YEAR IN REVIEW
2018-19

MURRUMBIDGEE LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT
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Murrumbidgee Local Health District acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land in the MLHD region.
We pay respect to past and present Elders of this land: the Wiradjuri, Yorta Yorta, Baraba Baraba, Wemba Wemba and Nari Nari people.

We recognise diversity and the value that it brings in reflecting the communities we serve.

Welcome to the 2018-19 Year in Review, a snapshot for our community on what we have achieved throughout the year. Once again we wish to thank our wonderful staff for their work and dedication to delivering high quality care and compassion to our many communities across Murrumbidgee.

We remain focussed on achieving our goals and vision; together in partnership we focus on wellness, aspire to excellence and continue to invest in our people. In February 2019, MLHD released Our Communities, Our Future; Healthier Together providing a blueprint for leading the organisation towards 2021.

The year has seen a growth in services across the region. Embracing telehealth, clinical teams are using digital platforms to reach patients in emergency departments, hospital and community settings and in their homes. The District has provided care to more patients presenting to emergency departments, and there has been a rise in admissions to hospitals and patients receiving emergency and elective surgery.

MLHD remains committed to broadening the use of innovation, research and partnerships to anticipate challenges and take advantage of opportunities. These are reflected in the Murrumbidgee Edison Program, an initiative which supports our workforce to innovate. New ideas which have been implemented, includes the highly successful Virtual Fracture Clinic and the Virtual Reality in Paediatrics project; reducing procedural anxiety and improving experience for paediatric patients.

The District has seen significant infrastructure works progress in 2018-19, including progress on Stage 1 Griffith Base Hospital Redevelopment, including a new temporary Renal Unit opened, Mungarr Ngarung the Kidney Place. The third and final stage of the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital redevelopment is underway and a number of Multipurpose Service (MPS) redevelopments progressing or completed in Culcairn, Barham, Murrumburrah-Harden and Tumbarumba.

We were a proud team watching as, again, our staff won NSW Health Staff Member of the Year for the second year in a row. We celebrated our staff at our Excellence Awards and welcome new staff in new projects including our High Risk Foot Clinic and our Wellbeing In-Reach Nurse Coordinator at Tumut.

We also take the opportunity to thank our team of volunteers, such as the Local Health Advisory Committees, United Hospital Auxiliaries and other volunteers who work tirelessly throughout the year, to raise money for extra comforts in our hospitals, who advocate on behalf of the community and who spend their time working to improve the experience of patients in our hospitals. We continue to work with our community, to listen and hear how we can improve services across our 47 facilities, and improve health outcomes within their community.
Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) provides a wide range of inpatient acute and sub-acute public health services, along with community-based health services to the Riverina and Murray regions of New South Wales. We provide services across a geographic area of approximately 125,561 square kilometres, and around 243,228 residents live within the District (ABS ERP 2017). People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage make up 4.8% of the population (ABS Census 2016).

We operate 33 hospitals, 12 Community Health posts and employ over 3,500 staff. We are supported by a number of volunteers and Local Health Advisory Committees (LHACs) who make an invaluable contribution to enriching the lives of people in our care.

Our services are provided through:

- 1 Rural Referral Hospital (including a Mental Health Inpatient Facility)
- 1 Base Hospital
- 8 District Hospitals
- 5 Community Hospitals
- 16 Multipurpose Services
- 2 Mercy Care Public Hospitals
- 12 Community Health Posts
- 1 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service
- 1 Mental Health Facility (Inpatient Unit and Mental Health Recovery Services)
MLHD Executive Leadership Team 2018-19

In Murrumbidgee we set the bar high; in attracting the best people, using innovation to do new things and have an unwavering focus on quality and safety. Our staff are encouraged to never stop asking questions, to continue to learn, to achieve our vision:

