

NORTHEAST HEALTH FOCUS

AUTUMN/WINTER
2024



HEALTH

COMMUNITY

CULTURE



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.a
- Email us at feedback@nhw.org.au
- Write to Manager Consumer Experience, Northeast Health Wangaratta, PO Box 386, WANGARATTA 3676



WELCOME

Libby Fifis
Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to our Autumn/Winter 2024 edition of Northeast Health Focus, an opportunity for us to share with you some of the happenings across our health service.

A range of performance improvement initiatives and strategic collaborations are supporting our capacity to manage continued strong demand for our health services.

Recruitment continues to be a focus as health services are challenged by workforce shortages across the globe. Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) has welcomed 44 international recruits to our team in the last 12 months, with another 17 starting soon and we continue to invest in student programs to provide opportunities for locals and further afield to grow our workforce.

NHW is currently involved in 12 trials across our health service, which you can read about in this issue.

As a key stakeholder in the Hume Health Service Partnership, we continue to foster relationship with our health service neighbours to find ways to work together to provide quality care as close to home as possible.

I hope you enjoy reading this latest edition and thank the committed team at NHW who strive every day to provide the best care possible for our community.

Happy reading,

Libby

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Improving the patient experience
for the youngest in our care



Northeast Health Wangaratta acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, the Bpangarang and Yorta Yorta, 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

Since our last edition of NE Health Focus, the NHW Annual General Meeting was held with a strong crowd in attendance. Board Chair, Alison Maclean provided an overview of the work that continues to review and expand our service models to embed quality care and meet the continued strong demand experienced by our health service.

In 2022-2023, NHW received 29,200 presentations to our Emergency Department and conducted 7,176 surgical procedures, welcomed 708 babies and managed 75,185 presentations to our Imaging Department.

Just a few examples shared at the AGM were a revised demand escalation system, work to respond to falls management and pressure injury, the review of sub acute care plans and risk screenings to target and reduce preventable harms.

At the conclusion of the AGM, a special presentation was made to formally recognise Ferruccio Tonini for his 50 years of service. Ferruccio commenced his service in 1973 and was the first male nurse to graduate from NHW. In the time since Ferruccio has positively impacted thousands of people with his compassionate care and been a positive mentor and support to many of our staff.



*Top: The NHW Board on its tour of Illoura
Left: The 2022-2023 Annual General Meeting
Above: Ferruccio Tonini was congratulated on 50 years of service at the Annual General Meeting*

SUSTAINABILITY NEWS

THEATRE GREENIES

The Theatre and Central Sterile Supply Department (CSSD) have introduced a compostable 'greeny' to NHW.

The 'greeny' replaces the traditional 'bluey' that is widely used in health settings to protect surfaces and absorb fluids.

Made from cornstarch, the product is compliant with AS 4736 compostability standards and is said to be 60% more absorbent and 14 times more breathable than other products.

The team was named our latest NHW Green Leaf Award recipient by the NHW Environmental Sustainability Committee for their efforts.



RECYCLING

NHW was presented with a Certificate of Recycling Excellence from EcoCycle in recognition of our commitment to environmentally sound practice.

Our efforts to recycle have included 448kg of eWaste, 165kg of toner cartridges and 301kg of batteries.

Implementing a formal environmental management program and policy, along with a range of clear strategies, provides NHW with a framework to improve our environmental outcomes.

The Environmental Sustainability Committee brings representation from across NHW to review these efforts to minimise our environmental impact in ways that include recycling, monitoring our energy consumption, freight and transport, solar energy, and waste reduction.

A NEW MRI ON THE WAY

NHW is installing a new Medical Resonance Imaging (MRI) throughout April, which will bring advanced technology and diagnostic capability to the region.

In 2023, the Victorian government allocated \$1.9 million to NHW for a new MRI machine and Fluoroscopy Unit as part of the Medical Equipment Replacement Program.

The new scanner benefits include more detailed imaging, more efficient scan times and increased patient comfort.

