IN FOCUS: COMMUNITY CARE

THIS ISSUE: BERRIGAN LHAC

MURRUMBIDGEE MATTERS MAGAZINE

ISSUE 10 AUTUMN 2020

NSW GOVERNMENT
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ABOUT US
Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) provides a range of public health services to the Riverina and Murray regions of NSW, Australia.

We provide services across a geographic area of about 125,561 square kilometres to a population of more than 240,700 residents. People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage make up four per cent of the population.

As the largest employer in the region, with more than 3,800 healthcare staff working across 33 hospitals and 12 primary health care centres, we are supported by hundreds of volunteers who make an invaluable contribution to enriching the lives of people in our care.

Our services are provided through:
• 1 Rural Referral Hospital
• 1 Base Hospital
• 8 District Health Services
• 5 Community Hospitals
• 16 Multipurpose Services
• 2 Mercy Care Public Hospitals
• 12 Community Health Posts
• 1 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service

PUBLICATION
We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land covering MLHD and remind people that we live and work on Aboriginal land.

Welcome to the tenth issue of Murrumbidgee Matters Magazine.

This quarterly publication is developed by MLHD. Information is correct at time of printing.

Publication costs are subsidised by income generated from advertising.

FRONT COVER
MLHD Community Care Manager Summa Stephens, photo by Setchen Brimson

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OUR VISION
Wellness is our Goal
Excellence is our Passion
Our People are Our Future
Did you know Murrumbidgee Local Health District has a service which can help link you to a range of community health services?

The Community Care Intake Service (CCIS) aims to improve access to community health services by tailoring and streamlining care options available in the local area.

“We found people needed help to find out about services they could access to regain their health after an illness or hospital admission,” Community Care Manager Summa Stephens said.

“Our team of nurses work with clients and their families to understand their clinical and social needs and align them to the most suitable services close to home,” Summa said.

These services include Allied Health, Generalist Counsellor, Child, Youth, and Family Nursing, Women’s Health, Community Care Nursing, Integrated Care Coordination, Palliative Care, Diabetes Education, Respiratory and Cardiac Care.

Summa said the CCIS team work closely with local clinicians including GPs, Specialists, Allied Health services, hospitals and service providers to arrange care and support.

“It’s really exciting there is a one-stop which will make it easier for members of our community to access a range of health services close to home,” Summa said.

The service also provides information and support to access other services, such as the Federal Government’s My Aged Care and external providers to assist with social and financial issues.

Since celebrating its launch in January 2017, the CCIS now averages 1,400 referrals a month.

The service is available to people living in all communities across the Murrumbidgee region with strong partnerships being built with interstate services.

“Tina Curry, Nurse Unit Manager, Community Care Intake Service

“...It's really exciting to have one-stop which makes it easier for people to access a range of health services close to home...”

COMMUNITY CARE INTAKE SERVICE

CONTACT
You can call the service and make a self-referral or your local GP, doctor or any service provider can refer you.

1800 654 324
(Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
visit our website:
www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

MURRUMBIDGEE LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

Tina Curry, Nurse Unit Manager, Community Care Intake Service
Summa Stephens
Community Care Manager

I am the Community Care Manager for the LHD. My portfolio includes Community Care Nursing, Palliative Care, Integrated Care Coordination, Respiratory and Diabetes services, Community Care Intake Service and the district Integrated Care Strategy.

Since joining the district I have worked as a Registered Nurse in Wagga Wagga Base Hospital Emergency Department in a Clinical Nurse Educator role, and my current role in Community Care. I have completed a Diploma in Critical Care Nursing through Deakin University (Emergency Nursing) and a Graduate Certificate in Organisational Change Management at Charles Sturt University.

My experience in Project Management has included leading the implementation of the Clinical Initiatives Nurse program at WWBH ED, the district Enhancing Scope of Practice - Emergency Nursing, working as part of the Sustainability Taskforce and leading the CHESS Initiative Chronic/Complex Healthcare: Engaged with all Stakeholders and Services.

I am passionate about fair and equitable access to healthcare for all communities. Striving to ensure nurses and allied health staff have the support they need to provide the best possible care to all clients and their families.

This focus has motivated my most recent work in Community Care with the development of the clinical networks including Community Care Nursing, Palliative Care, Diabetes and Respiratory Care.

Achievements

I am proud of so many of the projects I have been involved with, as it is the dynamic teams in which I have had the opportunity to work within that I find stories of resilience and determination that drive me to seek excellence in my own endeavours.

In particular this year I coordinated the Fire Response mobile clinics for the bush fire affected communities in the Snowy Valley. Seeing such a diverse range of people coming together to assist and coordinating such a wide range of services in such a short space of time was a challenging, humbling and worthwhile experience as the help we were able to deliver to our local community was invaluable to so many.

