



# Northeast Health Wangaratta

*Every person, Every time*



## Community Report

MARCH 2022



# 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

## Board chair message – community report

As the Board Chair of Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW), I am proud to present this Community Report.

The aim of this report is to provide an insight into our health service, showing recent challenges and achievements, as well as profiling the people behind the vital work carried out each day.

This is an unprecedented time for our health service, as we continue to face the challenges of COVID-19.

While COVID-19 has stretched NHW, it has not stopped the progress of the organization in building a health service for the future.

Our \$22.9m redevelopment is well on track – this will deliver more beds in vital areas of the hospital, including Intensive Care and the Emergency Department.

Our Strategic Plan 2020-25 (see opposite page) is currently being implemented and the Board are committed to continuing to implement this.

This is a truly worthy document, crafted in consultation with many who have been involved with NHW over a significant period, and a Plan that I believe if faithfully delivered upon, will put NHW in good stead to navigate the challenges we in healthcare delivery face.

NHW's future will seek to leverage on the rapid changes seen in healthcare delivery since the COVID pandemic commenced nearly 2 years ago now, into new ways of providing health care across our service provision.

This will include new models of care that incorporate a COVID-19 overlay as business as usual and the increased growth in telehealth and care in the home, and a renewed focus on working with our partners on preventing hospital admissions.

NHW's work is not possible without the commitment and professionalism of our **1,567 staff**, along with the ongoing support of our team of Visiting Medical Specialists.

Our community continues their strong connection with NHW, our **245 volunteers** being the heart and soul of our health service. I thank them sincerely for their wonderful contribution, in so many varied ways.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure in celebrating that 2022 is the 150th year a hospital has operated on the site of our Green Street campus. Ordinarily we would have loved to celebrate this occasion with our community, however that is not possible at this point, due to the current demands on our health service. We will find ways to celebrate throughout the year so that this amazing milestone and those involved in achieving it, can be acknowledged.

Board Chair, Jonathan Green



## About NHW

Northeast Health Wangaratta is the specialist referral hospital for the Central Hume area of North East Victoria. Our organisation meets the healthcare needs of 28,000+ people in the Rural City of Wangaratta, our primary catchment, with an additional 62,000+ people in our secondary catchment – a total of approximately 90,000 people.

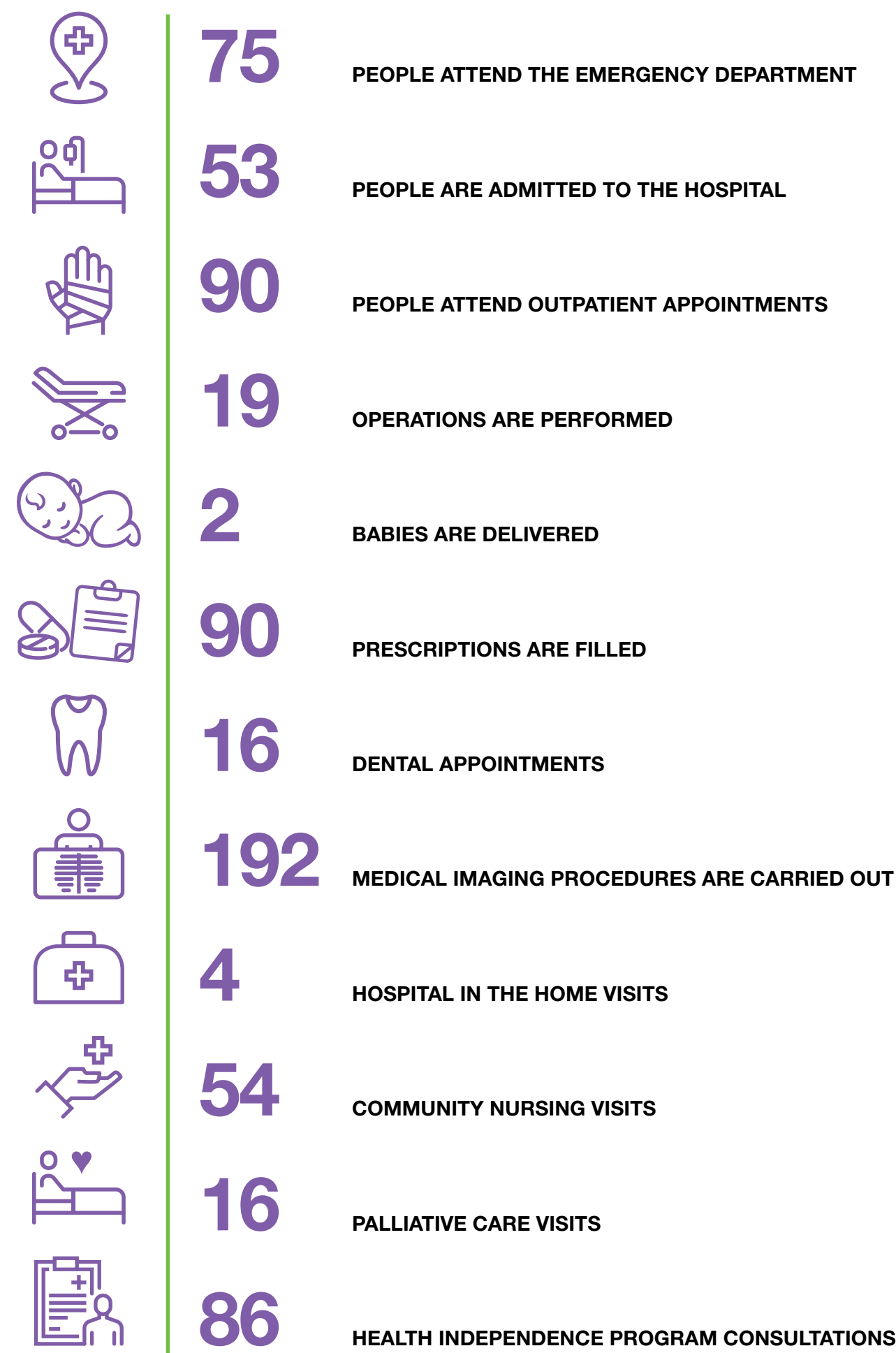
As well as serving the Wangaratta community, NHW is the major referral facility for people with complex health needs from Bright, Mansfield, Beechworth, Myrtleford, Yarrawonga, Euroa and Benalla.