NHW is without an MRI during construction and has undertaken extensive planning to meet patient requirements during this period.

NHW performs around 5,400 MRIs every year, so while the impact during installation will be substantial, we know the new machine's benefits will be worth the wait.

Installation of the new MRI has gone to plan, with full commissioning complete as of the date of publication and staff training underway (pictured top right). The system will be fully operational and in service from 22 April.

This is the final component of a suite of new and upgraded imaging equipment at NHW, with a new CT scanner, fluoroscopy unit, and seven new ultrasound systems installed in the last 12 months.

*Top: a new MRI delivers advanced imaging technology for the region
Middle: NHW installed a new CT scanner in 2023
Bottom: the new fluoroscopy unit*



GIVING

DIVERSIONS HELPING PAEDIATRIC CARE

Koala Kids continues to help the experience of our youngest patients through tools that help provide distraction, entertainment or engagement during their stay in hospital.

Jayden is pictured (right) working through one of the interactive games during his recent stay, with one of the devices in both our Paediatric Ward and Emergency Department. Oscar (below) tried out the Smileyscope, providing a virtual reality diversion to alleviate fear and stress, and reframe sensation.



THE GIFT OF TIME

Our team of volunteers provide invaluable support and assistance to families, patients, residents and staff at NHW. There are a range of volunteering opportunities available in areas like our concierge, palliative care, Meals on Wheels, on the wards and at Illoura.

People from all ages and diverse walks of life become volunteers and give their time to support our organisation and the local community. Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose and meaning, keep you connected and engaged in the community, and provide the opportunity to learn new skills.

www.nhw.org.au/volunteer



TRIALS IMPROVING OUTCOMES



NHW continues to link clinical trials into treatment opportunities across the hospital, providing potentially life-saving opportunities for regional consumers.

The NHW Clinical Trial and Research team (pictured above) is working with NHW-based clinicians and collaboratives across the State and more broadly to deliver treatment opportunities in a combination of onsite, telehealth and in major metropolitan hospitals.

NHW is currently involved in 12 clinical trials, including five in anaesthetics, two stroke trials, four cancer trials and one covering septic shock.

The ARISE FLUIDS Clinical Trial is being conducted in hospitals across Australia and New Zealand, involving patients who present to the Emergency Department with septic shock.

Participants will receive one of two commonly used treatments to manage blood pressure and will be followed up by the NHW Clinical Trial team for a period of 12 months to assess clinical outcomes.

NHW joined the ARISE Fluids Clinical Trial before Christmas 2023, and the first participant was enrolled in less than 24 hours.

NHW Director of Intensive Care, Prof David Tuxen said that NHW is keen to be a significant contributor to the trial.

“The trial is well underway, and we’re anticipating that at least one patient per month will meet the trial criteria,” Prof Tuxen said (pictured below).

“We often treat patients with septic shock arising from other conditions such as urinary infections or pneumonia and these are the types of presentations that we would include.”

“Treatment will be randomised so that patients receive either restricted fluids and early introduction of vasopressors to manage their blood pressure, or a larger initial volume of IV fluid.”

“The goal is to provide robust evidence around the best approach to use in the future management of septic shock.”

A total of 1000 participants are being included in the study across Australia and New Zealand, with the results expected to be available after 2025.



ABOVE: NHW Director of Intensive Care, Prof David Tuxen
TOP LEFT (L-R): Jacqueline Lake, Kellie Higgins, Richard Marais, Rowan O'Hagan, Nicole Humphreys, Narges Janalizadeh

MAKING EVERY WEEK COUNT

The participation of our maternity team in the National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative will include representatives gathering in Canberra during Autumn.

The National Partnership brings together 62 hospitals with the aim to reduce the rate of preterm and early term birth by 20 percent. It follows successful rollout in other states.

