



Our Year in Review 2019-2020

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District





Artwork by Brenden Broadbent.

Acknowledgement of Country

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on whose land we stand, and the lands our facilities are located on; the lands of the Dharawal, Gadigal, Wangal, Gweagal and Bidjigal peoples.

We would like to pay our respects to the Elders past, present and those of the future.

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SESLHD Board

Michael Still	Board Chair
Janet McDonald AO	Deputy Board Chair
Associate Professor Peter Gonski	Deputy Board Chair
Patricia Azarias	Board Member
Elli Baker	Board Member
Jonathan Doy	Board Member
Associate Professor Bob Farnsworth OAM	Board Member
Dr Debra Graves	Board Member
Liam Harte	Board Member
Dr Gregory Levenston	Board Member
Neville Mitchell	Board Member
Helene Orr	Board Member
Professor Allan Spigelman	Board Member

From the Board Chair

The 2019-2020 year has brought extraordinary, yet exhilarating, challenges to South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. All of our people, at every level of the organisation, are to be congratulated and commended for caring for our community with generosity and managing our response with skill and professionalism.

This year, under the leadership of Chief Executive Tobi Wilson, a new executive structure was put in place to support the implementation of our strategic plan. The course of the past year has highlighted, more than ever, the importance of those objectives, ensuring that our organisation is agile and equipped to manage the health of our local population – no matter what challenges we face.

New ways of working this year, such as the rapid expansion of sophisticated telehealth services, have become embedded in our models of care. These will continue to play a vital role in our operations even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

A wonderful example of this is the NSW Telestroke Service, which provides expert specialist care to stroke patients throughout the state from its Prince of Wales Hospital base.

Led by Professor Ken Butcher, stroke patients in many regional centres now receive virtual consultations with leading specialists in this field, ensuring the best possible treatment and outcomes. On behalf of the Board I congratulate Professor Butcher and also his colleagues at UNSW Sydney, for securing a \$750,000 grant for a world-first, three-year research project, investigating treatments for regional and remote patients suffering from ischaemic stroke.

A \$2.1 million grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council to investigate the impact of sepsis in critically ill patients is another example of furthering our District's commitment to essential translational research. I look forward to progress with this important work which is led by Dr John Myburgh, Director of Research, Department of Intensive Care Medicine, St George Hospital.

With 2020 named the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, the Board is keen to support SESLHD's commitment to the global Nightingale Challenge. This initiative calls on healthcare employers to provide leadership, development, support and education for emerging nursing and midwifery leaders under the age of 35. By the end of 2020 our District will have enabled at least 100 nurses and midwives to engage in leadership development programs, essential for strengthening this workforce and providing opportunity for young leaders amongst our staff.

Once again this year we have been home to many new initiatives and innovations which support NSW residents well beyond our District's borders. Scores of premature babies have now received pasteurised donor human milk through the Royal Hospital for Women's Milk Bank Program, run in conjunction with Australian Red Cross. Meanwhile, the ClinTrial Refer app, which streamlines patient access to clinical trials, co-founded by St George Hospital's Roslyn Ristuccia, had a new updated version launched by the Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt MP this year. And these are just two examples.

While all District staff are to be acknowledged and sincerely thanked for the role they play, it was exceptionally pleasing that SESLHD won three of the 12 categories in the 2019 NSW Health Awards.

Aside from these winners, the life-saving Overdose Response with Take-Home Naloxone Program, developed at the Langton Centre under the leadership of Professor Nick Lintzeris, was a finalist in the NSW Premier's Awards.

It is with great pleasure that I commend this report to you with the Board's very best wishes. I thank the Board members for their tireless work throughout the year and for their dedication in supporting all of our people in providing the best care possible to our many and varied communities.

Michael Still | Board Chair



SESLHD Executive Council

Tobi Wilson	Chief Executive
Lisa Altman	Director, Strategy Innovation and Improvement
Jennie Barry	General Manager, Prince of Wales Hospital and Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital
Elizabeth Curran	Executive Director, Operations
Paul Darcy	General Manager, St George Hospital
Peter Eaton	Director, Finance
Danielle Fisher	General Manager, Organ and Tissue Donation Service
Dr Marianne Gale	Director, Population and Community Health
Flora Karanfilovski	Director, Health ICT
Dr Jo Karnaghan	Director, Clinical Governance and Medical Services
Angela Karooz	General Manager, Mental Health Service
Vanessa Madunic	General Manager, Royal Hospital for Women
Anne Milne	Director, Corporate and Legal Services
Claire O'Connor	Director, Allied Health
Kim Olesen	Director, Nursing and Midwifery Services
Caroline Skipper	Director, People and Culture
Vicki Weeden	General Manager, Sutherland Hospital and Garrawarra Centre
Associate Professor Christopher White	Director, Research

The past year is one that won't be forgotten quickly. While we've experienced unprecedented challenges as an organisation and as a society, our District has also worked exceptionally hard and produced some outstanding achievements.

With the New Year came the devastating impact of the bushfires on communities throughout NSW. Our District deployed staff to provide expert healthcare and support to bushfire-affected communities. As part of a state-wide response, our mental health teams delivered specialist care to communities on the Far South Coast while dedicated nursing staff relieved colleagues impacted by the fires in the Illawarra Shoalhaven area.

In late January, our focus swiftly turned to the COVID-19 pandemic. Frontline and support staff were critical in providing safe, quality healthcare services to our community through this period.

Staff across the organisation worked closely together to undertake extensive planning and preparation for COVID-19. Hundreds of staff members received further training to enhance their skills, to best prepare for management of patients with acute respiratory illness.

Throughout the challenges in 2019/20, over 240,000 people attended emergency departments across the District. Almost 45,200 operations were performed, there were more than 179,000 admissions, while more than 7,700 babies were delivered at the Royal Hospital for Women, St George and Sutherland hospitals.

Many of our people have been recognised for the wonderful work they do. At the NSW Health Awards, the Mental Health Service PACER (Police, Ambulance and Clinical Early Response) Program won the Excellence in the Provision of Mental Health Services Award. Wendy Machin from Kirketon Road Centre was named Collaborative Leader of the Year and Isabelle Wilson was awarded Volunteer of the Year for her work with the Youth Reference Group at headspace Bondi Junction.

The District also launched several new services, including the Fertility and Research Centre at the Royal Hospital for Women, a new birth unit at St George Hospital, the state-wide Telestroke Service hosted at Prince of Wales Hospital, the Prince of Wales Hospital Cancer Survivorship Centre and Sydney You Can Centre, and the Hospital in the Home model of care at St George Hospital.

We celebrated key milestones, including 60 years of pioneering treatment at Australia's first drug and alcohol centre, The Langton Centre, 125 years of caring at St George Hospital, and launched the Mindgardens Neuroscience Network in partnership with UNSW Sydney, NeuRA and the Black Dog Institute, which integrates treatments and research for mental health, and alcohol and drug disorders. In line with one of the District's key priorities to foster research and innovation, we opened the Microbiome Research Centre at St George Hospital, allowing researchers to investigate how disturbances in the microbiome occur and how this causes disease.

My sincere thanks to our dedicated staff for their hard work and compassion, and special acknowledgment to our teams who stepped up during exceptional circumstances, travelling to bushfire-affected areas and continuing to work tirelessly during the pandemic to keep our patients and each other safe. Thanks also to our volunteers who help us deliver services, and our community partners who work with us to improve the population's health.

Tobi Wilson | Chief Executive



SESLHD in 2019-20

SESLHD covers 468 square kilometres

1. Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital
2. Uniting War Memorial Hospital
3. Prince of Wales Hospital
4. Royal Hospital for Women
5. St George Hospital
6. Calvary Health Care Kogarah
7. Sutherland Hospital
8. Garrawarra Centre



37% of us have long-term health conditions and 21% live with multi-morbidities



959,100 residents call our District home



Almost 40% of us were born overseas



Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples make up about 1% of our population

179,687
patients were admitted

242,809
people attended our emergency departments

7,726
babies were delivered at The Royal, St George and Sutherland hospitals

45,199
operations were performed

Our strategic priorities



Journey to Excellence Strategy 2018-2021

Our purpose

To enable our community to be healthy and well, and to provide the best possible compassionate care when people need it.

Our vision

Exceptional care, healthier lives



Safe, person-centred and integrated care

Everyone in our community will have access to safe, compassionate and high-quality healthcare. That care should be provided either at home or as close to home as possible.



Workforce wellbeing

We will create an environment where our people will be accountable and can be happy, well and supported to reach their potential.



Better value

We will deliver value to our patients and community through maintaining financial sustainability and making investments consistent with our vision.



Community wellbeing and health equity

We will work together with our partners to achieve health, wellbeing and equity for our shared communities.



Foster research and innovation

We will focus on translating research and innovation into clinical service models that deliver positive health outcomes.

Partnerships that deliver

Responsive information management systems

Data & analytics

Fit-for-purpose infrastructure

A culture of continuous improvement

ENABLERS



Safe, person-centred and integrated care





Caring for people experiencing psychosis

A new, \$1.4-million service for patients with complex psychotic disorders, the Tertiary Referral Service for Psychosis (TRSP), is being established by SESLHD's Mental Health Service. TRSP will also provide assessment and advice to support teams from all over NSW caring for patients with schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders, as well as their families and carers. Teaching and research to help people living with psychosis will also be carried out. The centre is the first of its kind in the state and will lead the way in setting new benchmarks for clinical care.

Rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic

From January to June 2020, 688 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were identified in SESLHD residents. Together with national and state-led initiatives, the District's Public Health Unit led the local response to the pandemic which proved to be effective in stopping community transmission of COVID-19 in SESLHD.

Targeted approaches were undertaken to support vulnerable communities, including local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Four 'COVID safe' influenza vaccination clinics were held in La Perouse, Menai and Gunnamatta Bay which saw 425 residents, ranging from babies to elders, being vaccinated. In addition six Aboriginal healthcare workers were trained as COVID-19 support officers, providing culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal COVID-19 positive patients and close contacts.

Supporting our Indigenous communities

Three Aboriginal mental health workers have been employed by the District's Mental Health Service to work in Indigenous communities in La Perouse. Aboriginal people can experience significantly poorer mental health than non-Aboriginal people, due to social dislocation, intergenerational trauma and other complex needs. The new liaison officers are the result of a collaboration between the District and the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council. They act as go-betweens, supporting and referring Aboriginal people to SESLHD services, such as drug and alcohol counselling and provide culturally safe mental health support in the area.

Rapid implementation of telehealth

The Strategy, Innovation and Improvement Directorate delivered a rapid implementation of telehealth at scale across the District. Between January and May 2020 more than 4,500 video conference sessions, including individual consultations, group exercise classes, the Aboriginal Healthy Lifestyle Program and mother's groups, helped provide equitable access for patients. The rollout of telehealth also allowed staff to continue to provide healthcare services to patients in their home via video conference technology, where clinically appropriate.

Mental health crisis care

There has been a 10 per cent reduction in mental health presentations via Police and Ambulance to the St George Hospital Emergency Department thanks to the ►

OUR PEOPLE



HELEN ROGERS

Early Parenting Program
Co-ordinator, Child Youth
and Family Services

I've been a nurse and midwife for 30 years and I'm passionate about providing respectful, culturally responsive care for women and their families from pregnancy to children aged five years – particularly Aboriginal women and families, migrant and refugee women and families, and women with mental health issues.

One of the best parts of my role is working in partnership with my team, clinical services, NGOs and the government to implement models of care and projects that respond to the needs of local communities. Some examples include helping international students with access to sexual and maternity services, and providing parenting information to women in the Nepali and Bangladeshi communities. We also organise for cross cultural workers to support women and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds on their pregnancy and early parenting journeys.

