

NORTHEAST HEALTH FOCUS

WINTER 2025



HEALTH

COMMUNITY

CULTURE



WELCOME

I want to start by thanking our incredible community and local businesses for the generous support shown towards our Maternity Fundraising Appeal. Thanks to your contributions, we've reached our \$70,000 target, which has allowed us to purchase two new neonatal resuscitation units. These are vital pieces of equipment that will make a real difference in the care we provide to our smallest patients and their families.

I'd also like to acknowledge the recent establishment of the Local Health Service Networks. This is a significant step for our region and will help streamline services, reduce duplication and strengthen how we work with our healthcare partners across the northeast. While this is an important structural change, I want to reassure the community that there will be no impact on day-to-day services. As planning progresses, we'll continue to keep you informed.

Lastly, I'm thrilled to share that our 2025 to 2028 Strategic Plan is now complete. It sets out our key priorities and purpose for the years ahead, with a strong focus on quality care, workforce support and innovation. You can read more about it later in this edition. Thank you again for your ongoing support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Libby Fifis'.

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

We welcome our new
2025 Board Members.

We're pleased to welcome three new members to the Northeast Health Wangaratta Board of Directors, who commenced their roles on 1 July.

Laura Shortis is a highly experienced executive leader in regional health, with a background in nursing and extensive work in rural health service delivery and governance. She has held CEO roles in several rural health services and brings valuable insight into system-level planning and leadership.

Susan is a colorectal surgeon with a focus on delivering safe, effective care through a patient centred approach.

Susan brings clinical insight to the NHW Board contributing to strategy and governance with a focus on quality, sustainability and innovation in healthcare.



Board Chair Ruth Kneebone

Paul Foley has a background in strategic management, finance and executive leadership, with experience across the not-for-profit, government and private sectors. He brings a strong focus on innovation, financial sustainability and regional collaboration.

Each of our new Board Members brings unique skills, knowledge and a strong commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of our region. We warmly welcome Laura, Susan and Paul to the NHW community and look forward to the contributions they will make in the years ahead.

We are also thrilled to welcome Ruth Kneebone as Board Chair, bringing her experience and leadership to guide our organisation into the future.



New Board Members, Laura Shortis, Susan Shedda and Paul Foley

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Introducing NHW's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan

We're proud to introduce Northeast Health Wangaratta's Strategic Plan for 2025–2028 a commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of our community over the next three years.

This plan is the result of conversations with staff, patients, carers, community members, partners and the Department of Health. It reflects the priorities and values of the people we care for and work alongside every day.

At its core, the plan is about delivering exceptional healthcare for north east communities by focusing on four key areas:



Exceptional Care

We'll continue to improve access to timely, safe and connected care, wherever you are. This includes developing new models of care closer to home, expanding community and home-based services, and working alongside First Nations communities to achieve better health outcomes.



Sustainability

To care for our community well into the future, we need to plan wisely today. This means investing in the right infrastructure, technology and systems to meet growing and changing health needs, while also protecting our environment and using resources responsibly.



Collaboration and partnerships

Health is a shared responsibility. We're strengthening our partnerships across the region, including through the Hume Local Health Service Network, and working more closely with consumers and local groups to shape services that reflect community needs.



Engaged People and Culture

We know that great care starts with great people. Our plan invests in the development and wellbeing of our staff so they can keep delivering the best care to our community. We're building a strong, inclusive culture where staff feel supported and valued.

Our plan will guide our actions and decisions, but most importantly, it reflects our ongoing promise to provide high-quality, person-centred care to the people of Northeast Victoria.

Thank you to everyone who contributed, we're excited to take these next steps together.

Our Strategic Plan

2025-2028

Our Vision

Exceptional healthcare for Northeast communities

Our Values



Courage



Excellence



Fairness



Integrity



Kindness



Respect

Our Commitments and Priorities



Exceptional
care

- 1.1 Access for all to timely, safe and effective health care.
- 1.2 Collaborate with First Nations peoples to achieve equitable health outcomes.
- 1.3 Deliver connected care for every consumer.
- 1.4 Review, create and advance new models of care and clinical services.
- 1.5 Develop and embed programs that support wellness in the community and care at home.
- 1.6 Lead the change for better mental health outcomes.
- 1.7 Strengthen research to enable exceptional care.



Engaged people
and culture

- 2.1 Strengthen engagement and responsiveness with our people.
- 2.2 Invest in the development and capability of our people to deliver upon NHW's priorities now and into the future.
- 2.3 Strengthen leadership capability at every level.
- 2.4 Our workplace is safe, welcoming & inclusive and supports the wellbeing and diversity of our people.