NHW supports the birth of more than 700 babies every year and have found evidence to assist months in making informed choices about the timing of birth is critical. This includes the benefits of timely birth to a baby's neurodevelopment and performance at school age, and the decreased risk of a newborn needing to spend time in special care or require readmission to hospital in the first year of life.

In 2022, 5.2% of babies were delivered before 37 weeks (preterm) and 34.7% of babies were delivered between 37 and 38+6 weeks (early term) at NHW.

Preterm (23-27 weeks' gestation) and early term (37 and 38 weeks' gestation) births increase the risk of life-changing adverse health events for babies, mothers, and their families. Preterm birth is the leading cause of death and disability in children up to five years of age in developing countries and is a major contributor to the global burden of disease. Preterm Births have been estimated to cost the Australian government \$1.4 billion yearly.



Executive Director of Clinical Services and Chief Nursing/Midwifery Officer of NHW, Bernadette Hammond said that preterm births occurred for many reasons and while some are necessary, the evidence supports that some are preventable.

"With new approaches, this rate can be reduced and provide better outcomes for mothers and babies," Bernadette said.

"Our aim is to ensure we are having these conversations with mothers about the benefits of reducing those preterm and early birth rates where it is safe for them and their baby."

"As part of the national collaborative, our midwives are being guided through communicating evidence-based changes to improve the quality and safety of care through increased screening and key interventions to safely lower the rate of preterm birth.

NHW Collaborative Lead, midwife Danielle Dalrymple said NHW had implemented some evidence-based changes since attending learning sessions around better screening of women at risk, and changes to the monitoring of cervical length (neck of the womb) at routine ultrasound, which can lead to better monitoring and use of preventative measures.

"We have seen some positive results with an increase in reporting of cervical length, an early indicator of potential preterm birth, allowing us to implement strategies to reduce the risk preterm or early birth," Danielle said.

"Alongside our new induction guideline, NHW has initiated more rigorous reviews on optimal timing of planned births and we are encouraging women to be part of shared decision-making with their care, by having those important conversations.

"We are building understanding of preterm birth risk factors and the need for early engagement to services through our early pregnancy care clinic and connecting with GPs in the region.

"We encourage women to book into NHW as early as 10 weeks."

Attending Collaborative learning sessions is providing ideas to implement further innovation and help empower women and families, and educate professionals in the region and support the co-design of preterm birth prevention pathways.

Sub-regional Director of Obstetrics for the Central Hume, Dr Amelia Bock, said that a systematic approach would drive optimal care.

"Embedding a systematic approach to our patients' pregnancy care ensures that women get high-quality, evidence-based care," she said.

"We hope these endeavours will make the pathway smoother for parents and reduce some of the potential long-term implications of early and pre-term birth."

BELOW (L-R): Emma Quarrell (nurse unit manager), Dr Amelia Bock (obstetrician), Danielle Dalrymple (front, midwife and NHW team leader of Every Week Counts Preterm Collaborative), Andrea Hogan (antenatal clinic coordinator) and Jacqui Webb (nurse unit manager)



UPDATES

CARPARK UPDATE

NHW has undertaken minor works in the Green Street carpark, opposite the main entry to the hospital.

Dedicated parking spaces are now provided for Dialysis patients and Oncology patients to assist their access to those departments. This was welcome news to patients who have to attend regular appointments, sometimes daily, and who can tire easily or feel unwell from their treatment.

The back of the site has been cleared and grading works have helped further improve safety and accessibility.



VISITING HOURS

8.00am - 1.00pm
and
3.00pm - 8.00pm

REST PERIOD

1.00pm - 3.00pm

VISITOR INFORMATION

NHW Entry Policy and Visitor Information is available on our website www.nhw.org.au/patients-visitors and also displayed at the main entry to our health service.

We appreciate the support of our community by limiting their visits to within the designated hours. Visitors are a very important part of patient recovery, helping to reduce anxiety and stress and maintaining connection. Rest is also important and we work to achieve this balance for all of the patients in our care through a dedicated rest period.