Wellness is our Goal, Excellence is our Passion, Our People are Our Future

Chief Executive MLHD Jill Ludford
Acting Director Operations Fiona Renshaw

Director
Finance & Performance
Maurice Ahern

Director
Mental Health & Drug Alcohol
Robyn Manzie

Acting Director
Integrated Care & Partnership
Emma Field

Executive Director
Nursing & Midwifery
Karen Cairney

Executive Director
Medical Services
Wendy Cox

Associate Director
Finance & Performance
Kevin Lawrence

Director
Strategy and Planning
Marianne Warren

Director
People & Culture
Helen Emmerson

Director
Clinical Governance
Jill Reyment

Executive Director
Wagga Wagga Base Hospital
Helen Cooper

Manager
Aboriginal Health
Diann Tremain

General Manager
Griffith Base Hospital
Greg Brylski

General Manager
Regional
Rosemary Garthwaite

General Manager
Operations
Carla Bailey

Chief Information Officer
Andrew Elliott
Key Activity Snapshot 2018-19

157,108 emergency department (ED) presentations
29,310 people admitted from ED into our facilities
69,336 people admitted into our facilities
779,880 non-admitted episodes of care provided
3,294 unplanned readmissions (within 28 days)

2,051 babies born
426 people treated with end stage kidney disease
788 people treated for heart disease
3,227 mental health emergency consultation referrals
1,356 episodes of care provided by telehealth services

354,547 total bed days

Achievements 2018-19

Improvements achieved through priority areas

A Wellbeing and Health Nurse (WHIN) Coordinator, based at Tumut, was appointed in July 2018 with support of $520,000 over two years by Snowy Hydro. The role of the Nurse Coordinator is to improve student health and wellbeing by identifying health needs early and coordinating timely access to suitable, youth-friendly services.

The first foot care service of its kind for patients in MLHD was launched in August. The High Risk Foot Service was established for people with diabetes and circulation problems in the region who have, or are at risk of developing foot ulceration. The $226,000 initiative is part of MLHD’s participation in NSW Health’s Leading Better Value Care program, which focuses on improving health outcomes, the experiences of receiving and providing care, and the effectiveness of care.

The signing of an agreement in August 2018 between NSW Health and the University of NSW Rural Clinical School means more doctors can now train from start to finish in Wagga Wagga. The agreement provides land for a new rural medical school at the redeveloped Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

Finley residents celebrated the opening of a $1 million Emergency Department (ED) at Finley Hospital by Member for Murray Austin Evans on 14 September 2018. The upgrade includes a main hospital entry, new ambulance entry, secure ED and treatment areas and a new mental health consultation room. The improvements allow the introduction of contemporary ways of providing patient care and improve the flow of patients and visitors in the ED.

A $2.3 million upgrade of the Temora Hospital operating theatre was officially opened by Member for Cootamundra Steph Cooke on 13 August 2018, ensuring the local community has access to a modern operating theatre and procedure room. The upgrade includes a refurbished theatre with equipment including a new operating table, pendant lights, service panels for oxygen and improved work flows for transferring patients in and out of theatre.

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital’s Mental Health Unit was recognised for its outstanding contribution in the lead up to Mental Health Month in October 2018. The Unit’s mental health recovery program (MHRP) won a state award in the category for Lived Experience Participation and a Leadership award at the Mental Health Matters Awards in 2018. The awards are run by WayAhead – Mental Health Association NSW, each year as part of Mental Health Month.
Improvements achieved through priority areas

In September 2018, Baha Mosa of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (pictured) was named Junior Medical Officer (JMO) Manager of the Year by the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) at the 2018 NSW Prevocational Training Awards. Recognised for his support, encouragement and consideration of the career aspirations of each and every JMO at WWBH.

Griffith Base Hospital’s temporary Renal Dialysis Unit opened in November 2018 as part of Stage 1 works of the $35 million Griffith Base Hospital Redevelopment. The building provides increased renal capacity for patients in Griffith and the surrounding communities, with an expansion from seven to ten chairs as well as two additional home training chairs. The building design and model of care have been co-designed by clinicians and consumers.

Leeton’s Carramar Aged Care facility achieved full three-year accreditation awarded by the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency. The site was measured against expected outcomes and met all 44, highlighting the high standard of care provided to residents.

Safe and Supported at Home Program (SASH) was launched in MLHD. Funded by NSW Health, SASH offers clinical, non-clinical and minor home modifications and community base supports to people under the age of 65 who have reduced functional capacity and cannot access support via NDIS.