Then along came COVID-19 and I was redeployed to establish and manage the Hurstville Community Testing Clinic. One health tip I'd give people is always ask questions. Clients often feel nervous talking to health professionals. Our most important role is to create an environment where clients feel comfortable to ask questions, and if you need to, ask for and use an interpreter.



pilot program, PACER (Police, Ambulance and Clinical Early Response). In a collaborative effort between NSW Police, NSW Ambulance and SESLHD's Mental Health Service, the successful program has now been rolled out to other parts of the state. It involves mental health clinicians working with 12 police stations helping people in trouble either by telephone or in person before they are sent to the hospital's emergency department. PACER focuses on care in the community, delivering actions such as referring a person to a domestic violence social worker.

NSW Telestroke Service

Connecting stroke neurologists to regional and remote patients via telehealth technologies, the pioneering NSW Telestroke Service was established this year. This service provides lifesaving, around-the-clock access to specialist assessment, diagnosis and treatment planning, improving patient care and outcomes.

Housing the state-wide service at Prince of Wales Hospital was made possible through partnerships with the Agency for Clinical Innovation and eHealth. The revolutionary model will expand to reach up to 23 rural and remote health facilities over the next three years.

Consumer walkarounds

Members of the Consumer Advisory Group at Sutherland Hospital offer a 'below the waterline' perspective on the care and treatment provided in the hospital, with information gathered by conducting newly implemented consumer walkarounds. The consumers, who have a range of different backgrounds and health-related experiences, are able to obtain important feedback about our patients' journeys, highlighting strengths and identifying areas where improvements need to be made, which otherwise may not be communicated.

Medication Safety Project

The introduction of Electronic Medication Management, eMeds, provided an opportunity to definitively identify and address safe medication administration challenges across Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital. A considered, three-phase program was launched, with collaborative meetings ensuring local issues were recognised. Education sessions were delivered, certifying staff expertise in

safe medication practice, followed by interactive presentations featuring a number of external speakers.

Some 10 months after the Medication Safety Project's implementation, the number of medication incidents were found to have decreased by 34 per cent.

Hospital in the Home

St George Hospital implemented Hospital in the Home (HITH) to enhance community access to acute and sub-acute care. Using an inpatient model of care, patients can remain in their home under medical and nursing staff review for some conditions that would normally require hospital admission. This is the first site using this model to trial the use of an electronic medication chart system called e-meds in the inpatient community HITH setting. The service was pivotal in providing follow up and management of positive COVID-19 patients in the community, for acute monitoring and for avoiding hospital presentations.

Putting patient safety first

A diverse group of clinicians and IT analysts at multiple hospital sites across SELSHD, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network collaborated to develop an intuitive electronic decision support tool to guide dosing of the antibiotic gentamicin. The tool markedly improved the appropriateness of dosing from 19 per cent to 79 per cent, with reduced over-dosing and under-dosing.

Improving the lactation journey for high-risk women

The Royal Hospital for Women developed a program to improve the successful transition to breastfeeding for women admitted due to high risk of delivery before 32 weeks gestation.

Along with their partners and other patients, women participated in weekly group discussions where they received counselling and information on the Newborn Care Centre environment, establishing breastmilk supply when separated from their newborn, and understanding the journey that may be ahead of them. Participants reported feeling less stressed and isolated as a result of the program, which showed excellent outcomes.



LIANE O'BRIEN

Senior Physiotherapist,
Cancer Care Services,
St George Hospital

Most of the patients I see have lymphoedema, a chronic condition which causes limbs to swell dramatically – often to twice their usual size. It can be caused by the lymph nodes being removed after cancer surgery or if the lymph vessels are damaged during an accident. Some are born with a pre-disposition towards it.

I've been at the cancer unit for more than 30 years and we've come a long way. Back then, lymphoedema was just seen as the side effect of cancer and patients were glad to be alive. Now it's treated much more seriously and can be managed really well. It can be debilitating for patients because it's hard to move or fit into clothes and they feel self-conscious socially.

One patient I'll never forget had been wearing an oversized man's slipper for two years and she desperately wanted to get the swelling down in her leg and foot for her son's wedding. I received a photo from her a few months later of her wearing a pretty dress and court shoes, dancing with her son at his wedding. She was beaming with joy. I was so honoured to be able to help her achieve her goal. Moments like those are ones you treasure.



Workforce wellbeing



Vicarious trauma & compassion fatigue support

A research project into the extent and impact of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue amongst the District's social workers has shown the need for more awareness and support for staff. As a result, a training course is being rolled out to assist social workers in detecting the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue in themselves and their co-workers.

Tools are also being developed around support during on-call work, clinical supervision and safe work guidelines. If successful, these tools could be rolled out across the state.

Identifying SESLHD's future leaders

More than 60 talented employees from across the District took part in the annual LIFT Program for Emerging Leaders to gain insight into the importance of leadership and management. The aim of the course is to develop participants' capabilities and to identify potential future leaders. Experienced managers across SESLHD shared details about their leadership journeys and spoke with attendees about how safe, high-quality and compassionate care can lead organisations through periods of

tumultuous change such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Upskilling our dietitian assistants

Upskilling our allied health assistance workforce is an effective way for SESLHD to meet the increasing demand of referrals to these services. SESLHD's Dietitian Assistant Competencies Program has created new models of nutrition care and as a result medical nutrition therapy has been improved across the District. Dietitian assistants now routinely undertake nutrition screening and support qualified dietitians in the review of patients' nutrition care plans.

Support for managers during times of stress

The extraordinary challenges of 2020 – from bushfires to COVID-19 – prompted the District's psychologists to develop a skills-based webinar to help managers and leaders support staff during stressful times. Interactive workshops have provided staff with evidence-based strategies to build the capacity of managers and leaders to create safe, supportive and resilient workplaces.

With over 90 interdisciplinary managers and leaders in attendance to date, participants have indicated that they valued the opportunity to share challenges with their peers, self-reflect, ►



PROFESSOR FLORENCE LEVY

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist,
Prince of Wales Hospital

Professor Florence Levy – otherwise known as “Flo” to her family and friends – was a brilliant leader in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry. When she passed away in April this year, she left an impressive legacy of research into attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which contributed to it being recognised as a legitimate disorder.

Professor Levy was a prolific researcher, publishing more than 300 journal articles, 30 book chapters and four books. She was awarded Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2015 for her contribution to research into child and adolescent psychiatry.

As a psychiatrist, her life was of enormous benefit to countless children, young people and their families. Professor Levy was adored not just for her brilliant mind, but also her quirky sense of humour and her unfailing generosity of spirit.

Along the way, Professor Levy was a tremendous advocate for women in medical research and mentored many early and mid-career female academics. She worked at Prince of Wales Hospital for more than 50 years, and continued working until late last year, just months before she died, leaving child psychiatry in Australia without one of its brightest lights.



focus on self-care and learn new strategies to detect and respond to a colleague's distress.

Resilience at the heart of wellbeing

Resilience at the Heart of Wellbeing was the 2019 theme for the annual Nursing and Midwifery Forum and has been the focus of a number of initiatives for SESLHD's Nursing and Midwifery Practice and Workforce Unit. Initiatives to cultivate a resilient workforce have included a series of webinars in partnership with the Langley Group focused on strategies to build individual resilience, targeted workshops to support resilience building in new graduate and certified clinical nurse managers and the creation of a 'check in tool' to support team connection and resilience. All initiatives were developed and facilitated using evidence-based content and approaches.

Empowering emerging nursing managers

For the first time at the Prince of Wales Hospital, the next generation of leaders were able to enrol in the Emerging Nurse Unit Managers (NUM) Program, following the success of similar initiatives established at St George and Sutherland hospitals. Starting from February 2020, nine registered nurses with demonstrated leadership potential commenced participation in a holistic 12-month training program. This initiative incorporates an orientation, regular workshops covering a variety of topics, online learning modules and ongoing reflective practice, as well as support to encourage overall wellbeing and mindfulness.

Participants shadow senior leaders, including an allocated mentor, and are offered opportunities to act in a NUM position.



DEBORAH LEE

Clinical Lead, Sydney Hospital
COVID-19/Influenza
Assessment Clinic

All I've ever wanted to be was a nurse. My mother and aunt were both nurses so I guess it might be in my blood. I started by working as a volunteer during Schoolies Week at the Gold Coast for many years and developed a love of caring for others. When I was a nursing student at the University of Wollongong, one of my work placements was in the maternity unit at St George Hospital. The nurses there were so calming and caring and nothing phased them. It only confirmed it's what I wanted to do.

I was seconded from the Emergency Department of Sydney Hospital into its COVID testing clinic at the end of April this year. We only had a week to set it up and at the start a lot of people were understandably anxious so it was all quite an experience. It's quite scary but I could see fairly quickly that our health system was going to be able to manage it extremely well. I feel so lucky to have been on the frontline of a global pandemic. I've been part of history.

My advice to family and friends is always to look after yourself first. Before you can look after others, you need to be healthy in yourself. If you're in good health physically, it can lead to a healthy mind. So look after yourself first, both your body and your mind.





Better value healthcare

Care for people with opioid dependence

SESLHD Drug and Alcohol Services is at the forefront in treating people with opioid dependence, with the introduction of a treatment called depot buprenorphine.

A world-first, randomised controlled trial into depot buprenorphine demonstrated greater satisfaction and convenience for patients using the treatment, when compared to conventional care. It has also been recognised for its cost effectiveness due to the reduced supervision time required by clinical staff compared to traditional daily dosing.

SESLHD led development of state-wide clinical guidance on the use of the treatment, delivered training to all specialist alcohol and other drug services across the state and worked with the NSW Users and AIDS Association to develop resources for consumers.

Cost-efficient rostering

An improvement in rostering led to a saving of more than \$890,000 in 2019-20. More efficient rostering of our existing staff has allowed us to reduce the amount of overtime, casual and agency pay across the District. SESLHD's Mental Health Service also saved more than \$937,000 this financial year by reducing overtime and more

than \$1.6 million by reducing the use of nursing agencies. This was achieved partly by the better management of annual and sick leave.

Framework for high-cost medications

Managing high-cost medications is a challenging public health issue, due to the need to balance both the best interests of patients and budget constraints. SESLHD's Clinical Ethics Service was consulted by the Quality Use of Medicines Committee for advice regarding how to manage the growing number of applications for expensive medications to treat individual patients. In response, the service developed a framework to guide decision making, helping to ensure that access to medicines for SESLHD patients is both equitable and cost-effective.

Osteoarthritis Chronic Care Program

The team from Sutherland Hospital's Osteoarthritis Chronic Care Program (OACCP) won the new category of 'Value Based Healthcare' in the SESLHD Improvement and Innovation Awards. With the aim of improving quality of life, increasing functional capacity, reducing pain and delaying or preventing the need for joint replacement surgery, the OACCP saw 252 patients in 2019-20 with 447 referrals to the service.



NELLON MATHEWS

Acting Manager, Financial Reporting and Accounting, SESLHD

When I started working in health 26 years ago the overall health budget was around \$10 billion state-wide, and now it's about \$30 billion. We worked in a spooky little office within the pathology department where they used to do lots of testing – we used to say we were surrounded by germs!

Back then, Sutherland Hospital seemed to have much more space around us where we could get out at lunchtime. There was a squash and tennis court, as well as a lovely pool that the staff could use, and a bit of grass where you could sit and have a cup of tea before you had a bit of a swing on your racquet. Now it's a concrete jungle.