Entry requirements for mask wearing are also updated on our website and noted at entry points and we appreciate the cooperation of our community. Masks help reduce the risk of transmission to vulnerable people in our care and protect our workforce, helping them stay well so they can continue to work.

MEDICAL MATTERS



NHW has welcomed Dr Garry Wilkes (pictured above) as Executive Director Medical Services. Dr Wilkes is an experienced director, having held senior executive roles across a range of Victorian rural and regional health services.

NHW continues to work on systems and responses to improve our care and manage patient flow.

Our service has implemented a fourth medical team to focus on the care of medical patients with an expected length of stay less than 72 hours. This unit has a dedicated registrar and Hospital Medical Officer on rounds to support timely care and discharge.

NHW has also commenced a local physician roster on our weekend service, as well as a Pharmacy service on Sundays to support patient discharge. The local physician roster supports consultants attending to patients admitted on weekends and helping our handover processes.

Another important initiative is the trial of a fast track transfer model with small rural hospitals. This model supports the goal of people receiving care in the most suitable setting and as close to home as possible.

The practice extends our established partnership with Benalla Health, who have certain dedicated beds to allow up to 2 transfers each day for this purpose. The rollout so far has been positive and NHW intends to extend this initiative to other rural hospitals in future phases.

Our clinical project team has implemented a orthopaedic pilot to enhance care for fractured hips, total knee and hip replacements. Our service conducts approximately 5% of orthopaedic works in Victoria and the new model improves outcomes through optimising prehab (before surgery), hydration, anaesthetics, techniques to minimise injury and early mobilisation.

Early indicators of the project are delivering great benefit for patients, including reports of decreased nausea and pain, earlier return to mobility, improved recovery times and reduced length of stay in hospital. In short, patients are feeling better, sooner and can return to the comfort of their home for the next stage of their recovery. We'll be sharing more about this project with our community as the project evolves.



ABOVE: NHW physicians

ILLOURA

The Lifestyle Team at Illoura Residential Aged Care continues to deliver engaging activities in collaboration with residents and our great team of volunteers. These activities are designed to encourage social connection, movement and mobility and involve residents to the level that their health allows.

Residents have enjoyed visiting musicians, a high tea celebration for Valentines Day, Pancake Tuesday, BBQs, craft activities and outings.

A great return to Illoura has been the onsite hair salon, providing a convenient and enjoyable way for residents to access hairdressing services.





Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Leading the Transformation

Our Vision

Thriving communities in North East Victoria, achieving the best quality of life for everyone.

Our Purpose

To be leaders in health, who transform and deliver high quality, safe healthcare for all.

Our Roles

Healthcare provider | Employer | Educator
Innovator | Advocate | Partner & Leader

Our Pillars and Priorities



Safe and high quality care

Healthcare defined by safety and high quality that goes beyond responsive treatment and has a focus on wellbeing and healthy ageing.



Engaged people and culture

A skilled, inclusive & engaged organisation with the capacity, capability and expertise to deliver exceptional care for our community.



Sustainable & enduring resources

A health service that invests in, develops and embeds effective physical and digital infrastructure.
A financially and environmentally sustainable organisation.



Collaboration & partnerships

A trusted organisation with deep links into our community, region and beyond. An integrated, consolidated and transformed health sector.

Our Values and Beliefs



Courage

Boldness and bravery are required to meet the needs of our community – this means going above and beyond what we do today.



Excellence

Quality is non-negotiable. We believe in ourselves – we have the vision, skills and determination to innovate and drive excellence.



Fairness

We believe that everyone has a right to equitable access to healthcare, and that this is vital for a flourishing community.



Integrity

We commit to being open and ethical in our actions, and ensuring we have a positive culture defined by commitment.



Kindness

We will always support one another, care deeply about our community, team and partners, and treat each and every person with kindness and compassion.



Respect

We believe in not only listening but hearing, responding to and advocating for those we care for and about. We believe in and commit to trust and mutual understanding.



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