There are just over 200 beds at the Green Street Hospital, while the Community Care Centre in Clark Street is home to a public dental surgery and 47 outpatient clinics. The 72 bed Illoura Residential Aged Care Facility in College Street provides 66 high care residential aged care and 6 transition care beds.



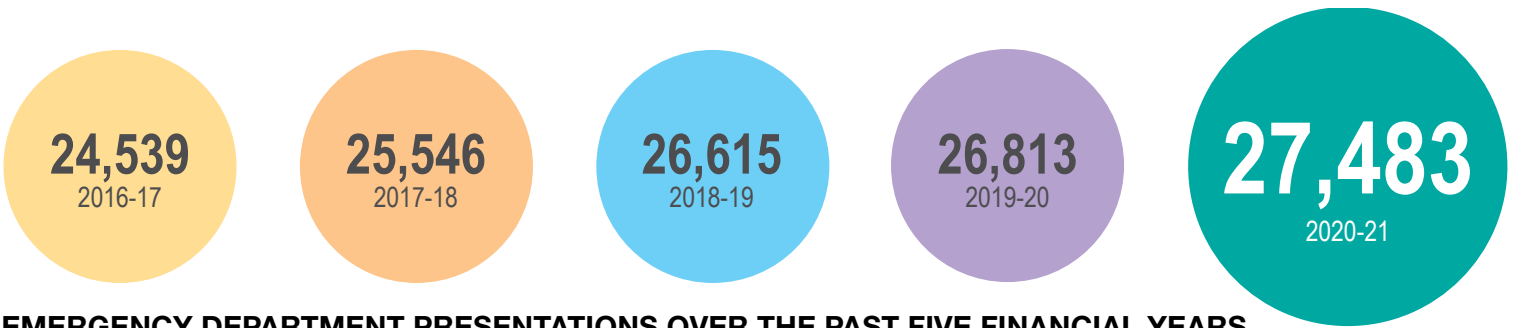
# Our service in Numbers

On an average day at NHW...



Figures from 2020-21 Financial Year

# Emergency Department



## EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS OVER THE PAST FIVE FINANCIAL YEARS

### Challenging times as demand grows

Demand for NHW's Emergency Department continues to increase, while the COVID-19 pandemic has added an extra layer of complexity to operations. Over the past five years ED presentations have shot up by just under 3000 per year. This means staff have been treating more patients than ever before, at a time when the way the ED is run has changed dramatically in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in the hospital. Director of the ED Dr De Witt Oosthuizen said strong precautions were in place to protect staff, patients, and the community. This includes screening all people who present to the ED and testing anyone with COVID-19 symptoms. The ED has also effectively been divided in two, so that people with respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms are separated from people with non-COVID-19 symptoms. For much of the past year all ED staff have been wearing Tier 3 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), in line with Department of Health requirements. This consists of plastic gowns, hair nets, gloves, eye protection and N95 masks.

**“It puts a very significant physical toll on staff members as it is very fatiguing wearing full plastic gowns, N95 masks and eyewear all day,”**

- Dr Oosthuizen said.

“They have to take all the PPE off to come outside of the ED and have a drink or eat anything, then put on a new set of PPE to re-enter the ED.” “For patients coming in, what may have taken 20 minutes in the past can take up to 2 hours because of the need to follow strict protocols.” ED staff have been at the frontline of NHW's response to COVID-19 and Dr Oosthuizen said the teamwork on display had helped ensure quality patient care. “It is generally busier, and at the same time it is harder for people to come in to visit us. Visiting and working in the ED is harder for everybody. We've got an incredible team of people who look after each other, covering each other's shifts and making sure everybody is okay.”

### Cleaning staff ensure ED safety

It's not uncommon for Paul Kelly to go through six sets of scrubs and a dozen sets of PPE in a day. The Patient Services Assistant (PSA) Orderly works full time in the Emergency Department, cleaning each room and cubicle, as well as managing stock levels and transporting patients. When a patient leaves the ED, Paul cleans the room in readiness for the next patient. He said a regular clean takes around 10-15 minutes, but cleaning a room after a suspected COVID-19 patient takes a lot longer.

**“You have to wipe every surface in the room because you don't know what a nurse might have touched,”** - Paul said.

“The cleans are extremely physical and I generally need to change my scrubs after each one because I'm dripping in sweat.” Despite the physical challenges, Paul said he enjoys his job. “It's a good team to work with and that's what makes you come to work each day,” he said. “You're all going through the same thing so you all want to support each other.” While he is on the frontline against COVID-19, Paul said he felt safe knowing NHW followed all COVID-19 precautions. “As long as you've got all your gear on, then you're safe,” he said.



Paul Kelly works full time cleaning the Emergency Department.



Kirsten Pianto is proud to work in a strong team.

### Challenging yet rewarding work

Kirsten Pianto has been at NHW's ED for the past five years. The Registered Nurse is originally from Benalla and completed her studies in Albury/Wodonga. She said working in the ED during the COVID-19 pandemic had been hard. She said one of the challenges of wearing Tier 3 PPE was connecting with the patients. “Because of the masks it can be harder to connect with the patients,” - she said. “I hope they still feel well cared for.” Helping Kirsten and the team through COVID-19 has been the knowledge of the high quality care they continue to provide. “I'm proud of the nursing team and doctors in ED and how well they've managed to cope with COVID-19, a redevelopment and PPE at the same time,” she said.



# COVID-19 Response

## Vaccinating our community against COVID-19

Helping residents of the Rural City of Wangaratta and surrounding municipalities achieve a double dose vaccination rate of more than 95% has been one of NHW's proudest achievements. The NHW Vaccination Clinic opened to the public in June 2021, initially operating from the former WJ Smith Linen Service building in Clark Street. The current Tone Road location opened to the public in late July 2021 and at its peak more than 300 vaccinations were administered in a day. NHW would like to acknowledge the Albury Wodonga Public Health Unit and all of the local GPs and pharmacies that participated in the vaccination of residents from Wangaratta and surrounds. The focus for the Vaccination Clinic is now on providing third doses to eligible adults and vaccinating children aged 5-11 against COVID-19.

