GIVE YOUR FEEDBACK

We value any feedback about our service, whether it be a suggestion, a complaint or a compliment.
To give feedback, you can:

- Speak with any member of staff or the Manager of the Department you are receiving the service from
- Call our Consumer Liaison Officer on (03) 5722 5202 between 8.00am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday
- Complete our online feedback form at www.nhw.org.au
- Email us at feedback@nhw.org.au
- Write to Manager Consumer Experience, Northeast Health Wangaratta, PO Box 386, Wangaratta 3676



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