Twelve sites across MLHD went “live” with a new electronic medication management system (eMeds) in 2018-19. Doctors, nurses and pharmacists now prescribe, order, check, dispense and record the administration of medicines using eMeds. The eMeds system ensures real-time access to patient information and clinical decision support for safer patient care.

MLHD’s ‘Our Communities, Our Future; Healthier Together’ was released in February 2019 — a community plan providing a blue print for leading the organisation towards 2021. It takes a whole of community perspective; and provides a foundation to support long-term initiatives and enables MLHD to strengthen our direction and provide services aligned to our community’s needs.

The 2018 Annual Patient Safety Forum was held at Griffith in November. The Forum’s theme was focused on National Standard 8 – Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration. Attendees enjoyed presentations from subject matter experts across MLHD, engaged in discussion around escalation processes to provide better patient care. Participants also participated in a scenario workshop led by Dr Limberger and Latitia Kernaghan to build on current learnings to improve recognition and management of patient deterioration.

The $224 million Griffith Base Hospital Redevelopment reached another milestone in February 2019, with a sod turn by the Deputy Premier John Barilaro and Member for Murray Austin Evans, marking the start of Stage 1 construction. Stage 1 works include construction of the new Ambulatory Care Hub, which will provide increased oncology services and extensions to Critical Care and general inpatient areas.

For the second year in a row, a MLHD staff member has taken home the NSW Health Staff Member of Year Award. Pictured above with Health Minister Brad Hazzard, Jenny McKenzie, MLHD Nurse Practitioner has been the clinical lead for a palliative care service providing quality care to patients living in rural and remote NSW.

Jenny has mentored generations of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in providing excellence in palliative care. She looks beyond the normal boundaries of clinical care, ensuring care at home is possible for MLHD’s rural and remote patients.
Improvements achieved through priority areas

The Inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing Yarn Up was held in Wagga Wagga in February 2019. The Yarn Ups are intended to create a space of cultural safety, an opportunity for Aboriginal nursing staff to meet and provide a network ensuring Aboriginal staff are well supported in the workplace. One aim is to identify and map out potential career pathways and how to transition into senior level positions within MLHD. The initial meeting was attended by two local elders who met employees and provided a traditional welcome to country.

A milestone for the $50 million Tumut Hospital Redevelopment was reached in February 2019, with the unveiling of the Master Plan for feedback from the local community. The proposal outlined in the Master Plan takes advantage of the site to create a more welcoming and healing environment and takes into consideration the need to continue to provide services on site during construction. Community drop-in sessions were also held to give local residents the opportunity to learn more about the project.

Partnering with Consumers Workshop with Dr Coralie Wales from Western Sydney LHD held 28 May 2019, supported by the Partnering with Consumers National Standards Two Working Group. MLHD managers, clinicians and consumers worked together to identify priorities including the development of a Consumer Advisory Board, to be progressed in 2019-20.

Consumers gained free access to vital scanning services in February with the Federal Government announcing a New Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) licence at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (WWBH). The licence means locals will be able to access a Medicare rebate for about 3,354 services a year, including access to emergency care.

The first in a number of community-led discussions to improve health services in Deniliquin and West Wyalong and districts was held in June, co-hosted by MLHD and the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN). The aim of the discussions is to develop strategies that will deliver sustainable and effective local health services which address priorities identified by the local community.

We recognised and thanked our hundreds of volunteers working in facilities across MLHD during Volunteers Week in May 2019. Our volunteers generously give their time to enhance the comfort and wellbeing of patients and work tirelessly to support our patients and staff in so many different ways. Our volunteers and hospital auxiliaries also work hard to raise thousands of dollars for our hospitals and services each year.

In June, the BreastScreen NSW Wagga Wagga service relocated from the Calvary Health Care Riverina campus to a refurbished building in Berry Street as part of the Stage 3 of the $431 million Wagga Wagga Health Service Redevelopment. The move to a central CBD location makes it much easier for local women to access the service. BreastScreen NSW offers a free, life-saving breast screen or mammogram to women aged over 40 years. The service reminds women aged between 50 and 74 years to have a screen every two years.