Development and implementation of the Community Care Intake Service has also been a major milestone for me, as this service has thus far processed over 50 000 referrals in three years, providing those living within MLHD greater and more equitable access and support to services available within the community.

Development and implementation of the Enhancing Scope of Practice - Emergency Nursing. Assisting registered nurses to grow and develop to support their local communities with flexible models of care that are responsive to rural health needs, reducing the need to travel and support care in local communities.
The Community Care Intake Service is a telephone based service and we can provide you with support and clinical advice regarding community health services.

Our dedicated staff will work with you to keep you healthy in your community and support you to stay safe in your home. We help ensure you receive the right services along your health journey.

**HOW TO ACCESS THE SERVICE:**
You can call the service and make a self-referral or your local doctor or any service provider can refer you. All referrals are via one number 1800 654 324.

What’s most rewarding about your role?
There are two things I find rewarding about my role.

Firstly being involved with MLHD’s commitment to developing leaders who are kind, adaptive and focused on building teams through capability. My own journey with MLHD has afforded me to grow and develop as a leader, but I find it more rewarding watching people in my team developing their own leadership skills, and seeing their own potential, and thus the potential of others in their team.

Secondly, in doing what we do well, we are able to then support clinicians to provide the best possible care that is collaborative and responsive to our clients and their family’s needs. That is why we are here in the first place.

What projects are you working on?
I am currently working on refurbishing Palliative Care Rooms- Working with Karen, Jocelyn and Wendy to complete upgrades to the Palliative Care rooms in Urana, Cootamundra and Temora Hospitals.

I am also passionate about reducing stigma associated with death and dying, and educating the community about their options to die at home. I am currently working with Palliative Care clients and their carers/families to share their stories and reduce stigma associated with death and dying and an associated education campaign.

Celebrating Carers- I am also working with a respected digital storyteller, Pippa Wisher, to provide carers with the opportunity to share their story in conjunction with the Museum of the Riverina. This project will be launched in the coming months.
2020 has already been an extraordinary year, starting with bushfires impacting on our communities in the Snowy region and along the Border to the south of our District.

These fires impacted our District greatly. Twelve facilities across MLHD were impacted by the fires, with aged care residents and acute patients from Tumut, Batlow and Tumbarumba relocated to Cootamundra, Junee, Narrandera, Temora, Wagga Wagga and West Wyalong. Gundagai and Holbrook were also on high alert during the peak of the bush fires. Adelong Community Centre was temporarily closed. Border towns and towns in Hume Shire were also impacted by the Corryong fires. Families from Holbrook saw the tragic death of one of their firefighters.

The effect of the smoke was felt across our District. Our public health team was vigilant in keeping people aware of how to deal with the poor air quality.

During this time, it became really apparent to us just how committed our staff are to the welfare and safety of people in our care. Despite many being significantly and personally impacted, our staff travelled with residents to their temporary homes to ensure consistency of care and familiarity while they were away from their home environment. Meanwhile, other teams came together to support the Emergency Operations Centre and our colleagues from Northern Sydney and Sydney Local Health Districts, and transport teams from HealthShare sent teams of clinicians and support staff to help us on the ground.

I was delighted to visit our patients and residents in their temporary homes as part of my program of site visits. I witnessed first-hand the care and attention given by our staff. I’m so proud of our teams who capably stepped up during this time.

COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS)
2020 has also seen the emergence of the Novel Coronavirus and we have worked with NSW Health and other agencies to maintain vigilance around early identification and keeping people safe in our communities.

If you have general enquiries about Novel Coronavirus, please visit NSW Health’s website, which will be updated regularly with new information arising: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus.aspx

I’d like to personally thank everyone who was so generous during this time. Their compassion and commitment to ensuring the safe quality care of our patients and residents during very difficult circumstances was admirable.
COMMUNITY SURVEY
Community feedback is really important to us. It helps us improve our services and ensure we continue to provide good experiences and outcomes for our patients. One of the key areas for improvement is the way we communicate with our communities. In order to better understand how we can improve, we invite all members of the public to provide feedback through our 2020 Community Survey.

This survey will help us to understand how much people know about our services and how we can communicate better with our communities about our services.

This survey can also be completed online at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020CommunitySurvey or drop into your local hospital to collect a copy.

MLHD EXCELLENCE AWARDS
I’m delighted to announce nominations will open soon for the 2020 MLHD Excellence Awards.

These awards are an exciting opportunity for us to acknowledge the great work that is being done across the District. During my site visits across the region, I see so many wonderful initiatives and projects, and excellent delivery of quality service that it’s great to see these staff rewarded for their efforts at the Excellence Award celebrations.

