

NORTHEAST HEALTH FOCUS

SPRING 2023



HEALTH

COMMUNITY

CULTURE



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.



WELCOME

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

Autumn and Winter were a busy time at NHW. The range of respiratory illnesses, including COVID, influenza and RSV challenged health services everywhere.

Despite this, our health service continued to forge on with the important delivery of planned surgery. I'm delighted that NHW not only met our 2022-2023 targets, but exceeded them with 2779 planned surgeries performed over the past year.

With the completion of our major redevelopment, works are now in planning to make good the grounds that were affected by construction. Our Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) has also undergone major works, which you can read about in this edition.

We continue to collaborate across the region with progress behind the scenes to share, develop and expand models of care as part of regional health service partnerships.

None of this would be possible without the continued hard work of our committed workforce and I know you will join me in expressing our appreciation to them.

Happy reading,

Libby Fifis
Chief Executive Officer

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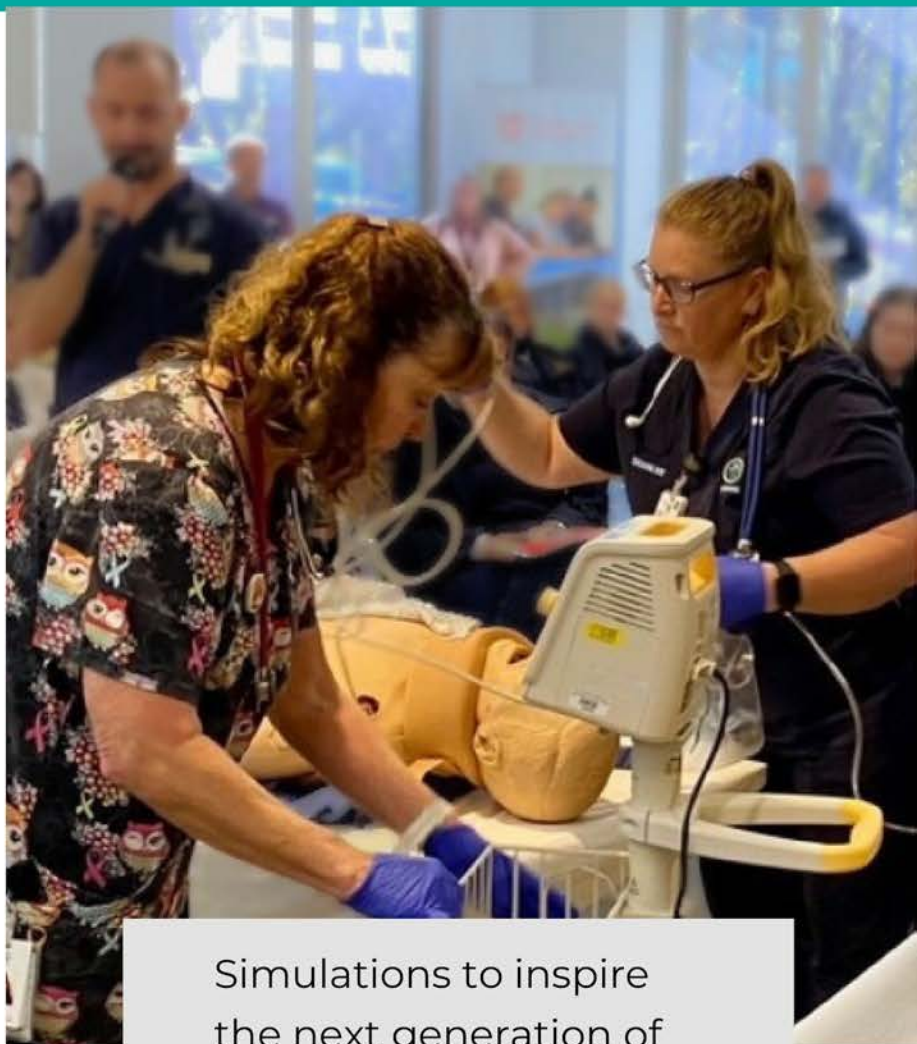
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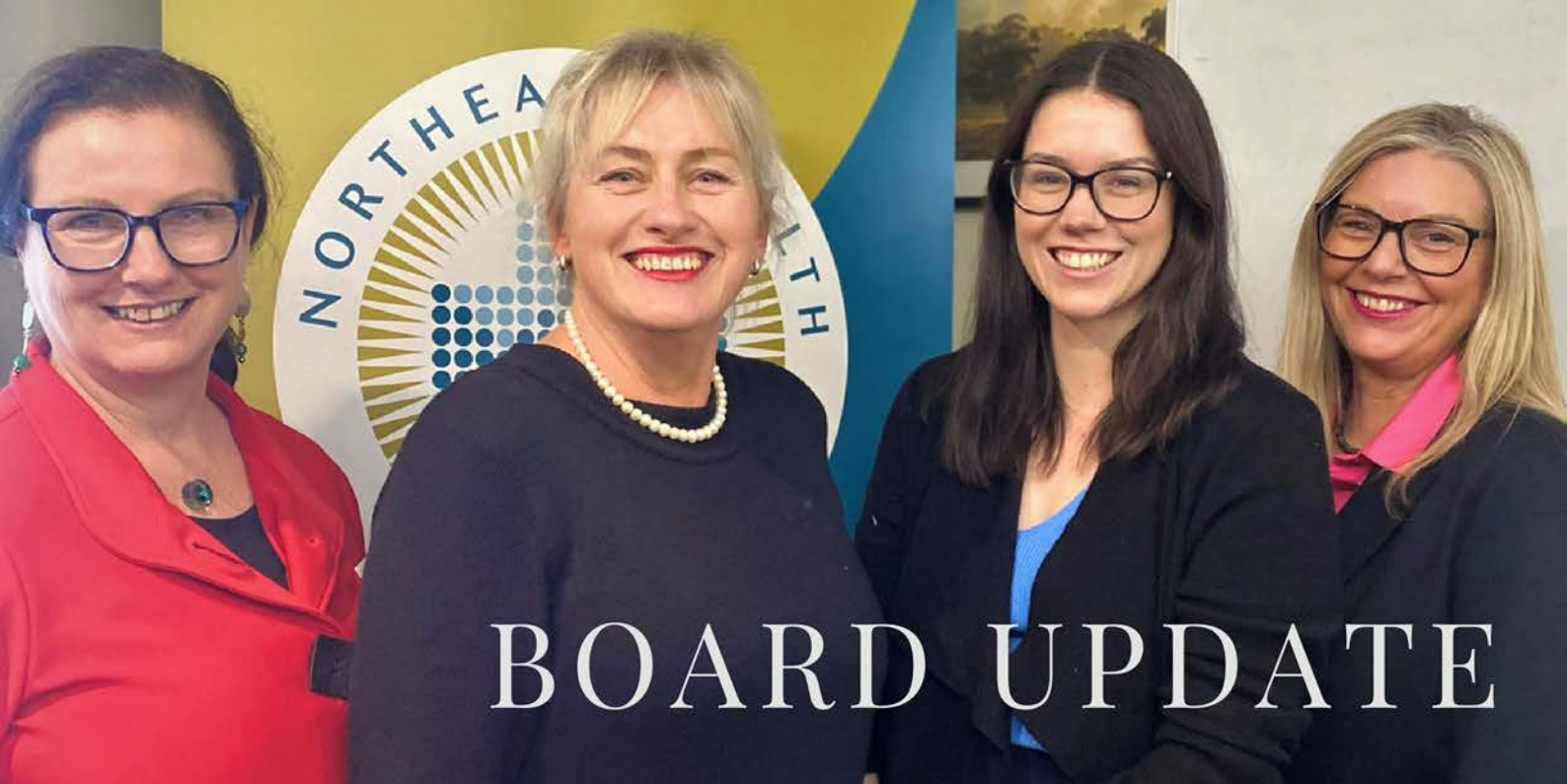
Residential Aged Care



Simulations to inspire
the next generation of
healthcare workers



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

Above: Leanne Mulcahy, Alison Maclean (NHW Board Chair), Caitlyn Walker, Libby Fifis (CEO)

Fond farewells & warm welcomes from the NHW Board

Northeast Health Wangaratta bode farewell to Martin Hession and Leo Fogarty from the NHW Board while welcoming two new board directors.

Leanne Mulcahy brings extensive experience across governance, risk management and strategic planning. Caitlyn Walker brings her legal knowledge and experience as a solicitor, together with skills in corporate governance and regulatory compliance.