### Vaccination Clinic

**TOTAL VACCINATIONS SO FAR:**

# 40,000+



Pharmacist Clement Oguiche helped set up the Vaccination Clinic.



Administration staff (from left) Sharen Fish, Paige Sturzaker and David Halabi.



Evie Scales and Alice Vincent after receiving their vaccinations.



Staff celebrate 10,000 vaccinations.



Staff at the Vaccination Clinic Brodie Pascoe and Emily Savge.



NHW Board Member Martin Hession receiving his COVID-19 vaccination.



# Covid-19 Response



Tahlia Davis, Albert Nguyen, Paige Sturzaker and Kylie White are among the staff from NHW's Dental department who were redeployed to assist with the Screening Clinic.

## Drive through screening clinic

NHW's drive through Screening Clinic has evolved over the past 2 years to meet increased demand for COVID-19 testing in North East Victoria. Initially located in Norton Street, the Screening Clinic then moved to Docker Street, before its current location at Vincent/Tone Road. During times of peak demand the screening clinic has been relocated to the Wangaratta Showgrounds where up to five lanes can operate at any time. Operating the Screening Clinic during peak times has required many staff to be redeployed from their usual roles. This has meant areas like dental and many allied health clinics have had to reduce capacity in order to provide staff to the Screening Clinic.



Senior Dental Assistant Karen Spokes working at the Screening Clinic.

## Ward 19

Ward 19 is an isolation ward established at NHW as part of the response to COVID-19. It is where patients who have COVID-19 symptoms are taken while awaiting test results. If a patient does test positive to COVID-19 they are cared for in Ward 19, with more serious cases transported to larger hospitals. By having Ward 19 NHW is able to protect all other patients and staff at the hospital from the risk posed by COVID-19.



Ward 19 Nurse Unit Manager Ruth Clifton with nurses Ajesh Kezhakekara and Kathy Govers.



Emily Hourigan has been working in the COVID-positive pathways program.

## Positive Pathways

NHW has been supporting community members through the COVID-positive pathways program. The aim of the program is to monitor and support members of the community who've tested positive to COVID-19 and are isolating in their homes. An oximeter (for checking oxygen levels and pulse) and a thermometer are delivered to homes, along with instructions on how often to use the devices and warning signs to look out for. Staff working in the COVID-positive pathways program call people regularly, checking in not just on their clinical condition, but also on their general wellbeing, ensuring they have the right support around them to access food and essential supplies. The program has been highly successful in preventing hospital admissions and assisting those with COVID-19 to recover from their infections.



# Redevelopment

## Redevelopment improving patient care at NHW

A \$22.9m redevelopment is transforming NHW's Green Street hospital to meet the growing need for acute health services in North East Victoria.

While planning has been taking place for years, the project officially began in February 2021, with Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes turning the first sod.

Albury based Zauner Construction have the contract to build the redevelopment and are employing local contractors throughout the project.

The project includes:

- 12 bed Intensive Care Unit
- 8 bed Short Stay Observation Unit
- New Paediatric Ward
- Additional Medical Ward beds
- Upgraded Emergency Department
- New Ambulance Victoria write-up area

## Short Stay Observation Unit

The Short Stay Observation Unit opened for patients in late 2021. The dark grey building fronting Green Street provides a state-of-the-art facility to care for people transitioning from the Emergency Department or other areas of the hospital for observation. Construction began in February and was completed in November this year.



NHW board members and executives had a tour of the new Short Stay Observation Unit prior to it opening. Pictured are: Acting Director Clinical Services Chris Gartside, Cheryl Clutterbuck (board member), Dr Leo Fogarty (board member), Acting CEO Robyn Gillis and Board Chair Jonathan Green.



Board Director Martin Hession, Deputy Board Chair Alison Maclean and Board Director Matthew Joyce inspect the Intensive Care Unit.

## Intensive Care Unit

The new Intensive Care Unit (ICU) has been built on top of the existing emergency Department and Medical Imaging area, adjacent to Cusack Street.

The ICU is for some of the most unwell patients in the health service. The first patients were admitted to the new ICU in February 2022.

## Emergency Department expansion

The Emergency Department expansion is crucial to helping NHW meet the growing demand for Emergency Department presentations. The project will see the existing Emergency Department expand right up to the hospital boundary with Green and Cusack streets. Work on this project was due to commence late 2021 but was delayed due to the surge in patients over the Christmas/ New Year period.