I've been in Australia for almost 30 years and one of the saddest things I've ever seen was the long line of people snaking around the block lining-up for Centrelink support because of COVID-19. It was very sobering coming to work one March 2020 morning and seeing that.

There is a great level of trust and affection for healthcare workers that's built up during this time. They are truly warriors in this battle against an unseen enemy.



Community wellbeing and health equity



Improving outcomes for vulnerable communities

In collaborative efforts between key government and non-government organisations, SESLHD contributed to the Intersectoral Homelessness Strategy and the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Regional Plan. Both initiatives reflect a shared commitment to improve outcomes for people experiencing or at-risk of mental ill-health, suicide or homelessness. Alliances with partner agencies demonstrates a strategic and holistic approach, ensuring vulnerable people have access to the right care at the right time.

Staying connected through social media

During the pandemic and bushfires, social media platforms – Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter – managed by the District's Media and Communications Unit, became crucial channels for relaying important public safety information quickly and accurately. This included highlighting local COVID-19 locations of concern, the importance of getting tested and changes to hospital visitor policies. The level of engagement with the community rose exponentially – Facebook by 41.2 per cent, Twitter by 28.9 per cent and LinkedIn by 172.2 per cent. SESLHD staff also embraced TikTok to boost morale

and stay connected with each other, with teams practising their best moves to produce a series of light-hearted videos.

Supporting bushfire-affected communities

Between January and March 2020, SESLHD's Mental Health Service dispatched 26 staff to the bushfire-affected communities of Narooma, Moruya and Batemans Bay on the NSW South Coast. The team supported vulnerable people from distressed and traumatised communities, visiting Milton Hospital, Nowra Community Health Centre and Shoalhaven Hospital's Emergency Department, counselling many people who had lost homes and properties. The team's efforts were nominated for the NSW Premier's Bushfire Emergency Citation Award.

Sydney Airport COVID-19 screening

SESLHD's Disaster Management Unit managed COVID-19 screening for more than 89,650 returning air passengers, requiring cooperative liaison with Sydney Airport Corporation and federal agencies. Processes and screening tools were developed with NSW Health to ensure community safety, timely screening and referrals for swabbing if required. Social issues, mental health and personal exemptions were managed in a holistic and caring fashion. ►



KATE DOBINSON

Clinical Product Manager,
SESLHD

When I stepped into this role I had no idea that there was going to be a worldwide pandemic. My job is to manage the interaction between NSW Health's warehouse and our District and supply all the clinical products used in the hospital like hand sanitiser, masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, surface wipes, cannulas, intravenous fluids and wound care products.

When the pandemic hit, my team and I had to adapt very quickly. The NSW Government imposed a lockdown on the people of NSW, with the aim of reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Suddenly we had a massive increase in demand for personal protective equipment – gowns, gloves, masks – so that staff could care for patients and be protected. The problem was everyone else in the world needed them too. Traditional supply chains from countries like China were extremely limited, so we had to be creative in identifying suitable products from other sources until the government established good volumes of stock.

It was a marathon effort by a lot of people – including the drivers – involving late nights and weekend work. It was exhausting, challenging and exciting – a real roller coaster. I don't think any of us will ever forget it.





Increasing breast screening in our Greek community

Greek women traditionally have one of the lowest participation rates of breast screening in the District. A collaboration between women's services and the Greek community dramatically increased the number of Greek women having breast screening in Sydney. An initiative titled Becoming Breast Friends with the Greek Community, saw a mobile breast screen van arrive at a Greek Women's Wellness Celebration on the Cooks River, to promote screening. Figures from 2018 showed 665 Greek women had a breast screen, but after the Cooks River event this year, more than 900 had presented for screening.

And now for the good news

The SESLHD Media and Communications Unit continued to enhance the reputation of District facilities and services by working with media organisations to share powerful stories, many of which had national audiences. Just three highlights include a profile about the life-saving, intensive care given to COVID-19 patient Joseph Tannous at St George Hospital in *The Weekend Australian* magazine; a feature on Kirketon Road Centre's care for Sydney's vulnerable population with mobile COVID-19 testing clinics on ABC TV's current affairs program, *The Drum*; and a profile on Chloe Kennedy, a quadriplegic woman having her first baby at the Royal Hospital for Women, on the Seven Network's *Sunday Night* program.

Healthy choices for primary school children

Live Life Well at School, a State Government initiative, supported public primary schools across SESLHD to implement the NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy. Its focus is to support a culture of healthy food and drink options in school canteens by making the healthy choice, the easy choice. With SESLHD's Health Promotion Service providing workshops, menu review assessments and tailored advice, 82 schools throughout the District were able to successfully implement healthy changes to their canteens.

The program saw the number of public primary school canteens meeting strategy guidelines increase from 8 per cent to 90 per cent.

Integrated access to legal support

Uniting War Memorial Hospital entered into a Health Justice Partnership with Seniors Law NSW, funded through the Commonwealth Attorney General. The partnership is a unique opportunity for multi-disciplinary clinical teams and lawyers to collaborate and support clients experiencing elder abuse, including providing early intervention to prevent abuse.

Through embedding Seniors Law NSW within the health team, legal help is made readily available to those who otherwise may not have access. Inpatients, outpatients and community clients with their clinicians are able to seek advice to understand if referrals are appropriate, keeping older people safe and well in their home and community.

Caring for Aboriginal children

The Narrangy-Booris service provides culturally safe and appropriate healthcare services for Aboriginal children from birth to school entry age, helping them fully engage in life and learning. Its successful and sustainable partnership model places families at the centre and provides them with critical support. Over the last 10 years the service has worked alongside clinicians to create culturally safe spaces where 500 families now feel comfortable accessing health services.

Reducing waterpipe smoking

The Shisha No Thanks project is an evidence-based and community co-designed initiative which has raised the awareness of the harms of waterpipe smoking amongst young people from Arabic-speaking backgrounds. The project team has found innovative ways to engage with the community and evaluate the project's work, to support individuals, families and communities in making healthy lifestyle choices.



ELLE MILTON

Acting Clinical Midwifery
Unit Manager, Royal Hospital
for Women

I was inspired to become a midwife when I saw how well my terminally ill grandfather was cared for. The nurses were so compassionate and kind; they did so much to make him feel comfortable – they'd make him laugh and reassure him. These small acts of kindness made his day and I treasure those lasting memories. I always hope to make women in my care feel this way.

Midwifery appealed to me because I love supporting women and their families during an often vulnerable and life-changing time. I strongly believe in advocating for women, offering individualised care, ensuring women are listened to throughout their pregnancy journey, are supported, and able to make informed decisions.

Being a midwife is such a privilege and being present at the birth of a baby is the best feeling in the world. Often there is a complete shift in energy in the room once the baby is born – there is an overwhelming sense of joy, relief and immense achievement. It's a buzz I never get tired of. There's nothing quite like it. Every family, woman and birth is unique and special, but one that stands out was supporting a young single teenage mother birth her baby girl. She later wrote to thank me and told me she had called her baby girl Elle, after me. On challenging days, memories like this really keep me going.



Foster research and innovation

Funding for innovative research

A grant of \$900,000, issued by the Medical Research Future Fund, was awarded to the Sydney Partnership for Health Education Research and Enterprise's (SPHERE) Musculoskeletal Clinical Academic Group in 2019.

The group, which undertook a research project to compare the effectiveness of re-fracture prevention services across a series of local health districts, gained a further \$500,000 in 2020 thanks to a Consumer Awareness Grant.

Randwick Health & Innovation Precinct

The Randwick Health & Innovation Precinct is a collaboration between SESLHD, UNSW Sydney, Health Infrastructure NSW and Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. SESLHD's Strategy, Innovation and Improvement Directorate worked with partner organisations to leverage the scale, diversity and expertise located on the precinct, resulting in clinical academic collaborations such as Research Imaging NSW. This initiative provides researchers with state-of-the-art magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) capabilities and increases collaboration between leading academic, research and healthcare institutions.

Sharing data for treatment & research excellence

Information technology systems within SESLHD and other patient delivery organisations, for example the Black Dog Institute, do not integrate – making it difficult for clinicians and researchers to obtain data. The Research and Operational Data Environment (RODE) Project aims to design, build and implement a comprehensive data management platform, enabling greater information access for treatment and research. A \$1-million grant was awarded by Mindgardens to develop and implement the RODE Project in 2019-2020.

Dashboards support the COVID-19 response

The Business Intelligence Efficiency Unit collaborated with the COVID-19 Operations Team and senior executive staff to rapidly design, develop and implement three dashboards for critical information visibility across SESLHD:

- ▶ The COVID-19 operations dashboard displays all testing activity, including the number of people attending COVID-19 clinics and those admitted to hospital
- ▶ The COVID-19 workforce dashboard displays all staff on special leave relating to COVID-19, enabling a rapid response to emerging hotspots and early identification of staff shortages
- ▶ The personal protective equipment (PPE) dashboard displays each hospital's daily supply of PPE and allows for early intervention to prevent shortages.

Remote technical capabilities & support

District ICT, known as Health ICT, helped more than 2,600 staff to work remotely when NSW went into lockdown in March 2020 and many employees were asked to work from home. Health ICT enabled cyber-safe remote desktops and delivered tools such as Skype for Business and telehealth platforms.

Within days of a pandemic being declared, the team fitted out COVID-19 testing clinics at Randwick, Sutherland and St George hospitals with computers providing access to electronic medical records, as well as printers. The team also implemented a "Network on Wheels" service support, rapid clinic relocations and pop-up testing.

Randwick campus redevelopment

Design is finalised and construction is advancing for the Prince of Wales Hospital Integrated Acute Services Building (IASB). The IASB will deliver state-of-the-art infrastructure that will support new and innovative approaches to acute healthcare and translational research, providing staff, patients and community with purpose-built facilities that support contemporary clinical practice. ▶

OUR PEOPLE



MARK DELUCA

Maintenance Manager,
Sutherland Hospital

I look after all the essential services for Sutherland – water, power, lifts, gas, building work, as well as more than 18 trade staff. In a typical day we deal with everything from doors, gas outlets, toilets, lights and smashed windows to wheelchairs that need fixing.

During the pandemic, I was asked to convert an empty space into a COVID-19 clinic in a week. It was quite stressful, but everyone pitched in and we felt like we were part of history, knowing thousands came in for testing.

I try and keep up morale by having a monthly team barbecue. I like to keep my door open, and give people leeway if they need time off for personal or family reasons. I'd also never ask my team to do anything I wasn't prepared to take my jacket off and do myself. Sometimes I like to just walk around and see what needs to be done, and if anyone needs a hand.

Before I took this job I didn't know much about the daily life of nurses and doctors, but now I have great admiration for their dedication and how they deal with traumatic situations.

My mum passed away in November last year, and the staff gave me lots of flowers and cards. I was really touched. That was a day in my career I will certainly never forget.



Randwick Health & Innovation Precinct research strategy

A comprehensive Translational Research Strategy was designed for the Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct in a collaborative effort between SESLHD and precinct partners. The strategy aims to strengthen collaboration between partner organisations to ultimately deliver better-value healthcare, focusing on innovative solutions, healthy communities and data-driven care. Thirty working groups were involved in the planning and consideration of the strategy.

New IVF clinic for cancer patients

The Royal Hospital for Women's Fertility and Research Centre is a first-of-its-kind oncofertility centre in a public hospital setting in Australia, providing opportunities for cancer patients whose fertility may have been compromised by chemotherapy and radiation. Since opening in 2017, the centre has offered fertility counselling and the preservation of eggs and sperm for those undergoing cancer treatment. Stage two of the centre, launched in October 2019, entails a new IVF clinic and laboratory. The centre also offers low-cost IVF for women under the age of 41 with a history of 12 months of infertility.