*Below: Leo Fogarty with Libby Fifis
Below right: Martin Hession*



Dr Leo Fogarty formally completed his tenure as Board Director on the NHW Board as of 30 June 2023. Words cannot express our sincere thanks to Dr. Fogarty, who took a leave of absence from the Board in October 2022, to continue his longstanding contribution to our health service and community as Interim Director of Obstetrics.

Martin Hession made an enormous contribution to our health service over 9 years including roles as Board Vice Chair, and as part of the NHW Finance Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and Project Control Group which oversaw the recently completed major redevelopment.



INSPIRING A GENERATION

110 secondary students from across the region attended the NE Health Careers Forum held at CSU Campus GOTAFE on 2 August.

This annual event is always well supported by our partners including Charles Sturt University, LaTrobe University, The Centre, Gateway Health, Community Colleges, NELLEN Tracks, University of Melbourne, Coovinda Village, and GOTAFE.

NHW staff attended to present to students including registered nurses, aged care nurses, allied health, doctors, healthcare students, and radiography staff.

Students attend four workshops throughout the day with a Q&A session at the end.

The medical education team who run SIMs at NHW set up a mannequin and ran students through a scenario around a mountain bike accident that involved a broken arm, injured neck and broken jaw. The team ran through the pick-up by paramedics on the mountain, arrival at ED, assessment, ICU for ventilation, surgical ward and rehabilitation.

During that journey, they discussed 20 healthcare professionals who interacted with the patient.

The simulations always get great engagement and attention from the students. Thanks to our partners and to the students for your great participation and interest in careers in healthcare.



CSSD UPGRADE

The Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) is responsible for safe and effective reprocessing of reusable medical devices so they are safe to use in the Operating Theatre and other areas in our hospital, as well as external medical clinics.

The CSSD has undergone a redevelopment with significant construction works over the last few months to install four new washer disinfectors, upgrade of packing tables and other equipment to improve safe OH&S practice for the CSSD staff. A mobile POD was craned into place for the relocation of our team so they could continue to operate for all elective and emergency surgery during this refurbishment.

Works should be completed during Spring, with finishing touches underway to provide a safe and functional work area for all staff.



Pictures: The CSSD Mobile Pod was craned in and out of position to support operations during construction. New washers have been installed and are operational. The NHW Board toured the new facility in August 2023.

SUSTAINABILITY NEWS

BETTER BIOPAKS

NHW is diverting approximately 75,000 plastic cutlery items from landfill each year through the introduction of biodegradable food containers at our Green Street campus.

Our service uses an average of 6,200 cutlery packs and 9,000 food containers each month through our café service for visitors at staff. As part of its environmental strategy, the service transitioned away from plastic, replacing containers with Biopak clams and cutlery.

The Biopak containers are made from rapidly renewable and responsibly sourced resources. The product is compostable and when it does end up in landfill, the carbon emissions released represents 50% of their total lifecycle footprint.



NHW Cafe Attendants Sharene Gervasoni and Katie Maiden with Food Service Manager Debra Corcoran

GREEN LEAF AWARD

Local resident Judy Lowen has diligently collected rubbish from around our hospital campus over the last 3 1/2 years. Her records show that Judy, on average, picks up over 20,000 pieces of rubbish every year around Wangaratta, with a heavy focus around NHW. Judy said the most prevalent items were cigarette butts, which contain fine plastic fibres in their filters that won't degrade naturally.

Judy has recently joined the NHW Environmental Sustainability Committee as a consumer representative and was awarded the NHW Green Leaf Award in recognition of her longstanding commitment to helping reduce the levels of rubbish around our grounds. NHW is working with council to increase the provision of bins and Judy has a simple message - "just don't drop stuff!"



JUMP IN MY CAR

Koala Kids is making our youngest patients' trip to the operating theatre a little less daunting with the donation of two electric cars. Koala Kids are also providing two sets of Smileyscope VR goggles for the Paediatric ward and emergency department to help distract and relax children during their hospital stay.

These musical machines allow children between 2 and 7 years of age to drive themselves to Theatre, or with the remote control guidance of one of our team.

Our test drivers were in theatre gowns that were beautifully created by locals Lorraine and Betty, mum and Gran to our NHW nurse Olivia Curran, which is further helping our young patients preparation for surgery.

After a test run by Percy and Fergus in the paediatric ward, Amelia was our first official patient to drive herself to Theatre.



YOUR HELP WAS VITAL

The response from our community to our Vital Signs Appeal was inspiring.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who generously contributed to our Appeal. Through the support of local businesses, residents and community groups we raised \$168,000 to replace 44 vital signs monitors across our health service.