## Paediatric/ Medical Ward expansion

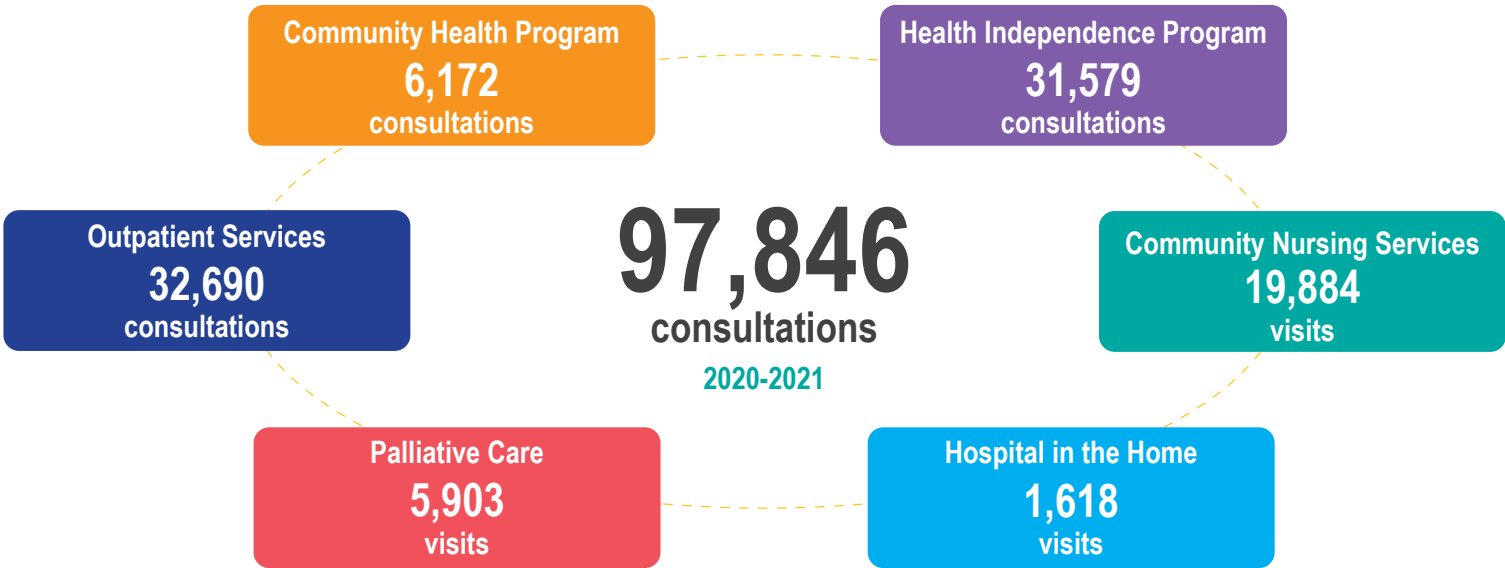
The new Paediatric Ward and Medical Ward expansion is taking place adjacent to the existing Paediatric Unit. Construction on this part of the project began in October 2021, and is expected to take 12 months to complete.



Construction is well underway on the new Paediatric Ward and Medical Ward expansion.



# Outpatients



A client works out as part of NHWs Outpatient Clinic.

## Outpatients servicing thousands of residents

One of the busiest places at NHW is the Outpatients clinic, located at the Community Care Centre in Clark Street. Some 47 separate clinics operate, ranging from fracture clinic, to antenatal, high risk foot clinic, physiotherapy, speech pathology and diabetes education. In the 2020/21 year there were 32,690 consultations through the clinic. This included phone calls, as well as in-person appointments. Outpatients are generally people who have been in the hospital as an inpatient, as well as people who have been referred to the various clinics on offer.

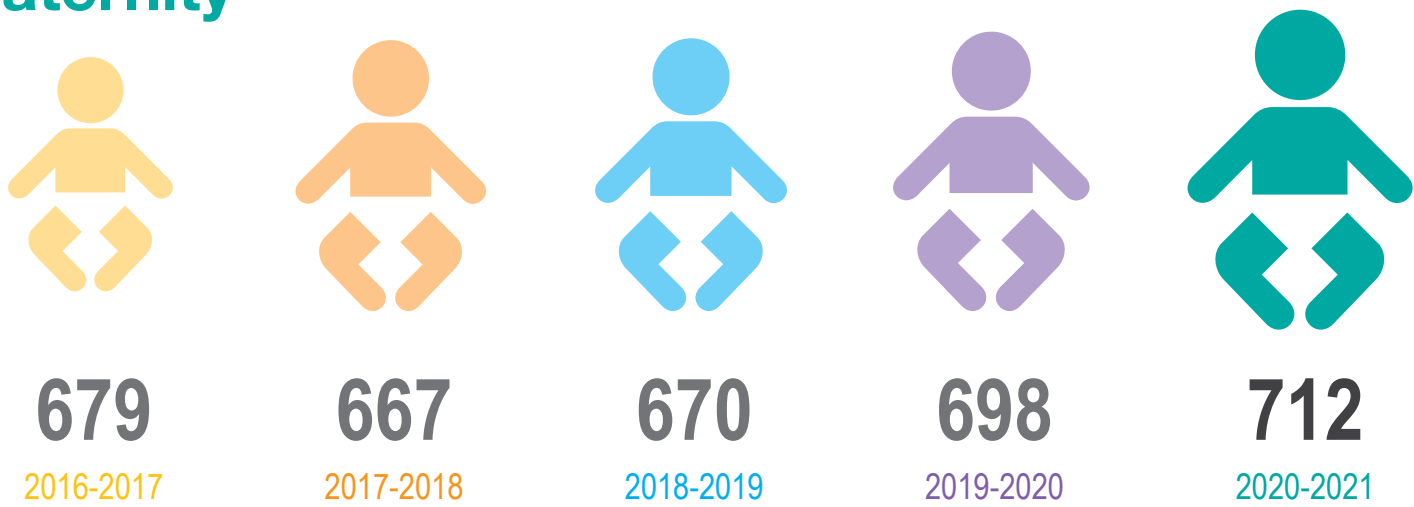
## Public Gynaecology Clinic meeting community needs

A new addition to the outpatients clinic has been the Public Gynaecology Clinic. This is open to people in the region who require a public gynaecology service. It came about as a result of wait times of 6-12 months for public patients who had been accessing private rooms. Local Obstetricians and Gynaecologists worked with NHW to establish the clinic, which has already resulted in shorter wait times for people in the region.



Dr Julia Keating, Susie Briggs and Dr Laurel Bennett.

# Maternity



## Babies part of world-leading study

Babies born at NHW can now be part of a world-leading health study. Generation Victoria - GenV is one of the world's largest birth and parent studies and aims to give a complete picture of the health and wellbeing of a whole generation across Victoria. It will help solve problems like preterm birth, mental health and illness, obesity, learning, allergies and more. Parents who have their child at NHW are now given the option to participate in the study, which involves collecting data on the first few years of a child's life. The data will then be used for research. One of the babies participating in GenV is William, born at our hospital last year. Pictured are William Stanley with midwives Tayla Harwood and Thea Domain, together with Linda Lawrence from GenV. The opt-in research project is open to all babies born in Victoria, Australia, and their parents over two years from mid-2021. Visit [www.genv.org.au/](http://www.genv.org.au/) to find out more.



Pictured are William Stanley with midwives Tayla Harwood and Thea Dormain, together with Linda Lawrence from GenV.