Corneal Bio-ink pen

In collaboration with Sydney and Wollongong universities, SESLHD is leading research into the treatment of common cornea problems. Led by clinical ophthalmologist Professor Gerard Sutton, a team at Sydney Eye Hospital is trialling the use of the iFixPen, which delivers a bio-ink to the cornea to facilitate healing, minimise scarring and reduce recovery time. Bio-ink can be applied to clinical tissues, to treat a variety of conditions such as cornea ulcerations, caused as a result of infection, trauma or contact lens misuse. The team initially received critical funding from the Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation and Sydney

Research, followed by \$1.1 million from the NSW Medical Devices Fund and has now received a further \$400,000 from the National Health and Medical Research Council, to develop another ink for eye treatments. So far, the trial has found that bio-ink is capable of not only facilitating healing but can also act as a "glue" in perforations of the eye, thereby sealing wounds and reducing possible infection. Professor Sutton's team is also exploring the role of bio-inks in the development of a bio-engineered cornea.

Showcasing our nursing excellence

SESLHD Nursing and Midwifery Practice and Workforce Unit showcased its work at the 5th Commonwealth Nursing and Midwifery Conference in London in early 2020. Three presentations highlighted some of the unit's work: using storytelling to improve compassionate care, improving the student midwife experience, and an evaluation of the Effective Leadership Program run in partnership with the University of Wollongong. Staff were also invited to present at Australian conferences, including the Nursing and Midwifery Office Showcase and the UTS Empathy Symposium. In addition, 22 abstracts from staff across SESLHD were accepted for the Enhancing Practice 2021 Conference.

Improvements in electronic medical records

The Health ICT clinical application support team continued to enhance electronic medical records across the District. Highlights included improved newborn and maternity electronic observation charts, improved discharge patient information and bridging the gap between the District's hospitals and local general practitioners. The Program Management Office also implemented a new system at St George Hospital for fetal monitoring that updates mothers' electronic medical and maternity records via a mobile app.



LOUISE BARCLAY

Nurse Manager, COVID-19 Testing Clinic, Prince of Wales Hospital

I was deployed to run the COVID-19 clinic in March. Before that I'd been the nursing manager for Hospital in the Home and had worked in the team for more than 22 years, so it was a steep learning curve. I was both excited and daunted. There was so much to learn, and at the start, a lot of patients were very uptight and anxious because they felt they had to wait too long to be tested or because they didn't meet the initial testing criteria. That was the early days though and things settled down a lot.

One patient I'll never forget helping at Hospital in the Home was a lady in her 70s who was living in absolute squalor. She obviously hadn't eaten a healthy meal at home for some time – there were mouldy pots and pans in the kitchen. We were able to move her into an aged care facility, and she's much happier. That's satisfying work.

If I could tell people one thing, it's to look after yourself, because it pays off in the long run. If you're unhealthy, small things can become a big issue. If you're not feeling well, go and see your doctor. Exercise, eat well and see friends. Look after your physical and mental health, because they are so precious.

WHEELS OF FORTUNE



Chloe Kennedy's world came crashing down around her in February 2017 when a fluke skiing accident in Italy left her a quadriplegic.

When the molecular scientist woke up in hospital, her first question was: Can I still have kids?

The damage to her spinal cord left her partially paralysed from the chest down, affecting her hands and legs. "It took a while for the reality to sink in," she says.

Months of grueling rehabilitation in the acute spinal care ward at Prince of Wales Hospital enabled Ms Kennedy to brush her teeth, dress and feed herself,

and learn how to use her new wheelchair. She fought back hard for a fulfilling life, helped by her family and her boyfriend Antonello Vigna.

Ms Kennedy joined a wheelchair rugby team and a year and a half after the accident, the young Zetland couple discussed the possibility of having a baby.

As the accident hadn't impacted her fertility, Ms Kennedy conceived naturally – and in June 2019, under the care of one of the top obstetricians at the Royal Hospital for Women, Dr Lucy Bowyer, welcomed baby Aurora.

"I have an interesting career, a supportive family and partner, and now our beautiful girl. That's a lot more than many other people have. I feel very lucky," Ms Kennedy said.

Although she has ability with her arms, Ms Kennedy's hands aren't fully functional, and she still needs a part-time carer while Mr Vigna is at work and Aurora is little.

Ms Kennedy was able to breastfeed, change and dress Aurora, who is now a cheeky toddler busy exploring the world around her.

Working with an exercise physiologist, Ms Kennedy has help with standing, walking, balance, posture and strength. And she's back playing wheelchair rugby – in her own words: "One thing I've learnt is to never give up."



The fight of his life

Joseph Tannous is living proof that the pandemic choking the globe doesn't just strike the old and the sick. Joseph was a fit, healthy 49-year-old businessman from Brighton-Le-Sands when he was struck down by COVID-19.

The father of three was the first patient admitted to St George Hospital's new COVID-19 ward. It was Saturday, 21 March. He had a tight chest and was struggling to breathe. He was quickly taken into the care of the hospital's Respiratory Specialist, Dr Yizhong Zheng.

But as the virus ravaged Mr Tannous' body, his condition deteriorated and he contracted severe pneumonia; within 24 hours of arriving at the hospital, the staff gave him the devastating news: they had to intubate him and put him on a ventilator in order to save his life.

Mr Tannous was placed in a coma for 10 days. As his life hung in the balance, staff monitored his lungs and heart, fed him through a tube, and applied drops to his eyes.

As Mr Tannous' lungs improved, the team of specialists slowly brought him out of a coma. He had lost 12 kilograms, struggled to stand up, and couldn't swallow properly because he had been intubated for so long.

Mr Tannous can't remember the specifics of what happened to him in hospital, but one thing he clearly recollects is the exceptional care the staff gave him. He remembers a nurse asking him to squeeze his hand if he would like to listen to music.

"Those 11-12 days I spent in isolation were the most traumatic time of my life. But in the end it was the wonderful staff at St George Hospital who got me back up to a point where I could leave and live the life I'm having now," Mr Tannous said.

Three weeks after discharge, Mr Tannous returned to St George Hospital with a gift of 10 fruit and vegetable boxes – a small gesture, he says, for saving his life. The skill and kindness of hospital staff, along with the love of his family and the prayers of his church, are what kept him alive. "I'm so grateful to everyone... they are such an amazing team."

"We have the best health system in the world."



Wedding Bells Chime

AT PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL

Prince of Wales Hospital's oncology staff were honoured to help fulfil patient Kevin Warner's dream of getting married to his partner, Simone.

With just a few days' notice, and thanks to the support of Dreams2Live4 – a not-for-profit organisation that makes dreams come true for patients who are living with metastatic cancer – staff swung into action to set up for the big day.

The ceremony took place in the sunshine on the balcony of the oncology ward, decorated especially for the occasion. Dreams2Live4 provided a cake, food and drinks, and also organised for a photographer and videographer to capture the everlasting memories.

Grace Wall, Registered Nurse, Oncology, Prince of Wales Hospital, had one of the most important jobs of all – to act as a witness at the ceremony.

"It was a privilege to sign the wedding register for Kevin. He was a loveable person who was always up for a joke, and I'm so grateful he asked me to be a part of his marriage to Simone," Ms Wall said.

"We always go over and above for our patients – and Kevin was such a great character, we wanted to do everything we could to make his wedding day extra special.

"After Kevin first met the nursing team on the oncology ward earlier this year, as a token of appreciation for the care he received, he organised to bring in lunch for us to share together."

Along with the couple's friends and family, staff from across multiple disciplines who cared for Mr Warner during his treatment were at the wedding to hear and see the exchange of vows.

Mrs Warner said the nurses, allied health staff and doctors involved in her husband's care made sure their wedding was extra special.

"Despite the overwhelming sadness, looking back at the photos of our wedding to see Kevin enjoying the day so much made me so happy," she said. "It will live on in my heart forever."

Sadly Mr Warner passed away on Monday, 29 June, surrounded by his new wife and many of the staff who cared for him.

SUPPORTING bushfire recovery

As both health professionals and caring compatriots, SESLHD staff were quick to help those affected by the 2020 bushfires.

The extent and intensity of this year's NSW bushfires were the worst on record: burning more than 11 million hectares and taking 34 people's lives along with an estimated one billion animals.

In response, the communities of SESLHD dug deep donating money, food and other essential items, while District staff despatched surplus medical supplies and many others travelled to fire-affected areas to give hands-on help.

For several months, mental health teams delivered specialist care to communities in the Narooma, Moruya and Batemans Bay areas, supporting distressed and traumatised communities. Dedicated nursing staff spent time at Milton Hospital, Nowra Community Health Centre and in Shoalhaven Hospital's Emergency Department to relieve local colleagues impacted by the fires.

Anne Devlin, Clinical Psychologist, Prince of Wales Mental Health Rehabilitation, shared a personal account of her own experience providing assistance. She said SESLHD staff always received a hearty welcome from locals: "As city dwellers unused to this area, we were saddened by what we saw, but the locals hold a memory of what was once there. They're glad to be alive but the charred trees and houses reminds them of what others lost and what they almost lost," Ms Devlin said.

❖ Dedicated staff from Prince of Wales Hospital's Kiloh Centre ran a donation drive to support residents affected by fires in the Cobargo region, delivering 21 pallets of items including food, water, toiletries, bedding and towels, clothing, generators and medical supplies via St Johns Ambulance.

Their efforts also led to a truck load of items for residents of the Merimbula area, while Prince of Wales Hospital's Cardiology Department conducted a bake sale and raised more than \$1,000 for the Rural Fire Service and WIRES (Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service).

❖ The Sutherland Hospital gave injured animals comforting cuddles of support while delivering towels, linen, medical equipment and food to Dimmocks Retreat Wildlife, in the Southern Highlands' township of Bundanoon. The self-funded centre relies on

donations to provide care for a range of animals including kangaroos, wallabies, possums, wombats, echidnas, birds and reptiles during their rehabilitation.

Clothing, blankets, pillows, towels, linen and toys were collected by staff and sent to various evacuation centres in the Southern Highlands and the South Coast along with hundreds of items of food and toiletries.

❖ Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital provided support to injured animals through donations to wildlife rescue and recovery organisation, Medidivert. Staff sorted stock to collect suitable unused items including ointments, saline, bottles, syringes, sterile instruments and gloves, making deliveries to wildlife recovery projects in both the north and south coast of NSW, and the Blue Mountains.

❖ Staff at the Royal Hospital for Women's Newborn Care Centre rallied together to collect a large amount of supplies for wildlife affected by the fires. Quilts, hats and mittens for joeys, koalas and other small mammals as well as bottles and syringes were gathered and distributed to WIRES for animals in need.

A microbat house was even built by the generous husband of a Royal staff member, as bat habitat was severely impacted by the fires.

❖ Staff from St George Hospital received an overwhelming number of donations for two separate bushfire appeals. While non-perishable food items were sent out via Food Bank, medical supplies, pet food, pouches and other items for animals were delivered to The Rescue Collective, with five car loads of deliveries dropped off in just the first week of gathering donations.

District staff who provided on-site support to bushfire-affected communities returned home in early March. Tobi Wilson, Chief Executive, SESLHD expressed his sincere gratitude to all who shared their time, their skills and their support.

"I would like to once again recognise our colleagues for their outstanding efforts during this very difficult time. Working away from family and friends to help others in need is commendable and reflects the core values of our district," Mr Wilson said.

"I would also like to recognise those who lost family, friends, property and pets as a result of the fires – please know that you are in our thoughts."

“

Working away from family and friends is commendable and reflects the core values of the District.

