Media Release

31 March 2014

Volunteers Celebrated at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital

Today, more than 60 volunteers who dedicate their time and skills to assist staff and patients at Australia's oldest hospital will be honoured and acknowledged as part of NSW Health Volunteers' Appreciation Day.

One of our humble volunteers is Fay Skuthorpe, President of the Friends of Sydney Hospital, who along with a team of knitters, sells her wares at The Little Shop on Macquarie Street which sells exquisite knitwear, handmade toys and souvenirs.

"The Friends of Sydney Hospital group last year donated in excess of $100,000 to the hospital towards the purchase of specialised equipment and hospital services," Mrs Skuthorpe said.

"Our dedicated volunteers also manage a small trolley located in the main hospital that provides patients, staff and visitors with snacks and beverages."

Mrs Skuthorpe learned to knit as a young girl using wooden skewers, and signed up to volunteer three decades ago as a way of saying thank you to the hospital for the excellent care provided to her beloved aunt.

Her children and grandchildren also do voluntary work in the community.

Other volunteer groups at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital include the Ladies Auxiliary, commenced in 1919, which runs the kiosk on Macquarie St, and last year donated more than $35,000 to purchase hospital equipment.

Volunteers in the Emergency Department (VED), commenced in 2012, and consists of 14 volunteers who help to ease the emotional distress and anxiety experienced by patients and their families and friends by providing practical and emotional support.

The Lucy Osburn Museum, the home of the oldest nursing school in Australia and the original nurse's wing constructed in 1868 with its design approved by Florence Nightingale, is also managed by volunteers.

The Museum is managed by Ms Elinor Wrobel, volunteer and curator, and assisted by fellow passionate historian volunteers who coordinate museum tours for visitors.

Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital volunteers are being celebrated in recognition of the many volunteers working across the NSW health system.

Director of Operations, Jon Roberts acknowledged volunteers' invaluable support thanking them for their contributions of service and also fundraising for vital equipment.

"On behalf of the staff and patients and the broader community I thank you all," he said.

Sydney Hospital is Australia's first hospital and dates from the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788.

It has been located at the present site on Macquarie Street since 1811, with 2011 marking its milestone of 200 years.

If you or someone you know, would like information about becoming a volunteer at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital, please contact Annabela Ventura on 9382 2675.