Last year we introduced the “Consumer Appreciation Award”. This category enables members of the public to recognise a staff member who has demonstrated outstanding patient care or support to families and carers. Last year’s winner Amanda Underwood is a Peer Support Worker in the Acute Mental Health Inpatient Unit. Amanda was nominated by a number of mental health consumers for her tireless advocacy for their care.

I’d also like to thank our sponsors for their ongoing support of the MLHD Excellence Awards. These contributions help reward the great work of staff through opportunities for professional development activities.

Nominations will open at the end of March 2020.

BUSHFIRE SUPPORT
We continue to provide ongoing support to our staff following the bushfires. Over 200 of our staff were personally impacted.

We established a Bushfire Staff Response Team in recognition of the adversity, high level of personal loss and stress that staff endured during the bushfire crisis. This team has provided support through regular onsite counselling and social work to assist staff navigate recovery support services available and provide practical information on clean-up support, financial assistance as well as mental health and wellbeing.

TOP: Jill Ludford with Denise Garner (Disaster Manager) in the Health Emergency Operations Centre during the bushfire emergency.

Amanda Underwood - Winner of the 2019 Consumer Appreciation Award with MLHD Board Directors Adrian Lindner and John Harding.

NOMINATIONS OPEN
TUESDAY 31 MARCH 2020
NOMINATIONS CLOSE
FRIDAY 22 MAY 2020
TO NOMINATE VISIT
www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au
Berrigan MPS

The Berrigan MultiPurpose Service (MPS) is a 14 bed facility with 4 hospital care beds and 10 residential aged care beds.

Berrigan MPS provides a 24 hour Accident and Emergency Department. The Emergency Department is equipped with telehealth cameras to connect the team in Berrigan with specialists through the Critical Care Advisory Service and the Remote Medical Consultation Service.

It also has the capability to directly transmit ECG’s to a cardiologist for urgent review.

The MPS provides a range of services including emergency care, palliative care, respite care, community care and allied health services. The MPS is supported by telehealth and speciality services on referral.

Services include:

> Aboriginal Health
> Aged Care
> Care Coordination
> Child Protection Counselling
> Child Wellbeing Coordinator
> Community Care Intake Service
> Community Care Nursing
> Critical Care Advisory Service
> Dental (Oral) Health
> Diabetes
> Domestic Violence
> Mental Health Emergency Consultation
> Mental Health
> Nutrition and Dietetics
> Occupational Therapy
> Palliative Care
> Patient Flow & Transport
> Physiotherapy
> Violence Prevention and Response Support
LOCAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TONY TAYLOR
Chair, Berrigan LHAC

Tony retired in 2009 and with his wife Liz, moved to Berrigan to start retirement. His background is in law enforcement. At the time of his retirement Tony was the Area Manager for Bush Fire in the Pilbara, Western Australia, based in Karratha.

He is heavily involved in the Men’s Shed organisation at two levels – locally and also on the State Committee.

Tony strongly believes in the Men’s Shed movement as a way to improving the health of men in general.

He is also interested in the health and welfare of all seniors. Tony joined the LHAC in 2014 as a Committee member and was elected Chair in 2017.

CHAIR’S REPORT

Berrigan LHAC Chair Tony Taylor reports on the busy year ahead for Berrigan Local Health Advisory Committee:

2020 started with a bang, welcoming two new LHAC members to our fold. We hope to have as productive a year as 2019.

Last year saw us tackling QPR* training. All the members of the Committee went through the program and successfully passed.

It was then introduced into the two primary schools in the area by one of our members – who coincidentally is a Principal - and we ended up with all the teachers at both schools completing the on-line course. We also introduced QPR to the dental health staff and the local football club (with a mixed result). All in all I believe the QPR training was very successful and we achieved our aims plus.

We organised a Dementia Friends talk from Dementia Australia which took place during the day with light refreshments served. The trainer came from Sydney and delivered a very informative talk. We are yet to decide whether we will proceed with the next possible step and that is to become a Dementia Friendly Community.

Due to a number of volunteer organisations in our area focusing on similar ideas and outcomes we decided to partner with the Berrigan Red Cross in the delivery of a Mental Health Course. This was well attended and took the format of a late afternoon/evening course with a light meal provided in mid-August. It was also successful.

The Committee produced an A5 size fully magnetic fridge magnet with contact details for most of the health services available in our town. This was made possible through a grant from the Strawberry Fields Music Festival Committee and was much appreciated. There has been good feedback on the magnet and its usefulness.

We promoted LHAC activities with a Health Matters article in the Berrigan News every month with some good feedback from the Berrigan residents regarding the column/article.

Our members attended the LHAC Forum held in Wagga Wagga in November and I represented Berrigan at a one day Training Session in Wagga Wagga regarding How to Advocate on behalf of our residents. It was very well presented and was also attended by members from a number of other LHACs in the Murrumbidgee area.