## Midbro's making a difference in maternity

Dean Blackney and Matt Bolte are the "Midbro's" in NHW's Maternity Department. In what was traditionally an exclusively female profession, the two qualified midwives are bringing a point of difference to birthing suites. Dean said while his number one priority was to care for the mother, he was able to help fathers feel comfortable as well.

**"It breaks down a bit of a barrier. Being a father of three I know how out of place some dads can feel. It can be very awkward,"** - Dean said.

"I try to make them feel comfortable and get them to be part of it." Dean made the switch to midwifery 5 years ago, while working for Care Flight in the Northern Territory. "Around 8% of the jobs were women in labour so I wanted to get all the tools to do the role," he said. With a nation-wide shortage of midwives, Dean said he encouraged nurses to consider making the switch. "It's very challenging – you have to be on your toes and act really quickly," he said. "Having a baby is a very special and exciting time in people's lives so it is a privilege to be part of it."



Dean Blackney takes pride in helping new fathers to feel comfortable in the birthing suite.



# Focus on the dental team

For the team at Northeast Health Wangaratta's Dental Department the past two year have been challenging. The team has often been one of the first to be redeployed to assist with the regional response to COVID-19. This has included staff working at the Screening Clinic, Vaccination Clinic, COVID-monitoring and even Meals on Wheels for a portion of 2020. The team of 34 staff provide general dentistry to the public and service high priority patients, including children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with special needs. As well as operating from the Community Care Centre in Clark Street, the dental team also provide services in Benalla Community Care.



Lesley Ottrey, Melissa Nolan, Vicki Zabilowicz and Phillipa Nolan serve the community in NHW's Dental Department.



Dental Assistant Katrina Davis says education is one of the biggest reasons behind improved oral health in the population.

## Faces behind the figures – KATRINA DAVIS

For Dental Assistant Katrina Davis the learning and teaching opportunities offered in public dentistry make her role extremely rewarding. Katrina has worked in both public and private dentistry throughout her career – but for the past 12 years she has called NHW home.

**“I find the public sector extremely rewarding. You get such a cross section of people come through the door,”**  
- Katrina said.

The education of patients is also a major motivator for Katrina. “Education is a big one for me,” she said. “One of the biggest changes I’ve seen is with the elderly. Most have their own teeth now, where that wasn’t the case 20 years ago.”



Members of NHW's dental team prepare to go on the road in the Smile Squad van.

## Smile Squad

The team began the delivery of Department of Education/ Department of Health Smile Squad program in February 2021 with the bright orange van and truck visiting schools in the region and have so far provided 12,434 items of treatment to 700 school aged patients over 1,198 visits. While COVID-19 impacted Smile Squad, school visits are taking place again in 2022.

## Faces behind the figures – SARAH PHOENIX

Oral health therapist Sarah Phoenix loves the team environment she is part of in NHW's dental department. “I’ve been here since the start of the year. I live an hour away and I do the drive to come here,” she said.

**“It is such a warm place to work. I love the patients and the team are great to bounce ideas off.”**

Sarah worked for 10 years in private practice and said she enjoys the opportunity to do things she didn’t have exposure to in the private sector. “You get to do a lot of things like Smile Squad, where you get out into the community and do your best to reach all the children,” Sarah said. “It’s a fantastic place to work. All the clinicians and support staff are here because they want to be. They put patients first and that’s what I love about it.



Oral Health Therapist Sarah Phoenix enjoys the variety of work at NHW.

# Focus on Pharmacy

At the heart of Northeast Health Wangaratta's hospital campus is the Pharmacy Department. In the 2020-21 Financial Year the Pharmacy Department distributed 33,000 items across the hospital and through community mental health. The team consists of 12 pharmacists, 3 interns, 8 pharmacy technicians and 1 administration assistant. The Pharmacy Department is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, serving the approximately 200 patients in the hospital, as well as outpatients. As a teaching hospital, interns enjoy coming to NHW for the exposure to high level, on the job training. Pharmacy regularly runs medication safety talks, and formally orientates every new doctor who arrives at the hospital.

## Faces behind the figures – MORGAN GIBSON

Originally from Shepparton, Morgan Gibson started as an intern at NHW in 2018 and has stayed on since then.

**“I’m a country girl. I did my Uni at Bendigo and chose here to work because it was close to home, but also somewhere different for me,”**  
- Morgan said.

Her role as a preceptor means she supervises interns, shadowing them and overseeing their university requirements. While working at NHW, interns need to continue to complete their university study, each completing a research assignment, and completing coursework throughout the year.



Pharmacist Morgan Gibson plays a key role in training interns.



Pharmacy Technician Melissa Tweedale enjoys making a difference to the lives of patients.

## Faces behind the figures – MELISSA TWEEDALE

Pharmacy Technician Melissa Tweedale has been with NHW for the past 6 and a half years and says it is the best job she’s ever had. Her role involves sterile manufacturing for oncology medications, and attending to inpatient discharge needs. She helps out pharmacists with anything they need, managing stock levels and making sure the hospital has all the medication needed for patients. “You’re making a difference for people who may have cancer,” she said.

## Faces behind the figures - JACQUI WALL

Pharmacist Jacqui Wall has loved her time at NHW. Originally from Gippsland, Jacqui was drawn to work in a regional area. She completed her internship at NHW in 2021.

**“You can learn all the content at Uni but you need to learn those skills of communicating. You need to make sure that when a patient goes home, the medication they have is correct and safe. It’s about making the transition from here to home as smooth as possible.”** - Jacqui said.



Pharmacist Jacqui Wall completed her internship at NHW.



# People and Culture at NHW

## People and Culture the quiet achievers during pandemic

NHW's People and Culture team have been vital to NHW's COVID-19 response, supporting staff through an array of policy changes while ensuring the day-to-day business of human resources, payroll and safety and wellbeing continues.