Vital signs monitors help our team gather critical information on the patient in their care and they are used 24/7 across the hospital.

Your support reflects the strength of our community and our ability to make a collective difference.

For information on how you can support NHW, visit www.nhw.org.au/support



EXPRESS YOURSELF

When we hear the word Speech Pathologist, you can be forgiven for thinking it's all about words.

NHW's Speech Pathology team is encouraging people to think about speech in a different way and beyond the spoken word to expression, gesture and identity.

Speech Pathologist, Sheree Bennett said the profession is focused on much more than just speech and that their services can help broader communication and swallowing impairments.

"Our work covers the lifespan, from infants and children to the mature aged and into aged care," said Sheree.

"Communication is more than speaking and the ability to express what you want or need.

"To communicate is how you show your personality, how you establish and maintain relationships with people, and it is very personal to us.

"So when that ability changes – which could be due to a stroke, cancer, progressive neurological conditions such as Parkinson's, Motor Neurone Disease or dementia – it has an enormous impact on the person as a whole.

"As Speech Pathologists, we provide therapy and work closely with people who have communication difficulties and our work covers a range of responses to meet their specific needs."

Gil Cunningham from Yarrawonga developed aphasia after one of his strokes. Aphasia is a language impairment that involves a breakdown in the ability to find the right words when speaking and writing. It can cause difficulties understanding written language and can lead to the individual writing unrecognizable letters or symbols.



Before his strokes, Gil was an avid golfer and very active in the management of Yarrawonga Golf Club. He has been participating in rehabilitation that includes Speech Pathology over the last twelve months.

"The first thing I found difficult was the feeling of lack of self-control. I felt like a bit of a nuisance and it was difficult to share my frustration," Gil said.

"It can be a really lonely time so I have relied on the support of this team."

"I had real difficulty with my speech at the start and that highlighted to me the extra work that all allied health professionals do to help people recover, and the way they cross over and integrate."

Gil said the bigger art form of the profession was the communication and support he experienced, which helped him feel comfortable and confident in working through rehabilitation.

"Being able to feel comfortable with the team was a big thing and encouraged me to keep doing the work," Gil said.

"For example, it took until just recently for me to feel comfortable using a tablet to regain some independent functions like checking banking and writing a shopping list. Getting that confidence back was a big thing and it took a combination of therapies to get me there."

Sheree said communication impairments could often be improved with consistent, focused rehabilitation.

For Gil in particular, as a high-functioning person, he experienced some issues early on speaking and writing.

"It's hard to imagine what it's like for someone who has been using language and gestures all of their life to have letters on a page not making sense.

"We implemented a range of activities to help build Gil's capacity and his confidence and he's made significant improvements over time."

Sheree said communication training with families and people that are close to the person they are working with was also important, because families often needed support in understanding how to best support the person with a communication impairment.

"It's not just if we can't communicate, it's the bigger impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing, and the ripple effect for their family and loved ones." Sheree said.

Self-referrals can be made to NHW's Community Care Intake Advisor on phone (03) 5722 5679 or email ccia@nhw.org.au



PICTURES - Page 8: Gil Cunningham with NHW Speech Pathologist, Sheree Bennett. Above: Members of NHW's Speech Pathology team

ATTRACTING TALENT

Global workforce shortages are challenging a range of industries and healthcare is no exception.

NHW has been taking this challenge very seriously, applying some innovative and collaborative approaches to its recruitment efforts.

Executive Director of People and Corporate Services, Kim Bennetts said the service was firmly focused on measures to showcase the benefits of a regional lifestyle to entice workers to the region, as well as efforts to retain existing staff.

"We're experiencing the same challenges as many other health services to compete for staff in a very tight market," Kim said.

"The completion of our redevelopment has increased our workforce needs for nurses, physicians, allied health and support services.

"We've ramped up our international recruitment efforts since global travel opened up and this has shown some positive results, with NHW welcoming 15 international recruits in 2023."

NHW has been working with the Rural City of Wangaratta on marketing the lifestyle of the region as part of its recruitment strategy.

The Workforce Attraction Project included filming at NHW during August as part of a showcase of the mix of regional careers and lifestyle options open to people looking at a tree-change.