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COVID-19

Our local response

COVID-19 in 2020 brought a unique set of responsibilities for South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, with all staff rising to meet the many challenges.

For South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) – which covers 468 square kilometres from the city to beyond the metropolitan area's southern boundary – responsibilities expanded in response to the global pandemic: managing international air travellers, infection control compliance in the busy Central Business District along with overall healthcare of a diverse population nearing one million.

By 30 June SESLHD had already screened almost 90,000 airport arrivals, conducted swabbing on approximately 74,000 people at multiple special clinic locations and hospitals, with analysis performed by NSW Health Pathology at Prince of Wales Hospital, and identified 688 residents with COVID-19, several of whom required intensive care.

Team work came to the fore, with frontline and support personnel developing new ways of working. Innovative solutions were born, some even being adopted internationally; telehealth models of care were developed and expanded, and staff took on new or additional roles: from virtual antenatal care, online exercise sessions for patients with chronic heart and lung disease, and apps supporting COVID-19 care at home, to virtual 'upskilling' of physiotherapists treating COVID-19 intensive care patients, the Keeping People Safe and Connected phone service for isolated patients, and a mobile COVID-19 Disability Response Team – to name just a few. Meanwhile, novel ways to 'check-in' with, cheer and connect the District's staff were born.

Patients in our care

With news of the pandemic from overseas, District staff quickly swung into action to ensure SESLHD facilities had capacity to manage infected patients and minimise the risks of transmission in hospitals. Actions included ensuring capability was in place to manage increased numbers of those needing higher acuity care and establishing systems to screen every person entering a District facility.

Kate Frampton, Nurse Unit Manager, Respiratory and Infectious Diseases,

helped establish the COVID-19 inpatient care capability at Prince of Wales Hospital. This work required infrastructure improvements, such as new non-invasive ventilators, which improved care for patients with a range of respiratory conditions.

"The more prepared we got, the more we felt we were ready to be able to deal with what was happening. We began by putting new monitoring capability in all eight rooms and now we're finishing off providing this for the full 26 beds in the ward," Ms Frampton said. "We can now monitor all patients safely via back-to-base monitoring at the nurses station."

Sutherland Hospital had the highest number of admissions of COVID-19 patients across the District.

Dr Grant Eruini-Bennett, Medical Director, Critical Care at Sutherland Hospital, said while the protocols of caring for a potentially infectious patient are always observed, COVID-19 brought extra vigilance.

"While the layers of PPE [personal protective equipment] were different, we tried to not be concerned and treat each patient as we would any other respiratory failure patient," Dr Eruini-Bennett said.

"While we only needed to intubate one COVID-19 positive patient, we had many suspected COVID patients who needed intubation and we didn't know if they were positive or not at the time. So we needed to treat them as if they did have COVID-19 and manage the procedure in a new way.

"COVID has been difficult and demanding but I can't think of a winter in the past 25 to 30 years that hasn't been. The winter is always very demanding and people have been training for this level of demand."

Testing, testing...

SESLHD staff moved rapidly to find available space, source stock of consumables and to gather staff to conduct testing clinics. ►



Dozens of clinics and pop-up sites dedicated to testing for COVID-19 were established throughout SESLHD, complementing the testing work being performed by private clinics and general practitioners.

At Prince of Wales Hospital, for example, a team worked around-the-clock to prepare to diagnose and treat COVID-19 patients. Associate Professor Jeffrey Post, Director, Infectious Diseases, said his team took on a vast range of responsibilities to tackle the pandemic, “chipping in” to get the job done. “Some helped set up the clinic, others were in charge of providing test results to patients. There are staff caring for COVID-19 positive patients in our hospital as well as patients in isolation. We also have a 24-hour on-call team advising on how to do business in a world with physical distancing.”

Hurstville Community Health Centre COVID-19 Clinic – the first community based clinic in South East Sydney – attracted large numbers of locals from its opening day in April. Pop-up clinics often drew together healthcare professionals and support staff not linked prior to the pandemic.

“Most of the team have never worked together before yet collaborated closely – with physical distancing of course – to quickly set up the clinic and provide an extremely high standard of care,” said the clinic’s team leader, Helen Rogers.

“In the peak of the lockdown we met a number of clients who were really socially isolated from family and friends. We were able to provide an important touch point for a chat and connect them with support services.”

Extra efforts were put in place to ensure culturally and linguistically diverse communities were receiving the messages concerning infection control, social distancing and testing. Vulnerable and homeless communities were also a focus, with initiatives such as the pop-up clinics established in key community locations by the Kirketon Road Centre.

With just a handful of staff, 2020 saw the District’s team managing procurement of clinical items face challenges never experienced before. Within a couple of weeks a small warehouse was up and running managing orders for items such as sterile gowns, gloves, sanitisers, masks, aprons and eye protection – in multiples of tens of thousands.

Community nurses were transporting stock to clinics, dock teams became experts in logistics, teams of drivers usually ferrying patients became an urgent courier service for critical supplies.

In less than two weeks, a system ‘dashboard’ was built and implemented by the Business Intelligence & Efficiency Unit and Clinical Governance – to enable accurate up-to-date stocktaking.

“We are a tiny little group and the local health district was going through stock at the rate of knots,” said Kate Dobinson, SESLHD Clinical Product Manager. “Initially until new supply chains were established through HealthShare and Ministry, we had to get out there and search for items that were fit for purpose to keep our staff and patients safe.”



“

Most of the team have never worked together before yet collaborated closely – with physical distancing of course – to quickly set up the clinic and provide an extremely high standard of care.”

OUR PEOPLE



EMMA GRIGGS

Aboriginal Workforce
Development Consultant,
Sutherland Hospital

I am a proud Wiradjuri woman as well as a careers counsellor, so this job was a terrific use of my skills and background. My job is to attract, recruit and retain Aboriginal people in the workforce.

So far we have more than 153 Aboriginal people working in our local health district. Sometimes I pinch myself that I ended up in such a great role. Part of my job is to showcase the work of NSW Health to Aboriginal communities. I often do this by talking to the careers advisors at high schools and universities.

Often people are not aware of the variety of jobs we have here. You don't have to do nursing or medicine; there are jobs ranging from allied health assistants to speech therapists, psychologists, and various roles in hospital services. There are some wonderful traineeships for school leavers for dental health assistants and administration assistants.

One of the things that puts a smile on my face is hearing about some of the people I've employed being promoted or doing a leadership course. Everyone starting out in their career can do with a mentor, and I'm so happy to be that person.

“We had to re-purpose everybody in the procurement-related teams to support these efforts. But I was so impressed by the way they saw what had to be done and jumped at it – no-one ever said no. It was a phenomenal effort.”

Tracing contacts & managing isolation

SESLHD's Public Health Unit (PHU) worked long hours to investigate each positive case of COVID-19 in SESLHD, identifying close contacts and supporting people to safely self-isolate. The PHU also worked closely with local schools, councils, businesses and our health facilities to ensure prevention and response measures were in place.

Nursing Unit Manager, Tracey Papa, typically manages a team of five, identifying close contacts of those with other infectious diseases such as measles; team numbers were boosted to 45 to deal with COVID-19.

“We go through each person's day-to-day movements and find out who they've seen and where they've been. It really is just like being a detective,” Ms Papa said.

The teams provided advice on how to self-quarantine at home and the importance of monitoring for symptoms – while also being a friendly voice providing support on the other end of the phone.

Further support came from SESLHD's social work contingent, which held responsibility for managing quarantine arrangements for COVID-19 positive people and their close contacts – as well as providing support to those not infected but struggling to cope with major upheaval it has caused them.

Emma Dixon, COVID-19/Social Harms Social Worker, SESLHD, supported people to isolate at home, where possible, depending on their living arrangements, but often had to organise relocation to a hotel.

“For most people, it's just ensuring that the Public Health Unit is aware of them, that the local hospital is aware of them if they're COVID-positive, and just ensuring that they're kept safe and supported for those 14 days,” Ms Dixon said.

“For those unable to isolate at home, that requires getting them to the hotel and providing case management and oversight for the 14 days that they're in isolation, ensuring that psychologically their needs are met – 14 days with your own thoughts in a hotel can be a little challenging.”

One referral “can quickly become five people” – and for many, receiving the news that they must isolate can be a serious blow.



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Fourteen days with
your own thoughts in
a hotel can be a little
challenging.”





“Learning that you're a close contact or that you're positive can be the straw that breaks the camel's back for a lot of people – a single mother, for example, who is the breadwinner for a family and is casually employed with no leave entitlements and has to stop work and isolate. That's why this role sits with social work, because there's a flow-on effect and a lot of other issues that often happen because of that news.”

Support staff come to the fore

While clinical staff faced new and increased pressures, the role of support staff, such as frontline administration and domestic services personnel, became even more essential. Many took on different responsibilities due to COVID-19.

An example of this was Madison Taueli, Health Information Clerk, and her co-workers who provided admin support to the COVID-19 and Flu Assessment Clinic at Prince of Wales Hospital – the self-nicknamed “Quaranteam”.

Previously holding a ward-based role, Ms Taueli became responsible for organising patient information, supporting doctors and nurses to meet the complex needs of inpatient care, and maintaining a structured and effective patient flow.

Prince of Wales Hospital has one of NSW's largest COVID-19 testing facilities. Starting the day with a team briefing involving all admin and clinical staff ensures all is prepared, as the patient flow can be constant from the moment the clinic's doors open.

“The skills brought from our pre-COVID roles has made us all very good at working together,” Ms Taueli said.

“It's our hope that patients leave the clinic more informed and reassured about COVID-19.”

Prepared for testing times

SESLHD's Disaster Management Unit has played a vital role in the COVID-19 response, in a partnership with Australian Border Force and the Australian Department of Agriculture Biosecurity, identifying which passenger arrivals at Sydney International Airport require testing.

Liz Ryan, Acting Clinical Nurse Consultant in SESLHD's Disaster Management Unit, said expertise from many government agencies had managed this large workload.

“We wouldn't have been able to achieve this outstanding result without the brilliant team work between Nursing, Medical, Ambulance, Biosecurity, Border Force as well as the excellent interpreters with us on the ground. Everybody has worked so incredibly hard,” Ms Ryan said.

“It's also been great to see that passengers, on the whole, are really happy to be screened and to receive advice on what to do if they get sick, information about isolation and details surrounding how to protect their families.”

Anthony Cook, Disaster Manager, SESLHD, said: “I'd like to make mention of the amazing team work. There has been an incredible response from our Nursing and Midwifery team and the support and leadership shown by all the facility nurse managers in filling the roster has been inspiring. Also, the way senior nurses have managed complex problems and situations every day at the airport is something to be very proud of.”



“

The way senior nurses have managed complex problems and situations every day at the airport is something to be very proud of.”

OUR PEOPLE



RISHI BALDEO

Exercise Physiologist,
St George Community
Mental Health

My job is to help people with mental health issues to improve their physical health; it can range from designing intensive exercise programs to simple lifestyle changes in the home.

People are referred to me through the Mental Health Service. They also see a nurse, a dietitian and a peer support worker. We provide them with all the help they need to achieve their goals over 12 weeks.

Clients range from teenagers to the elderly, and some of the transformations are extraordinary. One person lost more than 25 kilograms. But the improvements go far beyond physical health. Taking steps to improve physical health helps them become more confident, and have better self-esteem. It improves their overall mood and outlook on life.

Often taking charge of their physical health is that first, crucial step many people take towards becoming independent and managing their own life. It's a form of self-empowerment.

The program can have a powerful overall impact; it has allowed many to return to work or study, and engage much more meaningfully with their families and their community. It's incredibly rewarding to see the changes people make in their lives.