Sustainability

- 3.1 Commit to environmental sustainability in everything we do.
- 3.2 Continue to be a financially responsible organisation.
- 3.3 NHW is digitally connected and uses data-informed practice.
- 3.4 Respond to emerging future infrastructure needs to meet health care demand.



Collaboration and
partnerships

- 4.1 Strengthen our engagement with the Northeast community.
- 4.2 Exceptional care is provided in partnership with consumers.
- 4.3 Advocate for better health outcomes for the Northeast community.
- 4.4 Contribute effectively to the Hume Local Health Service Network (Hume LHSN) for improved access and health outcomes.

INTERNATIONAL CLINICAL TRIALS DAY

On 20 May 2025, we celebrated International Clinical Trials Day.

Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) took the opportunity to acknowledge and thank those who have participated in, or supported others to participate in, a clinical trial at NHW. We wish to recognise and show appreciation for the effort, time and dedication of participants and carers involved in clinical trials.

Since the commencement of the clinical trial program in Wangaratta in 2019, over 90 members of our community have participated in (as participants or carers) 21 clinical trials across seven departments at NHW. This includes people who have come to NHW for surgery, those admitted to the ICU with sepsis, and outpatients seeing an oncologist or geriatrician.

Each year, the number of people taking part in clinical trials in our region continues to grow, and we are expanding into more diverse clinical areas.

Our community understands the value of research and recognises, with great selflessness, that being involved in research benefits everyone. It also brings a rural perspective to studies being undertaken across the state and the country.

The theme for the 2025 International Clinical Trials Day was Powered by Purpose. Each participant received a letter of thanks, a small gift, and an invitation to share their reason for taking part in a clinical trial. The responses we received highlighted the importance of clinical trials and our community's strong commitment to research. All responses are now on display in the Education & Research Unit.

Clinical Trials team members



SURGERY THAT SUPPORTS YOUR RECOVERY

Discover How NHW is Improving the Surgical Experience

At Northeast Health Wangaratta, we're proud to be leading the way in improving the experience and outcomes for patients needing surgery. Two recent projects, Sip til Send and ERAS+, are already making a positive difference for both patients and staff.

ERAS+: Faster, Safer Recovery for Joint Replacements

Our Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS+) program focuses on helping patients recover sooner and feel better after hip or knee replacements. Over 12 months, 449 patients completed the program with excellent results: less pain, fewer complications, shorter hospital stays, and improved patient satisfaction. The program also saved 550 bed days and up to \$4 million in hospital costs. This demonstrates that high-quality, efficient care is achievable in a regional hospital setting. These projects are the result of strong collaboration between doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and support teams. They highlight what can be achieved when we challenge outdated practices and focus on what truly benefits patients. NHW is proud to continue leading innovation in surgical care and looks forward to building on this progress.



Sip til Send: A Kinder Approach to Pre-Surgery Fasting

Traditionally, patients were asked to stop drinking hours before surgery, often leaving them feeling thirsty, anxious, and uncomfortable. Our new Sip til Send approach allows adults to continue drinking small amounts of clear fluids right up until surgery, with children allowed smaller sips. This change has reduced fasting times from over six hours to just over one hour, improving comfort and reducing stress. The team is now contributing to a national study to ensure this approach is as safe as it is patient-friendly.

WE HAVE COMMITTED TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As part of our commitment to sustainability and improving the environmental performance of public sector buildings, Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) committed to an Energy Performance Contract (EPC) under the Victorian Government's Greener Government Buildings (GGB) program.

The National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) is a Commonwealth initiative that measures the environmental performance of Australian buildings, including hospitals. NABERS provides a rating from 1 star (making a start) to 6 stars (market leading). To improve public transparency, NABERS for Hospitals certificates must be publicly displayed at each relevant facility. These ratings are also published by the Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA).

You can view NHW's NABERS certificates in our front foyer area – our energy rating is currently at 4 stars and our water usage is at a 5.5 Star rating.

With NHW's growing footprint and increased accountability for reducing environmental impacts, establishing an Energy Performance Contract is so important across all our NHW-owned sites and buildings.

What is an EPC?

An Energy Performance Contract is a partnership between a health service and a specialist Energy Services Company (ESCO). The ESCO designs, implements, and guarantees energy-saving measures, which are funded through no-interest loans from the Department of Treasury and Finance. The savings from reduced energy consumption are used to repay the loan over five years. This model ensures cost neutrality and performance accountability.



What happens next?