Two staff of NHW who can attest to enjoying the regional lifestyle are Registered Nurses, Carl Paculba and Amie Pagador who are both on 4-year sponsored working visas. They joined NHW as part of the NHW nursing pool after relocating from the Philippines.



Above: international recruits Amie and Carl.

Amie applauded the sense of team and care she has experienced since living and working in Australia.

"In the Philippines there is a real hierarchy, but here everyone works as a close team and you feel like you are welcome," Amie said.

"The people here are very respectful and approachable," Carl said.

Of making their home together in the North East, Carl and Amie said the established Filipino community had helped them settle in and make new friends.

"It gave us a foundation to make friends and feel comfortable, and we've enjoyed getting to know more people which has been easy because the people are so supportive," Carl said.

International recruits are only one part of the puzzle as NHW continues to focus on internship, graduate, and post-graduate programs.

The Pharmacy intern program will welcome its next intake in December 2023 as part of an effort to build a pipeline of qualified professionals and develop the next generation of pharmacists in the North East.

In partnership with neighbouring rural hospital Benalla Health, as well as community pharmacy owners in Beechworth and Yarrawonga and credentialed community pharmacists providing medication management services into small rural hospitals, GP clinics, Aged Care and Chronic Disease Management, the 4 internships encompass a regional education and training program, pathways to postgraduate pharmacy qualifications, and connect the hospital's future pharmacist workforce with their peers and colleagues across northern and north east Victoria.

Director of Pharmacy, David Ford said the unique and all-inclusive program offers novel training opportunities for emerging pharmacists.

"Since its first intake in 2017, we are very proud that the program has enjoyed a 100% pass rate and 100% retention rate," David said.

The NHW Post Graduate program for RN offers courses in collaboration with University partners and is designed to maximise the clinical and theoretical learning of participants to apply their knowledge to practice.

Kim Bennetts said the post graduate offerings were always well-subscribed and a positive offering as part of the NHW Education program.

"The Post Graduate Program includes a two-year contract with a consolidation year and the opportunity to apply for ongoing employment."



21 Hospital Medical Officers (HMOs) were welcomed to NHW in August to complete a six month placement. NHW is also part of the Murray to the Mountains (M2M) intern training program and Murray City Country Coast (MCCC) GP training as part of its medical workforce program.

NHW is excited to support a new research project by the University of Melbourne to investigate the potential impact of Virtual Reality (VR) experience in decision making relating to rural health careers. The project is engaging staff to use a 260-degree camera to record aspects of their work and lifestyle. The footage will be edited into a VR experience to be viewed by students and professionals at expos and events, and may develop into expanded projects using VR for recruitment in the future.

For information about career opportunities at NHW visit nhw.org.au/careers



Left: Director of Pharmacy, David Ford with 2023 Pharmacy Interns Hannah Barakat, Stephanie Kunnel (Intern Preceptor) and Renata TorresVera
Top: University of Melbourne's Kristen Glenister (left) and Tegan Podubinski (right) commence filming for the VR project with NHW midwife, Klodi Ward.
Above: Members of the 2023 Post Graduate Program Rebecca Judd, Janine Henning, Gurjit Sangha, Kirsty Reinders, and Ariarne Davis



ABOVE TARGET

NHW is enormously proud to have achieved above target case numbers of planned (elective) surgery in the last financial year, as one of the top performing hospitals in Victoria.

2779 planned surgeries were conducted at NHW from July 2022 to June 2023. More than 600 surgeries are performed every month in a combination of emergency and planned procedures, including endoscopies, across the 4 theatres on the Green Street Campus.

Common procedures include general surgery (such as abdominal, breast, skin), orthopaedics and colonoscopy, urology, ears nose and throat (ENT), obstetrics and gynaecology, and paediatrics.

NHW has the highest rates of orthopaedic surgery in the Hume region, with 693 patients treated in the last financial year. Urology procedures are also extensive, with 624 procedures.

Orthopaedic surgeon, Mr Richard Kjar praised the team effort towards achieving targets.