MLHD held an inaugural Aboriginal Staff Networking Forum in May 2019, connecting over 120 people, including MLHD staff and community members, strengthening MLHD’s commitment to developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and fostering a culturally safe workplace across the District.
The Culcairn Multipurpose Service (MPS) Redevelopment was officially opened in June by Member for Albury Justin Clancy. The new 35-bed facility has seven hospital acute care beds and 28 residential aged care beds. The project was delivered as part of the $304 million MPS Strategy to provide health and aged care services for small and remote rural communities. The facility provides a home-like environment for our aged care residents and a state of the art acute service.

The Healthy Food and Drink in NSW Health Facilities for Staff and Visitors Framework was implemented from 1 January 2019. Importantly, the framework ensures no sugary drinks are for sale in MLHD facilities. It also supports the inclusion of more healthy cold and hot food options at cafes and more healthy options in vending machines in MLHD. Meal deals are comprised of only healthy options and healthy options are advertised, strategically placed at eye level and around points of sale. Forty-seven per cent of outlets in MLHD achieved all relevant healthy food and drink practices and MLHD performed above the NSW state results for seven of the 13 practices. The MLHD framework support team are working with outlets to increase the number of outlets achieving healthy practices to make healthy, easier choices.

2018-19 saw the first full year of the multidisciplinary Metabolic Obesity Service (MOS), which provides a pathway for patients wishing to undergo bariatric surgery, aiming to improve their health and wellbeing. The multidisciplinary team provide education and support for consumers of the service through an intense education phase, patients then transfer the knowledge gained independently at home before being considered to progress to the surgeon for further consideration. Throughout 2018-19 MOS provided over 4,450 occasion of services, and received over 460 referrals to the program. Bariatric surgery for program participants commenced in December 2018, with 25 patients undergoing surgery via the MOS pathway.

Seizing every interaction as an opportunity to focus on and improve people’s health and wellbeing

A rapid assessment clinic opened in 2019 offering an improved model of care with vision of, right patient, right place, at the right time was established within Wagga Wagga Base Hospital’s Ambulatory Care Services. Incorporating existing services such as the Hospital in the Home team, with new models such as the Rapid Assessment Clinic and PIXI (Minor procedure and infusion). The Clinic is working to provide the community with an appropriate alternative to Emergency Department or Admitted Patient Care. Medical staff in the Integrated Care Service liaise closely with General Practitioners and Emergency Department clinicians to reduce unnecessary admission of chronic and complex care patients, and improve their experience. In one patient’s experience, this led to a comprehensive care plan and escalation pathway being established, which saw this consumer’s presentations to the Emergency Department reduce by 80% over an eight month period.

MLHD promoted Kidney Health Week in April 2019 to help raise awareness of the need for early detection. Since the Murrumbidgee region has a higher incidence of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) than the national average, MLHD offers various renal services across the district including CKD support and early intervention, renal supportive care, nephrology clinics, dialysis units, home training services, dietitians and social work.
Local people with breathing difficulties related to asthma and hay fever were reminded to prepare for the spring thunderstorm asthma season at the annual campaign launch by the Murrumbidgee Asthma Collaborative in September 2018.

The key message was for people to visit their GP or specialist for an assessment, obtain a current medication prescription and a written Asthma Action Plan and then to use them.

The collaborative includes representatives from MLHD, Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (WWBH), Charles Sturt University, Asthma Foundation NSW, Ambulance NSW and community groups.

Interventional Services Unit (ISU) Opens in Wagga Wagga

ISU consisting of three areas, Hybrid Lab, Cardiac Cath Lab, Cardiac Procedure Room and a 10-bed recovery area, which are dedicated to providing diagnostic and interventional cardiology, radiology and vascular procedures. We aim to provide the best evidence based practice so optimum care is provided to those patients who require procedures within the ISU complex and improve patient outcomes to support their return to living in the community and reduce their length of stay in hospital.