Population and Community Health

The Population and Community Health Directorate, newly formed in December 2019, played a critical role in 2020 given its focus on disease prevention, community health and wellbeing.

Soon after the Population and Community Health (PACH) Directorate was established, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived presenting a great deal of change to both services and the community as a whole. Despite the many challenges staff adapted brilliantly, showing great professionalism, flexibility and commitment as they continued to care for our local community.

The PACH Directorate is focused on preventing disease, promoting wellbeing and minimising harm across the lifespan. Effective preventative health interventions are a cornerstone of our society and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this into sharp focus, illustrating why prevention matters.

We are also faced with the challenge of preventing non-communicable diseases that cause premature deaths in our community.

Tackling modifiable risk factors – in particular obesity, poor diet, physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol consumption – continues to be a focus.

Addressing the disproportionate burden of poor health outcomes on disadvantaged communities is at the forefront of our actions, in particular closing the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in SESLHD.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Population and Community Health staff for their immense efforts in 2019-20. I look forward to working with the team in the years ahead and demonstrating the full potential of our collective action.

Dr Marianne Gale
Director, Population and Community Health



Culturally appropriate care for new parents

SESLHD provides healthcare services to culturally and linguistically diverse residents including people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Cross-cultural workers employed by SESLHD's child and family health and maternity services support these families to ensure early and ongoing engagement occurs from pregnancy up until a child is five years old.

Preliminary results from an evaluation of these services showed 84 per cent of women reported a positive impact on their maternity experience and 100 per cent reported an increased understanding of pregnancy, birth and parenting, noting they would 'definitely' or 'probably' recommend the service to friends and family.

Keeping mouth in mind

People living with a mental illness often have poorer oral health than the general population and can experience challenges when accessing mainstream oral health services. To reduce this gap, SESLHD's Oral Health Service and Community Mental Health Service, based at Sutherland Hospital, have implemented a referral pathway for clients taking the antipsychotic medication clozapine. The program supports mental health patients throughout every step of their oral health treatment journey and has significantly improved health outcomes and the quality of participants' lives.

Vaccinating local Aboriginal communities

Four flu vaccination clinics were held at the La Perouse Aboriginal Community Health Centre, Gunnamatta Bay Pavilion and Menai Community Health Centres, resulting in over 400 people receiving a vaccination. The initiative supported our local Aboriginal communities to minimise the dual challenge of the winter flu and boost immunity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Families attending the clinics expressed their appreciation to SESLHD for making flu vaccination a priority for Aboriginal communities, with a number of families suggesting further vaccination clinics be held in 2021.

COVID-19 resources for multicultural communities

The Multicultural Health Communication Service, a state-wide service located within SESLHD, worked closely with NSW Health on translated information and communication strategies for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across NSW. Locally, multicultural and health promotion services worked together to address the needs of CALD communities, including the large number of international students in SESLHD. An array of materials were produced, including two successful social media campaigns in 15 languages.

Read more achievements from SESLHD's Population and Community Health Directorate in Our Strategic Priorities section (page 8).



SESLHD Mental Health Service

The SESLHD Mental Health Service (MHS) has managed its core business – as well as the challenges brought by 2020 – with the agility and skill shared by its staff throughout the District.

It has been an extraordinary year beginning with the devastating bushfires, floods and then the impact of COVID-19. However, these transformational times have strengthened our ability to pivot and respond rapidly. Proudly, we have remained committed to providing inclusive and responsive services in collaboration with partnerships developed specifically for consumers who have complex needs.

We have performed a range of procedural and service adaptations due to the pandemic, such as the provision of telehealth care, revised management of inpatient leave, and altered the way we communicate updates and changes to practice.

We now engage with patients via regular recorded information sessions available on the Mental Health webpage, and have realigned resources to support increased calls to the State Mental Health Telephone Access Line.

As well as the achievements outlined here, we have:

- Developed the 2020-21 Mental Health Business Plan, following active staff participation in the Mental Health Service planning day.
- Considered and developed new models of care with COVID enhancement funding.
- Finalised restructure of community services for the St George and Sutherland hospitals' mental health teams.

I have been proud to complete my first year as General Manager of the District's Mental Health Service and on behalf of the Mental Health Clinical Council, acknowledge the efforts of our skilled staff. I am exceedingly impressed and thankful for such a dedicated team and would like to acknowledge and thank all at Mental Health for their valued contributions and efforts.

Angela Karooz
General Manager, SESLHD Mental Health Service



Partnerships and Transitions Team

Realignment of the SESLHD Mental Health Service's Partnerships and Transitions Team was another focus for the Mental Health Service this year. The Partnerships and Transitions Team provides leadership and coordination of mental health care services that are orientated to address people's complex care needs – so that the people with lived experience of mental illness can live a meaningful and satisfying life in their community.

The team facilitates strategic planning and expert support to the Mental Health Service in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of access and integration processes to improve consumers' and providers' experience.

The Partnerships and Transitions Team is a proactive service model and works with people as the centre of their care. The team looks beyond the primary current challenges to view people holistically and identify what they need to be able to live in the community, to avoid future protracted hospital or emergency department presentations.

Bondi Prevention and Recovery Centre (PARC)

In partnership with Independent Community Living Australia, the SESLHD MHS has been undertaking substantial planning to establish a mental health short-stay recovery centre in Bondi. Bondi PARC is an eight-bedroom residence, intended to open in late 2020.

The planned PARC model is one that encourages the service provider to consider the holistic needs of the individual. This means that the PARC will provide psychosocial support – that is, support to help individuals and communities heal psychological wounds and rebuild social structures after an emergency or a critical event, as well as clinical supports which are focused on treating the underlying mental health diagnosis.

Clinical nurse consultants working together as one

Thirty-four mental health clinical nurse consultants came together for a professional development day designed to support leadership and cultural development. The day provided an opportunity for some of SESLHD's most senior nursing leaders to network, join forces and develop strategies, with the aim of increasing the meaningful impact that their role has on consumers, clinicians and the community. The day focused on building connections and exploring how, as leaders, clinical nurse consultants can shape service delivery and create support for each other to embark on research.

Read more achievements from the SESLHD Mental Health Service in Our Strategic Priorities section (page 8).



Prince of Wales Hospital & COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Prince of Wales Hospital staff proved that when challenged, together they can provide innovative healthcare solutions. New and different ways of thinking were embraced due to COVID-19, changing the face of optimal patient care.

Reflecting on the many outstanding achievements for Prince of Wales Hospital this past year, an enduring accomplishment is the exceptional teamwork shown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our hospital opened one of the busiest COVID-19/flu assessment clinics in NSW, seeing almost 16,000 presentations between March and June 2020 – an average of approximately 130 per day. I was inspired by the collegial atmosphere, witnessing staff with a wide range of expertise come together to set up clinic operations in just 48 hours, and continue to collaborate as needs evolved.

Innovative thinking and planning also saw the rapid launch of the COVID-19 Telehealth Assessment Clinic. The clinic provides safe and efficient home monitoring for people who test positive to COVID-19, including prompt medical support and education. To date, over 170 cases have been managed via the telehealth service, helping to reduce Emergency Department presentations and hospital admissions.

This move to virtual care is just one example of how Prince of Wales Hospital continues to embrace telehealth, transforming the way we provide care. As we look to the future we will expand and integrate lessons learned to strengthen our Virtual Care Strategy.

Design is now finalised and construction is advancing for the Integrated Acute Services Building (IASB). The IASB will deliver state-of-the-art infrastructure that will support innovative approaches to acute healthcare and translational research, providing staff, patients and the community with purpose-built facilities to enhance contemporary clinical practice.

Jennie Barry
General Manager



Cancer Survivorship Centre

Providing a sanctuary and support base for people who have survived cancer, the Cancer Survivorship Centre opened in March 2020, located in the historic Medical Superintendent's Cottage.

In partnership with the Nelune Foundation, Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation, Sony Foundation, Cancer Council NSW and NSW Health, the centre offers care to support cancer survivors manage the physical, emotional and psychological effects of the disease, beyond diagnosis and treatment.

The new centre is co-located with the Nelune Comprehensive Cancer Centre, which provides acute cancer treatment, ensuring access to two world-class facilities throughout the patient journey.

Virtual education and events

The Medical Education Department, in partnership with the Glenn McEnallay Simulation and Learning Centre, led the way in delivering virtual education, training and meetings across the District in response to COVID-19 physical distancing requirements.

The teams utilised webcast and interactive question-and-answer solutions to keep staff regularly informed of COVID-19 updates.

Nursing and Medical Grand Rounds moved to these virtual platforms to ensure ongoing training.

Other SESLHD hospitals and directorates followed this model and events, including International Nurses Day, also embraced the virtual format. This resulted in greater staff engagement, as content was made available to view post-event.

Preventing healthcare-associated infections

A Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Prevention Strategy was established after data analysis identified many HAI acquired by patients could be avoided with effective infection control systems.

A thorough, hospital-wide approach was taken, with the establishment of six working groups covering areas including: early detection and management of sepsis, invasive devices management, environmental cleanliness, hand hygiene, standard and transmission-based precautions and prevention of surgical site infections in cardiac surgery patients.

Positive outcomes included improvements in hand hygiene compliance, pre-operative screening and standardisation of precaution displays.

[Read more achievements from Prince of Wales Hospital in Our Strategic Priorities section \(page 8\).](#)





The Sutherland Hospital & COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

With record Emergency Department presentations and high numbers of COVID-19 inpatients, Sutherland Hospital has continued to focus on strengthening patient-centred models of care.

Presentations to the Emergency Department increased by 23.6 per cent, demonstrating the significant impact of COVID-19 on our emergency services this year. I have been impressed by the way staff have pulled together and adapted to the changes and challenges thrown at us including utilising telehealth to deliver care.

We continued to develop strategies to innovate and improve on the quality of care provided, implementing a number of new models of care. The Midwifery Group Practice and the Maternity Antenatal and Postnatal model saw excellent outcomes, while our care of vulnerable patients improved through early identification and multidisciplinary team planning.

Enhancements were made to the Rapid Assessment Diagnostic Interventional Unit Sutherland (RADIUS), including the addition of an outpatient clinic, eight new beds for the General Medical Unit and a partnership with NSW Ambulance for direct referral to RADIUS.

We continued to enhance clinical services with the arrival of a second CT scanner and master planning was completed as the \$81.5 million Operating Theatre Upgrade Project gained momentum.

Vicki Weeden
General Manager



Garrawarra Centre

This year, Garrawarra Centre implemented internationally recognised innovative lifestyle programs, providing world-class clinical care that improves the quality of life for residents with dementia.

Pioneering innovative lifestyle programs

Garrawarra Centre was one of Australia's first aged care services to introduce Tovertafel, an interactive gaming console developed for people with dementia to promote social interaction and fun. Using this innovative leisure resource, residents are able to interact with pictures and sounds projected onto a table by using hand movements, detected by infrared sensors. This technology has been an exciting addition to the centre's lifestyle programs, promoting conversations, shared memories and laughter amongst residents and staff.

Garrawarra research poster awarded

Garrawarra Centre received the 'Poster of the Showcase Award' for excellence in content, communication and presentation in the NSW Health Nursing & Midwifery Showcase Awards.

The poster outlined research that showed multisensory environment programs have a significant impact on reducing agitation and increasing social engagement for residents with dementia. Results show 87 per cent of residents who participated had a reduction in agitation, with average agitation levels improving by 40 per cent. Resident engagement levels increased by 98 per cent.