Key changes brought about by COVID-19 which have required People and Culture support include:

- Ensuring timely and accurate information and support was made available when border permits were required
- Supporting staff through school and childcare closures
- Recruiting workforce for both the Screening Clinic and Vaccination Clinic
- Redeploying staff when services have been reduced
- Supporting staff to meet vaccination mandates
- Facilitating Hospital Surge payment allowances

This is in addition to the day to day roles which in 2021 included:

- Hiring 314 staff
- Conducting 734 interviews
- Completing 1000 contract variations
- Ensuring more than 1500 staff are paid each week



NHW's People and Culture team comprises of Human Resources, Safety and Wellbeing, Workforce Systems and Payroll.

- Introducing fingerprint scanning for beginning and ending shifts for Environmental Services
- Changing over the internal emergency number to 2222
- Enterprise Agreement implementations

## Best You @ NHW

With the challenges presented by COVID-19 over the past two years, the need to look after the safety and wellbeing of all staff has never been more important.

In 2021, NHW launched the Best You initiative, aimed at supporting the wellbeing of all staff with programs and training to aid work/life balance and staff enjoyment in the workplace.

Key highlights of the Best You program have been:

- Free fruit and bottled water to encourage healthy eating
- Access to the Oranges Toolkit – a variety of resources and opportunities for staff to help manage burn out and fatigue, as well as leadership coaching and mental health support.
- Purchase of massage chairs for staff to use to aid in relaxation



and muscle recovery. NHW has had the highest uptake of all 9 participating health services.

Other initiatives include:

- Improved outdoor relaxation areas
- Breastfeeding/family space
- Improved tea room amenities

We look forward to the gathering of our Best You champions in 2022.

## Safety and Wellbeing a priority at NHW

Northeast Health Wangaratta's Workplace Health and Safety Team, Luke Tweedale and Thea Garraffo, are passionate about staff safety and actively encourage all staff to get involved to ensure that Northeast Health Wangaratta is a safe and enjoyable workplace.

The team have been actively involved in the COVID Pandemic response supporting all departments through promoting social distancing, managing COVID Coaches, ensuring a safe work place for our offsite Vaccination and Screening Clinic, providing staff to assist in the clinics and completing COVID Safe Audits.

2021 saw a steady and significant decline in Workplace injuries requiring medical treatment and the team are looking forward to championing safety in the workplace to achieve even better outcomes in 2022.

In her role as Fitness for Work Coordinator, Thea has pioneered a new and proactive approach to fitness to work. In 2021, she supported 71 staff suffering from personal injuries, reduced fitness and/or wellbeing concerns to achieve a positive and safe return to work outcome.



OHS and Wellbeing Manager Luke Tweedale and Fitness for Work and Wellbeing Coordinator Thea Garraffo make up NHW's Safety and Wellbeing Team.

## Safe Patient Handling

Lisa Twamley is NHW's Safe Patient Handling Coordinator. Her role involves developing safe operating procedures and delivering hands on training to staff. She has recruited and trained safe patient handling champions across the organisation to ensure that training is delivered in a timely and professional manner to keep NHW competency rates high and injury rates low.

NHW saw a 32% reduction in reported patient manual handling incidents in 2021, compared with 2020.

# People and Culture at NHW

## RAP a first step towards reconciliation

Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW) first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is guiding the organisation's reconciliation journey. The RAP was launched in 2021 after being endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

For NHW the decision to implement a RAP is a genuine and conscientious approach to embed and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, wellbeing and cultures into the health service. NHW is the largest employer in Wangaratta and has a responsibility to be an inclusive, welcoming and safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have the need for its services.

Key drivers of the RAP have been Dr Seb Kirby, Dr Zara La Roche and Aboriginal Liaison Officers Anita Cooper and Bonnie Marsh

Key actions stemming from the RAP have already begun to be implemented at NHW, which will guide NHW's reconciliation journey until September 2022, when a new RAP is developed in line with the

Reconciliation Australia framework.

Key partners that assisted with the development of the RAP are: Dirrawarra indigenous Network, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), Central Hume Primary Care Partnership.

The RAP includes 18 actions grouped under the themes of Relationships, Respect, Opportunities and Governance.

Key actions include:

- improving employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development,
- ensuring NHW reflects a culturally safe environment,
- demonstrating respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols, and
- promoting positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.

## Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are major focus points as NHW seeks to support staff and patients.

Recently NHW appointed its first Manager – Diversity and Inclusion, Jess Widdop, who heads up a team including Disability Liaison Officers David Halabi and Tracey McGeehan and Aboriginal Liaison Officer Anita Cooper.

The focus on Diversity and Inclusion has come about after strong support from the NHW workforce through the annual People Matters Survey.

Recent highlights have included:

- Disability Liaison Officer position funded to support people with disability in accessing Covid-19 vaccinations and testing clinics.
- LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Practice Conference held in Feb 2021. 258 people registered for the event which incorporated 19 sessions over 4 days.
- Quiz and education sessions held through NAIDOC week with NAIDOC scrubs as prizes
- Behind the Scenes tour May 2021 with students from Wangaratta District Special School.



David Halabi, Anita Cooper, Jess Widdop and Tracey McGeehan form NHW's Diversity and Inclusion team.

## Disability support at NHW

The Disability Support team at NHW provide support and advocate for people with a disability including their families and carers, accessing health care services as inpatients and outpatients.

They can assist with arrangements for medical appointments, decision making and discharge planning. They also educate and promote disability awareness in health care.

David Halabi specifically provides support for COVID vaccinations and testing with a strong focus on disability accessibility. It does not matter how big or small the needs are, David will ensure their experiences regarding COVID support is as positive as possible.

Tracey McGeehan is the primary contact person for employees who require disability support, ranging from workplace modification support, organising training, and moral support.

Tracey and David are firmly committed to providing an accessible, safe, and inclusive environment for our patients, visitors and staff, including future plans to create a Disability Equipment Resource Centre for patients with a disability.

For more information about Disability Support at NHW, please visit [www.nhw.org.au/disability-support/](http://www.nhw.org.au/disability-support/), or email [disability.support@nhw.org.au](mailto:disability.support@nhw.org.au)



# People and Culture at NHW

## Volunteers

### NHW drives statewide volunteer framework

NHW has helped shape a statewide framework for volunteer management. A Competency Framework for Volunteer Management was launched in June by La Trobe University's John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research and the LOHVE (Leaders of Health Volunteer Engagement) Network. NHW's Manager Volunteers and Philanthropic Services Kerryn Mitchell is co-founder of the LOHVE Network and used her experience managing more than 300 volunteers at NHW to drive the development of the framework.