Hybrid Lab

Opened November 2017, provides 24 hour care, catering for vascular/radiology interventional procedures. We also supply anaesthetic cover for those patients requiring anaesthesia for procedures. A new service that we offer is Endovascular Aneurysm Repair (EVAR), previously these patients would have been transferred to a metropolitan hospital or had the procedure in theatre, which would then require ICU for three days and then to a ward for a further seven days. Our EVAR patients are discharged home three days post-surgery, this is a great outcome for the patient and the hospital. Insertion of port-a-cath and PICC for many varieties of treatments for patients, meaning these patients can be treated in HITH complex and admission to the wards. The hybrid lab may be used as a theatre if required. In 2018-19, 996 patients attended the Hybrid Lab, 63 of those patients required emergency procedures.

Cardiac Cath Lab

MLHD’s Cardiac Cath Lab opened in April 2019; previously all Cath Lab patients had been transferred to a private facility. MLHD now provides Cardiac Cath Lab Services Monday to Thursday. Patients now have a better experience, they no longer require transfers between sites for procedures and many are admitted and discharged in the same day. 134 patients have attended the Cath Lab to date. 24 hour care is planned for 2019-20.

Cardiac Procedure Room

The Cardiac Procedure Room (CPR), provides diagnostic coronary procedures, such as transthoracic echo, transoesophageal echo, stress tests, bubble studies, pericardiocentesis - this allows for comprehensive assessment and direction of care for patients.

CPR also provides a ‘day only’ service for specific diagnostic coronary procedures where the patient requires anaesthetic involvement, recovered post procedure in our recovery area and discharged home. The patient does not require a hospital bed. Previously these procedures where performed in ICU, which had limited bed availability causing constant cancellation of procedures, this has not occurred since the CPR was opened. In 2018-19, 2908 patients attended the Cath Lab.

Recovery Area

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital’s 10-bed recovery area means that the patient journey from start to finish is within boundaries of ISU. Patient is placed into a bed space, transferred to one of the three services, patient is returned to the same bed space and either discharged home or transferred to the ward. Patients who have previously experienced transfers to and from the hospital have expressed how lovely it is ‘not to have to go anywhere’ and ‘it’s great to have this facility within the public system’.

A total of 66 patients required emergency procedures out of business hours; these patients would have required transfer to another facility either within wagga or a tertiary facility.
Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) celebrated the annual Excellence Awards ceremony on Friday 20 July 2018. Celebrating the initiatives of staff across the Murrumbidgee region and acknowledging the dedication and contribution exceptional employees have made over the year. These winners represent 3,800 staff from across the district who work hard every day to make a difference to the lives of people in our region.

The evening culminated in the presentation of the prestigious Don Kendell Memorial Leadership Award. This award is presented each year to an MLHD employee recognised as a role model through innovative leadership and outstanding contribution to health services in their area.

2017 Don Kendell Memorial Leadership Award

In 2002, the former Greater Murray Area Health Service, with the support of Don Kendell’s family, initiated a memorial award commemorating Don’s leadership contribution to the Health Service. This highly coveted award recognises staff who have demonstrated the values which Don’s approach to life was based: commitment, achievement and a pioneering spirit.

Gale Hynes is a champion of people living with severe and enduring mental illness. As the Clozapine Coordinator for MLHD, Gale supports the safe and effective prescribing, dispensing and administration of this ‘last resort’ antipsychotic medication.

Quality & Safety Award

Awarded to Creating Positive Cultures working party. Wagga Wagga Mental Health clinicians in the Acute Inpatient Mental Health Unit at Wagga Wagga established a working party to reduce restrictive practices of people with a mental health illness. The group focused on regular meetings and feedback surveys with patients to improve their experience and reviewed all aspects of care provided in the unit based on the feedback received. The result is a decrease in restrictive practices, improved journeys for consumers and improved collaboration between consumers, their families and staff.

MLHD was proud to take home a record number of accolades at the 2018 NSW Health Awards in November.

Patients as Partners Category— “My Recovery, A Consumer Led Journey” (winner)

Excellence in the Provision of Mental Health Services Category — ”When Less is More - Weight Gain in Mental Health Units” (winner)

Staff Member of the Year — Jenny McKenzie (winner)

Collaborative Leader — Gale Hynes (Finalist)
Patient Experience Surveys

MLHD Local Health Advisory Committees (LHAC) across the District conduct regular site visits, meeting and greeting with consumers and asking them about the care they are receiving and how we can continue to improve the consumer/patient experience.