The ASPIRE program

This intensive coaching and training program was implemented to enhance teamwork, communication and problem solving while promoting continuous improvement across the hospital. The program involved weekly training sessions and daily coaching for nurse unit managers and their teams with a focus on refining communication and work practices. The results have shown an improvement in increased patient flow, performance visibility and discharge planning.

The IMBED study

The Translational Research Grant Scheme provided funds to implement the IMBED study, looking at preventing and treating moisture-related skin injuries, most commonly a result of incontinence-associated dermatitis. Commencing in November 2019, the study has achieved greater than 45 per cent reduction in skin injuries.

Response to COVID-19

Pandemic preparedness and planning was quickly implemented with the establishment of Sutherland Hospital's COVID-19/Flu Assessment Clinic. Our COVID-19 clinical response team was quickly deployed, wards were reconfigured and processes were adjusted to provide safe clinical care in a changed environment.

Staffing profiles were reviewed and equipment was procured to ensure the hospital was prepared. Telehealth utilisation was a key focus during the early stages of the pandemic to provide continuity of care and promote early discharge with support in the community.

Employment opportunities for school leavers with disabilities

The Human Resources Advisory Team has set up a new program at Sutherland Hospital that provides work experience for school leavers with intellectual disabilities. In partnership with disability employment service provider Jobsupport, school leavers are taught how to travel on trains and buses by themselves and then take on roles ranging from sorting files, to linen delivery, cleaning and working in the store room. Once they have gained sufficient experience they will be considered for permanent positions at the hospital and across the District.

Read more achievements from The Sutherland Hospital in Our Strategic Priorities section (page 8).



Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital

The significance of Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital in the history of Australian healthcare entered a new chapter this year with staff contributing to the COVID-19 response, while maintaining specialist and innovative services to patients from all over NSW.

Despite the many healthcare challenges brought by COVID-19, the past 12 months has seen Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital continue to provide outstanding patient-centred care.

The Emergency Department achieved performance targets, including treating most patients within four hours of arrival, and meeting the optimal time required to transfer patients from an ambulance.

The same collaborative team should also be acknowledged for its critical role establishing the hospital's COVID-19/Flu Assessment Clinic, and coordinating ongoing thorough door screening for patients, staff and visitors.

A Multidisciplinary Stable Diabetic Eye Disease Screening Clinic was established, enabling greater access to specialist treatment for patients with low-risk diabetic eye disease, improving therapeutic planning and outcomes.

Preparations for the refurbishment of the Eye Outpatient Department reached final stages, with works likely to commence by the end 2020.

The upgrade will provide new reception, procedure and consultation rooms, creating increased space to better meet future demands.

Almost 2,500 patients received surgery to treat cataracts. Exemplifying effective partnerships with healthcare partners, some of those treated were from the St Vincent's Hospital waiting list, helping to deliver timely care and improve sight for more patients.

At the annual Foundation Day celebration in October 2019, President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Ms Joy Dick, reminded us of the enduring support our volunteers have provided for a century, saying: "For 100 years, Auxiliary volunteers have had the interest of the hospital at heart and good feeling has always prevailed."

Jennie Barry
General Manager





St George Hospital & COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

St George Hospital, one of the state's leading centres for trauma and emergency management, has introduced new patient-centred models of care with a focus on providing our community the highest quality of healthcare and support.

St George Hospital, the largest hospital within the local health district, has been challenged in ways never before experienced in this past year and each test has been met with fierce determination and resolve. Staff were adaptive in their approach to delivering services and the hospital created new positions, built new facilities and incorporated new systems to improve patient care.

I would like to acknowledge the amazing work undertaken to deliver the Birth Unit redevelopment. The works have ensured that we can continue to offer gold standard care to our growing community and more importantly, local mothers and babies.

We established a Southern Grief and Bereavement Social Worker position, dedicated to providing support to the loved ones of patients who have died at St George or Sutherland hospitals, ensuring our community has access to local and appropriate bereavement support.

Staff took some time out to recognise our strong nursing history for International Year of the Nurse and Midwife and it was a testament to the organisation's character and culture to see staff across all disciplines come together to celebrate.

I am extremely honoured to be a part of an organisation that is so greatly respected and supported by the community it serves. The contributions and care shown by local schools, businesses, individuals and organisations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic played a huge part in lifting the spirits of our staff. This community spirit is a reminder of what is truly important.

You should all be so very proud of what you have achieved and I look forward to continuing to work with you all over the coming year, whatever it may bring.

Paul Darcy
General Manager



Pharmacist referral system improves ED patient outcomes

Introducing early intervention by a pharmacist in the Emergency Department (ED) improved overall patient care by reducing medication-related incidents and in some cases avoiding patient admission altogether. The referral system has seen a 67 per cent increase in patients being reviewed by a pharmacist in the ED. As a result the majority of patients had their medication history documented and a clinical review completed by a pharmacist within the first hour of their presentation, reduced from an average of 14.5 hours. Pharmacist involvement has also provided a direct link with community services for patients discharged directly from the ED.

‘Check, please!’ project improves high-risk medication administration

The ‘Check, please!’ project aimed to improve cross-checking of medication administration by engaging staff in the use of a ward-based resource package. Staff were encouraged to review and provide feedback on tailor-made processes specific to their area of work.

The results showed the number of medication administration errors involving failed or ineffective second checks fell by 36.2 per cent. This project prompted honest appraisal of teams’ second check practices, leading to creative improvement ideas, resulting in safer medication administration.

Improving productivity & patient care

The Productive Ward program was implemented to review and improve ways of working on the wards by making small changes to help clinical staff spend more time on patient care. Phase 2, the “Renovated House” Productive Ward, has now been successfully implemented across all clinical units supporting multidisciplinary teams to collaborate and apply the principles of lean thinking, process improvements and wellbeing. This new series has seen an improvement in clinical practices across many units and engaged nursing teams in making meaningful change for the benefit of their patients.

Site response to COVID-19

All staff put in an enormous effort as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and particular teams have gone above and beyond to keep the hospital and community safe. Working closely with the Public Health Unit, our Infection

Control team developed new processes to facilitate contact tracing, while the Infectious Diseases team continues to provide leadership and expertise to the hospital as a whole. Team members responsible for personal protective equipment (PPE) have worked long hours managing and procuring resources for the site to ensure PPE is available for all who need it.

Physiotherapy training for COVID-19 patient care

Physiotherapists around the world are using a NSW training program to treat COVID-19 patients in intensive care, developed by a group of Australian physiotherapists including St George Hospital’s Wendy Chaseling.

COVID-19 patients in an intensive care unit can experience complications such as stiff and partially collapsed lungs, severe lack of oxygen, a build-up of secretions in the lungs, profound muscle weakness and reduced mobility. Physiotherapists play a key role in treating and rehabilitating these patients.

Read more achievements from St George Hospital in Our Strategic Priorities section (page 8).



Uniting War Memorial Hospital

Thanks to the steadfast commitment of staff at Uniting War Memorial Hospital to empower patients and clients, initiatives enabling them to take an active role in their care have flourished in 2019-2020.

A reflection of the past year uncovers a portfolio of programs, services and models of care where all involved have an opportunity to make a positive impact on the healthcare provided to older people.

Accomplishments typify the central ethos of War Memorial Hospital to keep people living well at home and avoid crisis health situations. Our dedicated staff continued to grow and consolidate models of care where objectives are to anticipate and prevent health risk factors, for both inpatients and clients living in the community.

The Integrated Rehabilitation and Enablement Programme (iREAP) for outpatients consolidated its presence amongst clinicians in the primary health sector. The eight-week program – which provides early intervention care for optimal quality of life and independence – raised its profile amongst general practitioners, resulting in excellent patient outcomes.

Our Geriatric Flying Squad (GFS) further integrated with the Prince of Wales Hospital GFS to address acute aged health issues in the community, including in residential facilities. This support proved particularly important in light of additional pressures placed on these services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gerard Hyde
Executive Manager

Wellness checks

Immediately following the introduction of COVID-19 health restrictions, staff at War Memorial Hospital took action to ensure older clients living in the community continued to take care of their health and wellbeing.

A multidisciplinary working group developed a 'wellness check', encompassing a number of tools to respond to the emerging need, including a letter, wellness check triage and decision-making tool.

The checks identified clients at risk of deterioration, enabling onward referrals – reducing the need for crisis support or acute hospitalisation.

Becoming a 'dementia friendly organisation'

The hospital partnered with Dementia Australia to become a 'dementia-friendly organisation' – supporting the hospital's aim to be a hub for dementia services, which includes comprehensive geriatric and psychological assessment, memory and education groups and carers' support.

Looking forward, War Memorial Hospital will pilot a new model of care, Management of Dementia – or MOD squad – after securing funding from The Inspiring Ideas Challenge in 2019. The model will focus on care coordination, education and goal-orientated rehabilitation for those in the early stages of the disease, filling a current gap in post-diagnostic support.

Telehealth and virtual care

COVID-19 saw the use of innovative telehealth and virtual care models at War Memorial Hospital expedited urgently to enable continuity of care. Groups for speech pathology and exercise and falls prevention were led remotely, and assessments for neuropsychology and the Geriatric Flying Squad were completed with virtual tools. Physiotherapists collaborated with partner organisation Feros Care to provide exercise programs and social interaction using home monitoring technology.

Comprehensive evaluations will determine which models will continue beyond the COVID-19 response.

Read more achievements from the Uniting War Memorial Hospital in Our Strategic Priorities section (page 8).



Calvary Health Care Kogarah

Calvary Health Care Kogarah – a 98-bed facility providing inpatient rehabilitation and palliative care, day rehabilitation and community services – introduced innovative new programs and initiatives to increase communication between staff, patients and their carers.

Calvary was congratulated for the standard of patient care across all programs receiving National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards Second Edition accreditation in July 2019.

Consumer involvement was identified as a strength across the organisation, complementing the specialist palliative and rehabilitation services lead by dedicated multidisciplinary teams.

Parkinson's Disease Wellbeing Program

Developed in collaboration with Southern Neurology, the Parkinson's Disease Wellbeing Program is an integrated model of care, incorporating education, exercise and lifestyle advice to help empower people with Parkinson's disease by maximising their physical and psychological function.

X-Change – Two way communication board

Two-way communication boards have been a successful addition to the rehabilitation unit, improving communication between the multi-disciplinary team, patients and carers. The boards are used to address questions about patient care and display each patient's mobility rating by using a 'traffic light' system.

Doing it Differently Grants

Calvary partnered with Georges River Council and SESLHD in this grants initiative, which offers up to \$10,000 to community members or groups that promote health and wellbeing, create well-connected communities and reduce the risk of loneliness and social isolation. Calvary's grants were awarded to: The Riverwood Community Choir and B Active – St George Community Transport, which supports older people to remain physically and mentally active.



Royal Hospital for Women

The Royal Hospital for Women continued to provide gold-standard care to women and babies from all over NSW in 2019-2020, while opening new services for IVF and fertility preservation, undertaking world-class research and planning upgrades to facilities for the care of at-risk newborns.

While caring for women at some of the most vulnerable times of their lives, such as pursuing fertility treatment or receiving chemotherapy for cancer, the Royal Hospital for Women this year celebrated several milestones including stage two completion of the Fertility and Research Centre, opened by NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research, The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP. The centre is giving hundreds of people with cancer and rare genetic diseases the opportunity to have children through the public health system.

The Newborn Care Centre completed refurbishment plans, which will allow room for more at-risk newborns and provide a better environment for their parents. Meanwhile, Royal Hospital for Women staff chaired a national steering group on the treatment of newborn babies – the Australasian Neonatal Medicines Formulary.