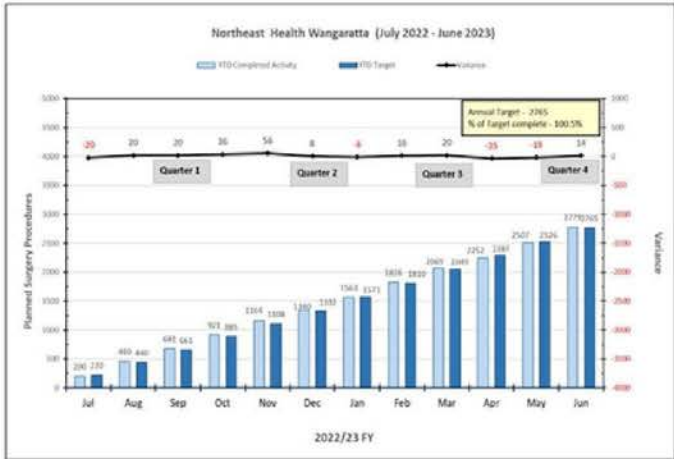
“Getting these planned surgeries done has been a real team effort, all the staff involved have contributed and helped to achieve what many thought was impossible,” he said. “I am really proud of the team.”

A strong collaborative relationship between NHW and the Wangaratta Private hospital has seen 250 patients transferred to the Private for post-operative care.

Another cooperation across the region under the Hume Health Services Partnership has led to the development of an information portal, ‘healthview’ which enables hospitals to see activity between services.

NHW Chief Executive Officer, Libby Fifis, said “Our partnerships help identify opportunities to fill any available theatre time between health services, which can help patients access surgery sooner and keep their post-operative recovery close to home.”

Newly acquired equipment such as the Myosure Tissue Removal System and prostate biopsy equipment is enabling a high standard of care delivered locally, saving patients needing to travel for procedures in metropolitan Melbourne.



HAPPENINGS

CAFE SPECIALS

Kelli and Jacob from our Support Services team are expanding their skills to food preparation with some specials for sale in the NHW Café.

Jacob's first special was muesli/fruit cups, while Kelli baked up some delicious Kit Kat cookies. This opportunity will help develop additional skills in problem-solving, preparation, and teamwork. Kelli and Jacob have applied themselves with great enthusiasm, with wonderful support from our Food Services team.

NHW is committed to a diverse workforce and we appreciate Food Services Manager, Deb Corcoran, the Food Services team and Kelli and Jacob for bringing new treats to our café that are made in a very special way.



ORTHOPAEDIC CARE

An Orthopaedic Study Day gave participants the opportunity to review and/or refresh fundamentals of orthopaedic care. Staff from both NHW and Wangaratta Private hospital and across nursing and allied health disciplines attended the day, which was designed to include lots of hands-on clinical practice through multiple skills stations and group presentations.

Orthopaedic surgeon Mr Richard Kjar said "The Orthopaedic Study Day offered the participants a great opportunity to network, learn and get some hands on experience in a relaxed and fun environment."

Special thanks to Mr Richard Kjar, Dr James Onggo, Dr Pedram Rajabifard, Lisa Gephart as well as senior nursing and allied health staff Megan Gilbert, Molly Lindner, Jill Doody, Bec Broughton, Kris Smale, Sarah Kreutzberger and Mel Pelazza.



HAPPENINGS

MEALS ON WHEELS

Our incredible team of 98 Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver more than 17,000 meals every year to our local community. Meals on Wheels operates 5 days a week, whatever the weather. This community connection provides an important opportunity to conduct welfare checks on those who may be isolated and vulnerable.

Regular feedback from our clients is how much they value the smiles and friendly chats with our team, as well as an appreciation for a warm and wholesome meal, making an enormous difference to their day.

We are grateful for our volunteers and the enormous contribution they make to our organisation. People of all ages and from diverse walks of life give their time to support our organisation and their community.

If you'd like to explore our volunteering opportunities visit our website or contact us on (03) 5722 5297.



Pictured: Volunteers Gloria Clewer, Elaine Broadway, Robyn Tipping, Jill Rendle, Kerrie Challis, Rhonda Taylor, Paul Challis, Judy Youings and Bernadette Lamb.



HEALTH INFORMATION

Behind every record is an oft-hidden record keeper and our incredible Health Information Management team is responsible for the collection, storage and distribution of 4770 records every month. Their role incorporates patient records, coding data for funding, performance reports, providing information to other healthcare providers, research, analysis and statutory reporting. Our health service relies on their clinical coding for the NWAU funding that keeps our doors open and services operational.

Not only are they the gatekeepers of health information, they have the patience of saints and are masters at deciphering handwriting. Supported by an equally committed admin team and surrounded by wall-to-wall shelving, Health Information Management Week in August was a great opportunity to give thanks to this proficient & efficient team that manages our records.