Temora Local Health Advisory Committee commenced an initiative some years ago, to conduct surveys with patients, with the thought process that patients might feel more comfortable discussing their experience with someone other than a staff member. The survey has been utilised since 2017, with a monthly roster LHAC Members visit the facility and talk with consumers, then report back to regular meetings to ensure any actions are immediately implemented. Surveys are also now tabled at monthly Work Health and Safety site meetings.

Some examples of feedback included:

- The back door of the facility made noises that disturbed patients. Staff had never noticed, once feedback was received, a work order was quickly placed and the issue was fixed.
- Changing stores provided included sourcing strong ply toilet paper.

Some questions asked include:

- Do you understand why you are in hospital?
- Was the hospital routine explained adequately when you arrived?
- Did you find access to the hospital adequate?
- Were you happy with the hospital conditions?

In March 2019, Deniliquin Hospital introduced live patient surveys with questions on everything from staff hand hygiene, to food service and how they access the hospital. To date, more than 400 patients and consumers have been surveyed and the good news is over 86 per cent rated their care as ‘excellent’ with another 10 per cent considering it ‘great’. The survey also includes a section which recognises staff and the excellent care they receive every day.

The surveys are conducted live via a tablet, using MLHD’s free WiFi for convenience, with a consumer or their family member encouraged to fill them out. At the end of the survey there is an option for the person to be contacted by a manager for further discussions. Consumers also have an opportunity to provide additional comments with a free text message.

Cluster Manager, Mr David Jackson said the hospital is always open to using consumer and visitor feedback to make improvements that matter to patients. “The feedback is a ‘gift of experience’ donated to us by those who use our services. Such experiences are handled with care and appreciation,” he said.

Pictured: Deniliquin Nurse Unit Manager Jacqui Ella sits down and conducts a survey with ward consumer Yvonne Binks.

“I really enjoy being part of a team that works to provide consumers with the best care possible” - Gabrielle Gribble, Consumer Feedback Support Officer
Pet Therapy

A four-legged visitor was special guest at a Kidney Week celebration at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Bear the Border Collie Cross registered therapy dog visited patients to help ease the stress of their treatment.

This was the first time the facility had offered this type of therapy but the benefits were plainly visible. Pet therapy can help decrease anger, relieve stress, lower blood pressure and create a more relaxing environment.

Patient / Guest WiFi

A patient / guest WiFi project is well underway across the district by securely utilising the existing network and wireless infrastructure in each hospital. To date, our largest facilities are actively using the service and are seeing a significant increase in usage since first going live. The patient WiFi service offers both free (for email, news, searching etc.) and premium options (for movie streaming etc.) for all our patients and guests.

The solution utilises NSW Health’s high capacity, reliable internet links and internal network. The second phase of the project will roll out the same patient WiFi capability to the remainder of our hospital facilities during 2019-20. Patient Entertainment initiatives are also being trialled at Deniliquin and Griffith Renal Units. This capability enables patients with regular dialysis appointments to catch up on the latest news and TV shows.

My Food Choice (MFC)

In 2018-19, Tumut, Deniliquin and Wagga Wagga Base Hospitals provided the My Food Choice (MFC) service model where meal orders are taken closer to each meal time through tablet technology providing patients with the choice of various meal options for breakfast, lunch, dinner and mid meals.

Patient satisfaction surveys are collected across Food and Patient Support Services across MLHD and are rated on average as 4.22 / 5, and is also noted to be above state average. Some feedback from consumers on their experiences with food services across MLHD include:

“the food was very good…the food is always well presented and tasty”...

“In the short time I have been transferred from Wagga Hospital, I have found the food here to be excellent”

“the food and the staff are the best, just keep putting the lovely meals that you do and you won’t have any problems at all”.

Letter to the Editor

“Very special hospital”

I am 83 years of age and recently I spent about eight weeks in Holbrook Hospital. During my time there, I was amazed at the genuine concern and care shown me by the nursing staff.

At one time, when I was due to undergo a small operation involving a general anaesthetic, it was decided that, because of an infection, the operation was not able to go ahead leaving me in tears and extremely upset.