Based at the Royal Hospital for Women, the statewide service, MotherSafe, led the online presence of District services receiving the most hits on its website. MotherSafe continued to provide a comprehensive counselling service

for women who are concerned about being exposed to drugs during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Pregnancy Planning, Lifestyle and Nutrition (PLaN), the Royal Hospital for Women's pre-pregnancy planning clinic, continued to partner with Karitane, a non-government agency and leader in parenting services, to educate women and their partners considering pregnancy.

The hospital's maternity services took a proactive approach to managing care during COVID-19, with staff actively involved in local and NSW Ministry of Health clinical reference groups. A pandemic plan was developed to protect maternity services, women's health and newborn care health, with additional innovative online and telephone services offered to local women.

As always, we couldn't do this important work without the ongoing dedication and hard work of our staff. To each and every one, in whatever capacity you have helped, I thank you.

Vanessa Madunic
General Manager



Exercising in pregnancy

A research team of 10, led by senior physiotherapist Hannah Graetz, is in the running for a \$1 million grant which, if successful, will enable it to explore ways to encourage women to start or continue exercising throughout pregnancy. Studies have shown exercise during pregnancy has enormous benefits to women's and infant health. The pilot project will involve up to 1,000 women from across the state.

Special midwifery care

The Royal Hospital for Women's midwifery team devised a new program that ensures all women having a baby at the hospital have the choice to see the same midwife before and after giving birth. Nine midwives provided continuity of care to more than 1,300 women, and interest continues to grow. The hospital aims to make this the standard model of care for all women not cared for by the Midwifery Group Practice.

New mammogram machine

In collaboration with The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation, a new mammogram machine has been installed in the NSW Women's Breast Centre. The new machine is fast, accurate and three-dimensional. It can perform X-ray-guided biopsies, providing much greater clarity for the technician, and more comfort and peace of mind for patients.

Recycling for a good cause

The Domestic Services Department began recycling polyvinyl chloride (PVC) intravenous bags for manufacture of hoses, safety mats and other products, avoiding sending medical waste to landfill. The team is also encouraging staff and the community to donate plastic bottle tops to support the manufacture of artificial limbs for children.

[Read more achievements from the Royal Hospital for Women in Our Strategic Priorities section \(page 8\).](#)





DR MEREDITH WARD

Neonatologist
Royal Hospital for Women

I treat some of the tiniest and most fragile patients in our health system, at The Royal's Newborn Care Centre. As part of a large team, which I lead along with six other specialists, we provide complex care for at-risk newborns, often for months at a time.

I've been at The Royal for almost 20 years and have seen vast improvements in the survival rates and long-term health of premature babies. Twenty years ago, only 40 per cent of babies born in "the grey zone" of 23 to 25 weeks lived. Today, more than 60 per cent survive.

One of the many things I love about The Royal is the way it remains right at the forefront of treatment for at-risk neonates. When I first joined, the long-term health concerns were about severe cerebral palsy, blindness and hearing problems. Today, more babies survive and they may face more subtle problems such as concentration and cognitive delays.

A big part of the job involves standing alongside the parents during a harrowing period in their lives. Although most doctors try to keep a professional distance, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit has always been different. When there is a genuine risk the little ones may not make it, it's hard not to get involved.

Fortunately, we get to say a lot of happy goodbyes when parents take their babies home. It's hard to think of any work more satisfying than that.

NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service

The NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service (OTDS), located within South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, is the state-wide agency responsible for increasing organ and tissue donation for transplantation in NSW. This year, NSW OTDS both promoted and provided vital access to donation and life-saving transplantation, as part of its role in the provision of quality health care in NSW.

Skin donations save lives interstate & overseas

The NSW Tissue Bank's deceased skin donation program played a significant role in two recent disasters, providing urgently needed skin for victims of the White Island Volcano incident in New Zealand in December 2019, as well as the Queensland mining disaster in May 2020.

Skin grafts are a life-saving treatment for people with serious burns. The program involves the retrieval and processing of skin in preparation for transplant, and after passing a number of stringent assessments it is preserved and stored for up to five years.

First-of-its-kind amnion donation program

The NSW Tissue Bank launched a unique program, offering women who are scheduled to have an elective caesarean section the option to donate their amnion. As part of the program, amniotic membrane, which would otherwise be discarded, is turned into grafts and used as open wound dressings. Since its launch in 2019, amnion grafts have been utilised by 68 surgeons across Australia, helping to treat patients suffering from serious wounds, eye injuries or burns. Just one amnion donation can treat up to 20 patients.

Organ & tissue donation partnership

The NSW OTDS has been working in partnership with researchers from Southern Cross University to investigate practical strategies for increasing registrations on the Australian Organ Donor Register.

The research has resulted in the implementation of an immediate registration opportunity initiative, which increases registrations by encouraging conversations to establish people's attitudes and beliefs towards organ and tissue donation.

Findings have been incorporated into community engagement activities undertaken by the OTDS, community partners and volunteers.



SESLHD triumphs in NSW Health Awards

The outstanding individuals and work taking place in SESLHD were celebrated when the District took out three of the 12 categories in the 2019 NSW Health Awards.

Eastern Suburbs Mental Health Service's PACER (Police, Ambulance, Clinical, Early Response) Program won Excellence in the Provision of Mental Health Services; Kirketon Road Centre's Wendy Machin won Collaborative Leader of the Year and Isabelle Wilson was awarded Volunteer of the Year for her work with the Youth Reference Group at headspace Bondi Junction.

The 21st annual NSW Health Awards were attended by almost 600 people from across NSW including the Hon. Brad Hazzard, Minister for Health and Medical Research, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, and the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

Wendy Machin, Clinical Services Manager, Kirketon Road Centre was

awarded for "providing inspiration and leadership at the Kirketon Road Centre for more than 20 years."

"I feel very proud receiving this award, most of all because of the generosity and kindness of my team in putting me forward," Ms Machin said.

"I feel very lucky to work with such a great team of dedicated and hardworking staff and with a client group who show such courage and resilience in the face of some major life challenges."

Volunteer of the Year, Isabelle Wilson, was one of the night's youngest winners honoured for her leadership to the District, including training as a youth mental health first aid facilitator. Isabelle has been a consumer representative for headspace Bondi Junction and a member of the Youth Reference Group, for over three years. Currently completing her nursing training, Isabelle is a committed youth advocate.

Angela Karooz, General Manager of Mental Health Services, SESLHD, said she was proud that an

interagency collaboration, like PACER, had received an award.

PACER offers on-scene and phone assistance to people experiencing a mental health issue, significantly reducing emergency department visits.

"The award celebrates best practice in an integrated emergency service system to respond effectively to people in urgent need. It was a pleasure to work with the St George Local Area Command, which has embraced the program," Ms Karooz said.

"Special acknowledgement must go to Superintendents Maloney and Griffiths, Inspector Daley and Senior Constable Sonia Krcalovic who worked tirelessly and shared the vision with SESLHD Mental Health Service, to make this program a success."

Winners from SESLHD's Improvement and Innovation Awards went into the running for the NSW Health Awards. Contenders were selected from a field of a record 193 entrants across NSW Health organisations.



Volunteers

OUR UNSUNG HEROES

> From cheering up patients by bringing therapy dogs into our wards to raising thousands of dollars running gift shops and kiosks, volunteers remain the unsung heroes of our health district. Each and every one gave their time and heart to make our hospitals a better place.



Royal Hospital for Women

Volunteers continued to play an integral role at The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation which supports the hospital. More than 30 volunteers ushered guests, managed donations and sold raffle tickets at the foundation's glamorous BAZAAR in Bloom fundraising event, while others brought Easter cheer by delivering chocolate eggs and bunnies to the patients.

Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital

The Friends of Sydney Hospital volunteer group raised an impressive \$100,000 to help fund hospital equipment and research by selling refreshments to outpatients and visitors, along with essentials for inpatients. They also raise funds selling delightful handmade clothes for babies and children at The Little Shop, a cultural institution on Macquarie Street that has been running since 1962.

Prince of Wales Hospital

Volunteers raised \$50,487 towards vital equipment to improve patient care at the hospital, by running the Wig Library, the Volunteers Garden Coffee Shop, a gift shop and book services. They also visited patients and provided guide services for the Randwick campus.

Sutherland Hospital

A small army of 150 volunteers including the Highfield Auxiliary Committee raised more than \$260,000 for equipment and services at the hospital, with income raised from the kiosk, food store, bookshop and gift shop. Volunteers played an essential role bringing smiles to the wards with therapy dogs, newspaper deliveries and by guiding visitors throughout the hospital.

St George Hospital

Volunteers cheered up patients managing ward visits by Roxy the therapy dog, while 'wayfinders' were on hand to direct or escort patients through the labyrinth of corridors in the hospital. They also distributed books via a library trolley in the Aged Care Unit.



A special thanks to our **hospital foundations**

Our District would not be the same without the invaluable contributions made by our foundations.



The Sydney Eye Hospital Foundation provided \$1.25 million over the last year for research, education and equipment at the hospital, with special grants and scholarships awarded including:

- ✿ Two scholarship grants of \$150,000 each which enabled PhD students to undertake research
- ✿ \$192,676 for the completion of a trial into macular research as part of a clinical study which aims to reduce the cost of injection treatment for patients
- ✿ \$440,000 allocated to fund eight, 12-month fellowships at Sydney/Sydney Eye Hospital for specialists from countries including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, United Kingdom and Nigeria.

The Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation this year contributed \$2,394,808 towards the hospital. Highlights include:

- ✿ \$400,000 to help refurbish the newly opened, heritage-listed Cancer Survivorship Centre
- ✿ \$250,000 for anaesthetics equipment for the Billington Centre
- ✿ \$115,000 for new virtual care and patient communications platforms
- ✿ \$30,000 for the refurbishment of the Medical Imaging Library.

The foundation's grants also funded four new research projects, six new innovations in patient care, 27 life-saving pieces of equipment, and 10 projects run by the Louisa Hope Fund for Nurses.



The Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation 2019 Research Medal was awarded to Professor Jacqueline Close for dedication and service to aged care patients.

The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation raised more than \$1.9 million for equipment, research, education programs and patient support across all clinical areas of the hospital.

Some of the foundation's achievements include funding:

- ✿ State-of-the-art incubators and monitoring systems for the Newborn Intensive Care Unit
- ✿ A perinatal psychologist to improve mental health outcomes for mothers and mothers-to-be
- ✿ Maternal fetal medicine research and ultrasound equipment
- ✿ Vital signs monitors across the hospital
- ✿ Ongoing support for the hospital's Indigenous midwifery program
- ✿ A first-of-its kind ultrasound for research into complex pregnancy and stillbirth
- ✿ A new 3-D mammogram machine for the NSW Women's Breast Centre, providing on-the-spot breast diagnosis and biopsies.



The St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation awarded \$205,810 to five new areas of research through its annual grants program. These went to:

- ✿ Dr Megan Gow for her research into whether exposure to pre-eclampsia in utero contributes to cardiovascular disease risk and ageing in early childhood
- ✿ Professor Marissa Lassere for her research into the role of gut microbiome in inflammatory arthritis
- ✿ Dr Jose Perdomo for research into the role of white blood cells in a bleeding condition known as immune thrombocytopenia
- ✿ Dr Michal Szczesniak for research into ways to help head and neck cancer survivors to be able to swallow after treatment and to prevent aspiration pneumonia
- ✿ Dr Nan Wu for research into inflammatory bowel disease.

A highlight was the opening of the Microbiome Research Centre which will explore how our gut health affects our overall health. The foundation launched the Red for Research campaign, asking St George and Sutherland hospitals and communities to 'go red' to raise awareness and funding for research in our hospitals.



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