**“Up until now there has been no guiding document that outlines what is required to manage a successful volunteer service in health,”**

- Kerryn said.

“The role of a volunteer manager in health comes with many complexities that is not easily understood at a glance. “Having this framework means health providers across Victoria now have an easily accessible guide to understand the core requirements of managing volunteers.” Underlining the framework is the assertion that volunteers are part of NHW's workforce and the same level of governance should be applied to their management as any other employee.



Manager Volunteers and Philanthropic Services Kerryn Mitchell has been a driving force behind developing a framework for volunteer management.

## Pastoral and Spiritual Care

### Pastoral and Spiritual Care team there to listen

NHW's Pastoral and Spiritual Care team is there to listen and assist patients at NHW and residents at Illoura. The team comprises of Dan Murphy, Maureen Beattie and Ruth Mitchell. Dan and Maureen operate from the Spiritual Sanctuary at the hospital campus, while Ruth is based at Illoura. Dan said their core role was to listen to people. “When we go into wards, we’re simply listening to people, not pushing a particular barrow,” he said. “It’s 1:1 listening and support.” “For the patients, it’s great for them to have someone focused on them as a person, rather than what may be physically wrong with them,” Dan said. “Nurses are often under the pump and patients are pleased someone is there to listen to them.” As well as listening to patients on wards, the Pastoral and Spiritual Care team also offer bereavement support to the families of people who’ve died at NHW. This includes a phone call 6 weeks after the death and sending a card on the anniversary of a death. “When we speak to people we ask them how they felt about the care that was provided. The vast majority of the time the feedback is very positive but on occasions when there are complaints of suggested improvements we will pass them on to the Quality team.” Pastoral and Spiritual Care at NHW receives funding through a Uniting Church grant and NHW. The service also receives support from the Wangaratta Men’s Shed.



Members of the Pastoral and Spiritual care team (from left) Ruth Mitchell, Maureen Beattie and Dan Murphy.

# Clinical trials in regional areas

The Clinical Trials Research Service (CTRS) is helping to put NHW on the map, both nationally and internationally. It is aimed at improving access to clinical research in regional areas. Clinical research is vital in developing better ways to treat patients, as well as giving local physicians the same opportunities to progress their careers in research as their metropolitan counterparts. So far NHW has participated in 5 clinical trials, involving 37 participants.

## Community members participate in published trial

Some 12 members of the Wangaratta and surrounding communities who underwent abdominal surgery under general anaesthetic were recently part of a pilot and feasibility study at NHW. The clinical trial, known as the SNaPP Pilot study, examined the effects of Sugammadex, a medication for the reversal of muscle relaxation induced by general anaesthetic. The study looked at whether Sugammadex reduced post-operative lung complications when compared to the reversal drug more commonly used, Neostigmine. The aim of the trial was to determine the feasibility of conducting a larger, international trial to further investigate this. NHW was approached by the Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) to be the regional site for the study, which involved 60 participants, 12 of which were recruited through NHW. Findings of the study have now been published, something Director of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine at NHW, Dr Jade Radnor, said was a significant achievement for the health service. "The pilot study showed that the protocol was sound and a large international trial is feasible which will hopefully be the next step," she said. "For the Anaesthetics Department at NHW it means we are recognized nationally and internationally as a centre that participates in research. "Research goes hand in hand with delivering excellence in health care." Dr Radnor said the CTRS staff at NHW, Nicole Humphreys and Jackie Lake, were integral in making the study a success. "They are the worker bees of the study," she said. "There is an enormous amount of work involved in screening patients to see if they meet the inclusion criteria for the study, speaking to prospective patients and obtaining consent, as well as collecting the clinical data required for the study."



Dr Jade Radnor and Clinical Trial Research support Officer Nicole Humphreys promoting the SNaPP Pilot Study.

The existence of the CTRS is something that will help NHW to continue to attract medical officers. "This makes NHW attractive to both junior and senior doctors for employment opportunities – not just for clinical practice but for academic research," Dr Radnor said "I'm passionate about providing fulfilling and rewarding career opportunities here as available to doctors in Melbourne."



Dr Lakshmi Dhakal is excited about the possibilities being opened up by clinical trials in Wangaratta.

## FOUND Trial

NHW has participated in a world-first clinical trial attempting to address dementia related wandering behaviours. The international study, known as the FOUND Trial, which took place across 12 sites in the USA and Australia, tested whether a medication called Fasudil is safe and can reduce dementia related wandering behaviours. Some 5 local residents were part of the trial, equating to 27% of the total participants. NHW is currently awaiting results of the trial, however Dr Lakshmi Dhakal, Clinical Director of Subacute Services and Consultant Geriatrician who conducted the trial at NHW, said the participants and their families were appreciative of the opportunity to be part of the trial.

**“A number of the patients didn’t want to go off the medication, which is a positive sign,”** - Dr Lakshmi Dhakal said.

Dr Dhakal said clinical trials were not common in regional areas, and created a point of difference for NHW. "Prior to us having the Clinical Trials Research Service, the community did not have access to participate in clinical trials," he said. "Clinical trials are essential in building the profile of the hospital. It gives job opportunities and helps to attract senior physicians. It enhances academic atmosphere and improves quality of care. "For me to advance my practice and remain up to date, clinical trials are extremely important." As for what comes next, Dr Dhakal said there were a number of trials in the pipeline that NHW was currently assessing participating in. NHW will also share the results of the FOUND trial when these become available.



# Cancer and Wellness service meets growing demand

In early 2021, NHW recognised the growing demand in cancer services and the need for an integrated structure. In response to this, the “Cancer and Wellness Service” was formed, bringing cancer services under one division to better meet the needs of this increasing patient cohort.

The “Cancer & Wellness Service” now incorporates the 9-chair Day Chemotherapy Unit, Breast and Gynaecological Specialist Nurses, Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurse, Stomal Therapists, the Cancer Wellness and Exercise program (Cancer Council Victoria), and outreach psychology services.