The first step is a Detailed Facility Study (DFS) — the most comprehensive energy audit available. The team from FG Advisory are our engaged Energy Services Company (ESCO) and will be visiting each NHW site to assess major energy-using systems such as:

- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)
- Lighting (e.g., LED upgrades)
- Building automation and controls
- Solar panel feasibility
- EV Charging stations – fleet and public use.

The DFS will provide a detailed report of recommended energy-saving projects, including costs, potential savings, and return on investment. These recommendations will inform our prioritised energy efficiency upgrades.

Why is this important?

- EPCs typically result in up to 20% savings in energy use.
- With NHW's annual energy spend at approximately \$1,500,000, projected savings could be up to \$300,000 per year with the uptake of some of the initiatives listed above.
- These savings directly reduce operational costs and support our sustainability goals.

The FG Advisory Team commenced on site with us on 9 July 2025 and will be working with us for the next few months.

We will be sure to keep you informed around the progress and initiatives that NHW will be undertaking as part of this really exciting program.

SUPPORTING LOCAL FAMILIES

New Maternity Self-Referral and a Welcome Funding Boost

At Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW), we're proud to be expanding support for families in our region with two exciting developments: a new self-referral option for maternity care and a funding boost to enhance our maternity and paediatric services.

Easier Access to Maternity Care

Expectant parents can now refer themselves directly to NHW's maternity service through a new online self-referral form. This change removes the need for a GP referral and makes it quicker and easier to access care.

Once submitted, families will be contacted within eight days by our Maternity team to arrange the next steps. A range of care options are available, including:

- Antenatal Clinic care
- Shared Care with a GP
- Midwifery Group Practice for low-risk pregnancies
- Continuity pathways for First Nations families

Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer Bernadette Hammond says, "This new pathway puts families at the centre of their care journey from the very beginning."

Funding Boost to Strengthen Family Care

In addition to improving access, NHW has received a significant funding boost from the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal.

This funding will directly support upgrades to our maternity and children's units, helping us create more family-friendly spaces, purchase vital equipment, and enhance staff training.

CEO Libby Ffis said, "We're incredibly grateful for this support. It allows us to continue improving the care we provide to our youngest patients and their families, right here in regional Victoria."

Looking Ahead

These initiatives reflect NHW's strong focus on improving health outcomes for local families, from pregnancy through to early childhood. With easier access, better facilities, and continued staff development, we're making family-centred care more accessible, supportive, and effective.

Together, we're creating a healthier start for families in our region.



IMPROVING CARE FOR CHILDREN

NHW has been fortunate to participate in the Safer Care for Kids Victorian Children's Tool for Observation and Response (ViCTOR) pilot project.

The ViCTOR chart is a paediatric-specific, age-based, observation track and trigger tool used across Victoria that helps clinical staff effectively recognise and respond to deterioration in children. These charts have been shown to assist in the early recognition of clinical deterioration.

The pilot project, launched in November 2024, has been testing a refined ViCTOR chart with NHW participating as one of eight health services across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria. The updated version of the chart now includes a specific question which is asked every time staff perform a set of vital signs on the child. It proactively asks whether families or carers are concerned that their child's condition is getting worse. It acknowledges that families and carers know their child best and are often the first to identify deterioration of their child, positioning them perfectly to alert medical professionals that 'something is not right'.

The refined ViCTOR chart recognises family or carer concern as its own "vital sign".

The ViCTOR chart project at NHW was trailed in the Emergency Department and Paediatric Ward and led by clinicians, with the involvement of consumers. Positive results have been shown with staff now adopting the additional question as routine practice. The updated chart is now here to stay and will be rolled out across Victoria to replace the existing ViCTOR charts.

Remember if you have a child in hospital and you are worried their condition is getting worse, please notify our clinical staff immediately.

MORE DOCTORS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Over the past year, we've been working hard to grow our medical team at Northeast Health Wangaratta and it's paying off. With more doctors on board, we're now in a better position to care for more patients, more quickly, and with better continuity.

In February alone, we welcomed 80 new doctors to NHW, which is the biggest intake we've ever had. With about half of the new doctors are filling brand new roles, and the rest are replacing short-term locums with permanent ongoing staff.

This means we now have more permanent team members who know our hospital, our systems, and most importantly, our patients.

Here's what's changed:

- Interns: We have added new junior doctor positions in Paediatrics and Women's Health, making NHW a more attractive place to train.
- Hospital Medical Officers (HMOs): With extra positions to cover staff leave and support specialist training, so our team can fill more gaps without bringing in outside doctors.
- Rural doctors: We have made space for more training positions for doctors who want to build their careers in the country.
- Registrars: There are more senior doctors in key areas like Emergency, ICU, Paediatrics and Women's Health, so teams are better supported and we don't need to rely as much on locums.
- Consultants: We welcomed more permanent senior specialists in areas like Emergency, ICU and Medical Specialties, plus we've started an Ortho-Geriatric service and will welcomed our new Renal Physicians this month.