However, one of the nurses came and sat on my bed, put her hand on my shoulder and consoled me with the words to the effect: "If you were my mother, and had this infection, I would not want her to have anaesthetic either."

This gentleness, and genuine concern of this nurse deeply impressed me and settled me down to the point where I was able to see the wisdom of her advice. I so dearly remember the nurses as truly being "Angels in Uniform".

Similar personal and individual attention was also given to me by the administrative staff, the cleaners, and kitchen staff. Add to the above, the pure joy of being able to sit out in the well kept garden with its fountain, and the native birds being constant companions made this a delight.

When my stay at this hospital came to an end I readily believe that my time there was not that of a hospital, but an exclusive "country retreat".

Lavington Resident

Letters to the Editor, The Border Mail, published Saturday 16 March 2019
MLHD has 33 Local Health Advisory Committees (LHACs) across the Local Health District. Each LHAC is affiliated with their Local Health Service and their roles include:

- Advocating for the local community
- Connecting with local communities about health priorities
- Being a voice for planning and evaluation of services
- Providing support to their local health service
- Promoting health literacy and wellbeing in their local communities

During 2018-19 MLHD held two Local Health Advisory Committee Forums to engage, support and provide information to local members of our community to advocate for better health within their communities.

Wagga Wagga held the first LHAC Forum on 6-7 September 2018 with around 85 delegates in attendance. The theme was “Murrumbidgee Men – an Adventure into Men’s Health” with the topic areas covered relating to the NSW Men’s Health Framework:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Chronic Disease & Obesity
- Cancer
- Sexually Transmitted Infections

The 2019 May LHAC Forum was held 2-3 May, in Griffith. Around 100 delegates were in attendance with the theme “Integrated Care in our Community – One System,” with the topic areas relating to the provision of a seamless service in our communities.
The Griffith Forum also included the introduction of a “pitch night” hosted by the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN). Other highlights included a Panel on Medical Workforce in Rural NSW which spoke on a range of recruitment issues, a Couch Conversation with MPHN CEO Melissa Neal and MLHD A/Director Operations Fiona Renshaw.

The forum culminated in the presentation of two awards presented by MLHD Board Chair Gayle Murphy:

**Local Health Advisory Committee**

**Outstanding Achievement Award:**

Culcairn LHAC

**Local Health Advisory Committee Member**

**Outstanding Achievement Award:**

Syd Dudley, Finley LHAC Chair (pictured left)

MLHD Local Health Advisory Committees across the District have undertaken a number of Safety and Quality projects and initiatives to support their communities; below are just a few examples during 2018-19;

- Involved and participated in Health Service Planning and redevelopments across the District (i.e. assisted with design and supported consumers through the change, as they move into new builds)
- LHAC representatives on new Models of Care Working Groups, including Hospital in the Home and Community Led Health Planning Initiatives (West Wyalong)
- Produced and helped publish brochures and fridge magnets for their local communities with specific health information
- Local advertising initiatives explored to bring awareness of BreastScreen Van visits and health checks; i.e. hearing and dental services to rural communities (i.e. columns in local papers)
- Facilitated Men’s Health BBQs with guest speakers, aimed at improving men’s health outcomes
- LHAC members conduct surveys and speak with consumers regularly to gain understanding of their experience and sharing with staff at facilities to enable service improvement
- Awareness campaigns and community led action, in partnership with local shire councils (i.e. street signage and safe and accessible access to our facilities)
- Raised funds and assisted with purchasing items that build wellness for local communities
- Conducted LHAC ‘walk round’ facilities and collected invaluable feedback
- Supported and engaged with schools to support initiatives and discuss health issues facing younger people i.e. Health Eating Programs
- Applied for and received community grants to support local health initiatives (i.e. successful stress relief program in Tumbarumba engaging with an educational psychiatrist to support local high school students approaching their HSC)
- Focus and support to improve farmers mental health; partnering with local football clubs to complete Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Training and hold community events to build and maintain social connections
- Collaborations with Rotary groups to hold meetings at Residential Aged Care facilities, where consumers can engage and socialise at conclusion of meetings with members