Highlights and changes:

- The Day Chemotherapy Unit was relocated to the “Puffin Gym” in the Community Care Centre, due to COVID-19 demands on the organisation, and changes continue to be “tweaked” to the use of rooms to optimise work- flow and patient comfort.
- The Cancer Council Victoria “Cancer and Exercise” program has continued to be popular and beneficial for those cancer patients newly diagnosed and starting cancer treatment, and those who

have completed treatments, working to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle and wellbeing.

- In January 2021, Sally Timmins commenced as Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurse, and since this, the demand for the service has become evident with a steady flow of referrals across the region (there are already 110 new patients and around 3 new referrals each week). Sally has been pivotal in establishing a Prostate Cancer Support Group in Wangaratta that has been well-attended from its inception.
- The Cancer and Wellness Service have welcomed back their much valued volunteer, Anne Coutts assisting in the Day Chemo Unit. Anne is passionate about assisting patients receiving chemotherapy, sensitively and skilfully advising and fitting wigs and headwear to help maximise their sense of self-esteem and wellbeing. Anne’s invaluable support for the nursing team, assisting with various “chores” and utilising her excellent organisational skills, was sorely missed during COVID-19 restrictions.



Sally Timmins, Annie Hansen, Mandy Kavanagh, Wendy Jordan and Linda Eykenboom work in the Cancer and Wellness Centre.



# JMO Forum making a big impact

NHW is home to one of the most active Junior Medical Officer (JMO) Forums in Victoria. The JMO Forum is a volunteer-led advocacy group made up of junior medical officers currently working at NHW. The Forum seeks to represent the interests, welfare, wellbeing and training of the doctors-in-training at NHW. Values of the NHW JMO Forum align with the broader and overarching JMO Forum Victoria, as facilitated by the Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV). In 2021 the NHW JMO Forum was recognised as an Example of Excellence by JMO Victoria for creating the advocacy group and achieving goals rapidly.



Members of NHW's inaugural JMO forum (from left) Georgina Oakman, Krystal Green, Nufail Khan, Addison Davis and Julia Keating with Executive Director Medical Services Susanty Tay, who presented the group with certificates recognising their achievements in January 2022. Absent are Sebastian Kirby, Bree Lucas and Anton Jermakoff.

# Illoura

At Illoura Residential Aged Care Facility the lifestyle program focuses on inclusion and support with a variety of programs to promote and encourage independence, social engagement and a sense of belonging. This is achieved through art groups, carpet bowls, cooking programs or active games to accommodate for a wide range of individual differences.



Illoura residents enjoy an array of lifestyle activities.

# Consumer Advisory Committee



NHW's Consumer Advisory Committee is undergoing a resurgence, with 6 new members appointed last year. Pictured are L-R back row: Maria Connor, Nadine Cain, Lois Knox, Cheryl Clutterbuck, Ann Wearne, Maison Ring, Coby Brock, Jim Cozens, Chris Gartside, L-R front row: Mark Hulbert, Robyn Gillis, Sue Don Leonard, Kerryn Mitchell, Stacey Talbot, Yvonne Gibson. The committee had been on hiatus due to COVID-19 but will now be gradually brought back into providing advice on how the health service can improve from the point of view of the people who utilize the services. Pictured is the revitalized committee and staff.



# Benefits of working at NHW

NHW is Wangaratta's largest employer, with more than 1500 employees. Medical professionals are attracted to work at our health service because of the focus on quality care and the opportunities for advancement and training. NHW is one of the few regional centres which offers the opportunity to participate in clinical trials. It is also a teaching hospital, with nursing graduates, pharmacy interns and junior doctors choosing to complete their training at NHW.

There are a wide range of employment opportunities at NHW outside of the medical field, with professions ranging from food services, cleaning, accounting, human resources and Information and Communication Technology. NHW also annually accepts a number of Gap Year students and trainees.

NHW is an Equal Opportunity Employer, committed to respecting and celebrating all forms of diversity and recognises the value of these unique identities within the community. NHW encourages all people of diverse backgrounds to apply for vacancies, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), Sex, sexuality and gender diverse (LGBTQIA+) community and those living with a disability.

Find out more and apply for roles at: [www.nhw.org.au/careers](http://www.nhw.org.au/careers)



Nurses Paul Jones and Bonnie Marsh are part of the team at NHW.

## Contacting NHW

Follow us on Facebook for daily updates @northeasthealthwangaratta

### NORTHEAST HEALTH WANGARATTA (NHW)

P: (03) 5722 5111

E: [enquiries@nhw.org.au](mailto:enquiries@nhw.org.au)

W: [nhw.org.au](http://nhw.org.au)

35 – 47 Green Street, Wangaratta, VIC 3677

PO Box 386, Wangaratta, VIC 3676

### MEDICAL IMAGING

P: (03) 5722 5001

Monday to Friday – 8.30am to 5.00pm

### COMMUNITY CARE CENTRE

P: (03) 5722 5555

4 – 12 Clark Street, Wangaratta, VIC 3677

Monday to Friday – 8.30am to 4.30pm

### NHW DENTAL SERVICE

P: (03) 5722 5116 or (03) 5722 5325

4 – 12 Clark Street, Wangaratta, VIC 3677

Monday to Friday – 9.00am to 4.30pm

### ILLOURA RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

P: (03) 5721 0310

E: [illoura@nhw.org.au](mailto:illoura@nhw.org.au)

W: [nhw.org.au/illoura](http://nhw.org.au/illoura)

32 – 50 College Street, Wangaratta, VIC 3677

### FEEDBACK

Providing you with safe, high-quality health care services is very important to us.

We value any feedback about our service, whether it be a suggestion, a compliment or a complaint.

P: (03) 5722 5202

E: [feedback@nhw.org.au](mailto:feedback@nhw.org.au)

W: [nhw.org.au/feedback](http://nhw.org.au/feedback)

Monday to Friday – 8.00am to 4.30pm





# Northeast Health Wangaratta

*Every person, Every time*