All of this helps us care for the community more safely, more quickly, and with more consistency. A huge thanks to everyone involved in making it happen—we're excited about what it means for the future of care at NHW.



2025 NHW Interns



VISITOR MAP

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

GROUND FLOOR

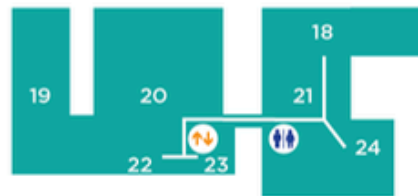
Café	11
Cashier/Reception	14
Department of Rural Health	5
Emergency Department (ED)	13
Facilities & Maintenance Department	4
Human Resources	3
ICT Services	6
I-MED & BreastScreen Victoria (BSV)	7
Kerferd Unit	2
Medical Imaging	9
Medical Ward	12
Pharmacy	10
Short Stay Observation Unit	17
Spiritual Sanctuary	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	Café
Visitor toilet	

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4-12 Clark Street, Warragatta	
Community Rehabilitation	27
Dental Service	26
Oncology Unit	28
Outpatient Clinics	25

Learning & Teaching Centre

Auditorium
Tutorial Rooms 1 & 2

Margaret Boyd Education Centre

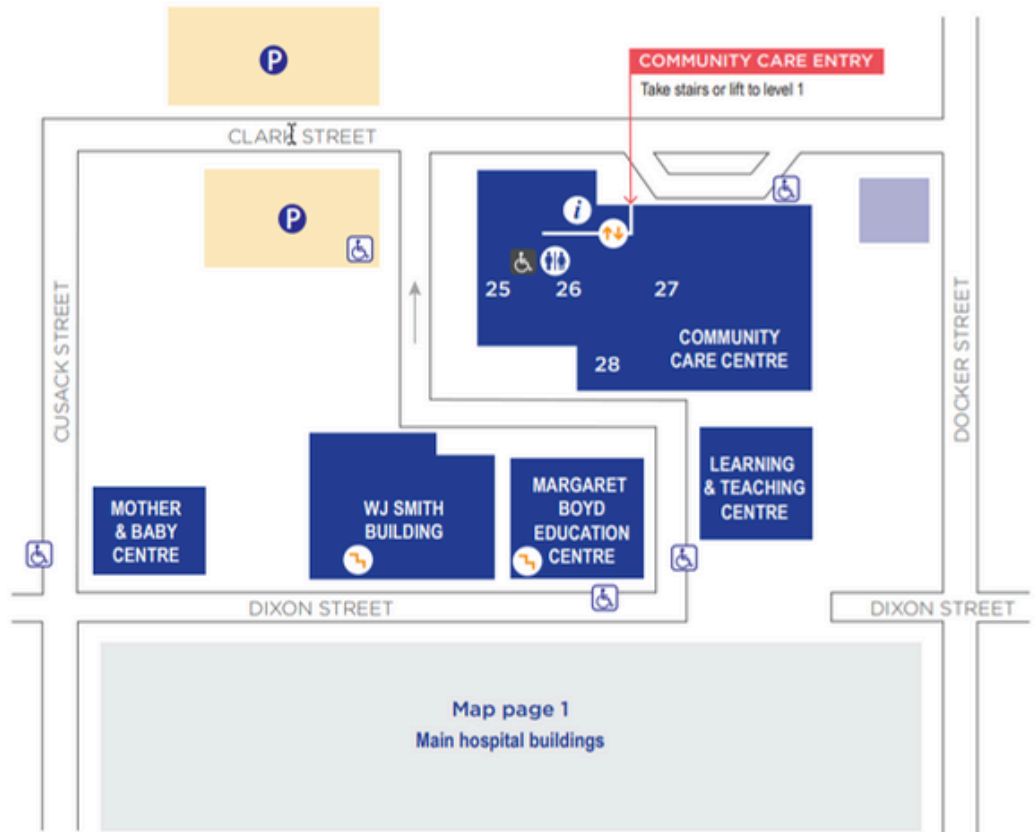
Community Nursing Services
Education & Research Unit (lower floor)
- Conference Room
- Clinical Skills Room
- IT Training Room
- Seminar Room
- Tutorial Rooms 4 - 6

Mother & Baby Centre

34 Cusack Street, Warragatta
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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