ILLOURA

The Lifestyle Team at Illoura Residential Aged Care is always organising fun activities for residents, helping to keep them active and engaged. Illoura has welcomed back the pet therapy program this year, much to the joy of residents and staff. Former NHW employee and local musician, Recent entertainment has included former NHW employee and local musician, Bruce Poulter, the Ostinato Choir. With the help of our volunteers, activities including indoor bowls, art and craft, coffee club, cooking, keep fit and physio classes, weekly church services and regular visits from Borinya students have helped our residents beat the winter blues.





VISITOR MAP

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

GROUND FLOOR

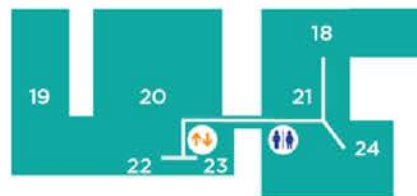
Café	11
Cashier/Reception	14
Department of Rural Health	5
Emergency Department (ED)	13
Facilities & Maintenance Department	4
Human Resources	3
ICT Services	6
I-MED & BreastScreen Victoria (BSV)	7
Kerferd Unit	2
Medical Imaging	9
Medical Ward	12
Pharmacy	10
Short Stay Observation Unit	17
Spiritual Sanctuary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

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



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

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

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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

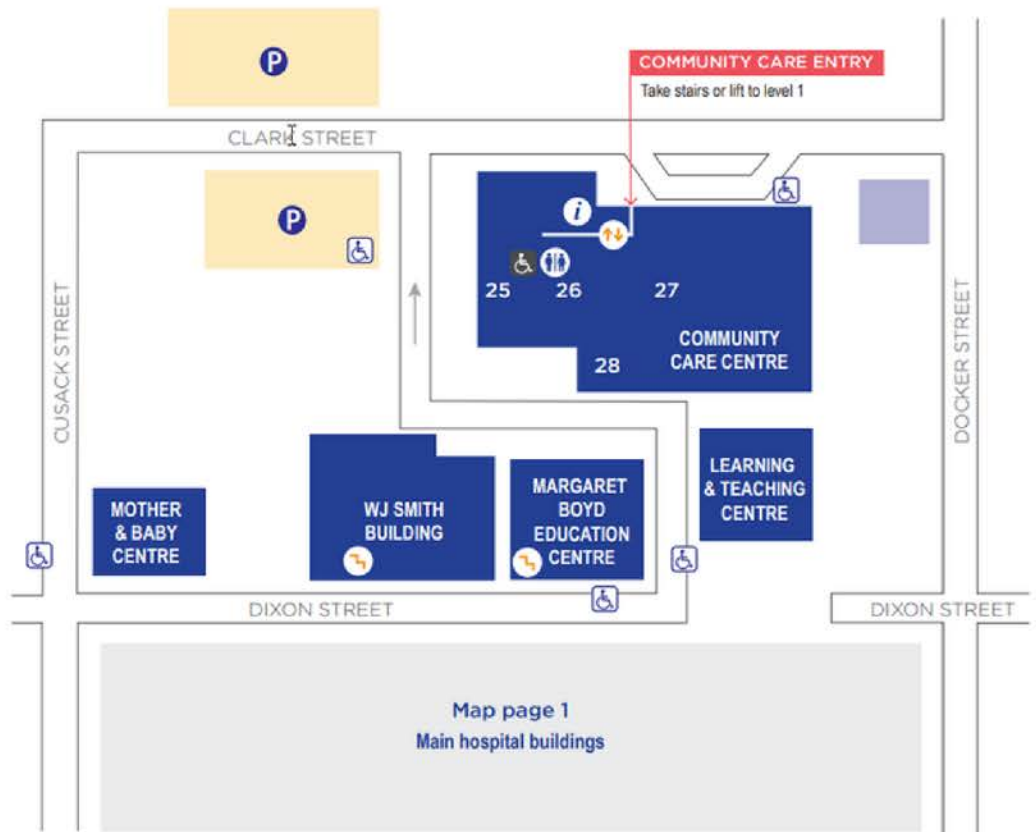
Community Nursing Services
Education & Research Unit (lower floor)
- Conference Room
- Clinical Skills Room
- IT Training Room
- Seminar Room
- Tutorial Rooms 4 - 6

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

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU 24/7



To connect to the VVED, visit www.vved.org.au

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.

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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