We regularly hold combined meetings with three other LHACs in our Cluster: Finley, Tocumwal and Jerilderie.

I also need to acknowledge the work done by Marion Dickins. Her depth of health knowledge and expertise is second to none and has been of great assistance to me. Additionally Marion has taken on the role of the Secretary which has again helped me carry out my duties.

Tony Taylor
Chair, Berrigan LHAC

QPR Training: Question. Persuade. Refer (QPR) training is a one-hour on-line suicide prevention training that’s free for people living in the Murrumbidgee Region. The program, is part of LifeSpan Murrumbidgee which is an integrated, systems approach to suicide prevention through building a community safety net. For more information about LifeSpan Murrumbidgee visit the website.

ABOUT LOCAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEES

LHAC members are volunteers who advocate for their local community. They have their finger on the pulse of what’s happening in their community and provide advice and feedback to MLHD and the MPHN on health service needs and expectations.

There are 33 Local Health Advisory Committees (LHAC) across the Local Health District. Each LHAC is affiliated with their local Health Service.

To find out more about joining the LHAC visit https://www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/get-involved/local-health-advisory-committee-(lhac)
New employment model a win for the bush

A new model of employment for Rural Generalist Trainees, just announced by the Federal Government, will help boost the future rural doctor workforce.

The Government has announced that a pilot ‘Single Employer Model’ for Rural Generalist (RG) doctor trainees will be trialled in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, in NSW.

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has been a strong supporter of the pilot model, and has worked closely with former RDAA President Dr Paul Mara from Gundagai to push for its funding.

“If this pilot program works is will be a massive win for the bush,” RDAA President, Dr John Hall, said.

“Our junior doctor members have been actively pushing for an employment arrangement like this.

“Currently, junior doctors are employed by the state hospital system while they are undertaking their early training years, and they receive all the usual benefits you get working as an employee.

“Sick leave; holiday pay; workers compensation; and maternity leave: all these entitlements, and the accrual of them, are available to them as hospital staff.

“But once they finish this part of their training they are faced with a difficult choice.

“If they want to become a General Practitioner (GP) or RG, they need to leave the hospital and become essentially self-employed, working out of a private General Practice within the community, even though they are still required to train and be supervised, losing their accrued benefits.

“However if they train in another specialty, which are largely hospital based, they can keep the benefits, and continue to build on them, during their training years.

“This has been a huge barrier in enticing junior doctors to choose GP or RG as a career option.

“But under the Single Employer Model, the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (LHD) will remain as the employer of RG trainees in that district, meaning that junior doctors finishing their time as a hospital trainee will be able to keep their employee benefits and entitlements should they choose to undertake RG training.

“This model would provide a significant incentive for young doctors to choose RG as a career, with this employment advantage available to them, but not in other GP training pathways.

“Rural Generalist doctors are trained in General Practice combined with other advanced skills in areas needed by rural communities.

“Development of this model has not only involved RDAA, but it has been a real team effort between private general practices in the Murrumbidgee LHD, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Murrumbidgee Regional Training Hub.
We commend each of these organisations and the Federal Government for being willing to think outside the box to arrive at this solution. It has the potential to make a big difference in how RG trainees are employed, and in turn how appealing RG is as a career path to junior doctors.

“A model like this could be a major part of the National Rural Generalist Training Pathway, and give a level of support for doctors choosing rural generalist practice, which will provide a supported training and career pathway to develop the doctors needed in the bush,” Dr Hall said.

The Federal Government has also announced funding for RDAA to continue its successful #DestinationRural campaign. This campaign has aimed to entice more medical students and junior doctors to consider rural medicine as a career, and to advise them of the steps needed to undertake training as a rural GP, RG or non-GP Specialist doctor.

“We have been really excited at how many medical students and junior doctors have engaged with us throughout the first year of #DestinationRural, so it is fantastic that the Federal Government is funding us for another year to continue this important work,” Dr Hall said.

“We commend each of these organisations and the Federal Government for being willing to think outside the box to arrive at this solution. It has the potential to make a big difference in how RG trainees are employed, and in turn how appealing RG is as a career path to junior doctors.

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Jan Locke, one of our volunteer exercise leaders, has won the Snowy Valley Council’s Citizen of the Year Award 2020 on Australia Day.

Among a wide range of volunteer work Jan performs across her community, she also runs her Smooth Moovers classes for seniors which assist balance, flexibility and builds confidence.

Jan has been running the twice weekly exercise class for the past five years and introduced a Tai Chi class six months ago.

“Our classes usually have around 24 people but this fluctuates. Last week I had 32 people attend. I have thirteen people who have been doing the classes since the beginning,” Jan said.

“There is a real camaraderie among the group. We muck around a bit and there is a lot of friendship. I hate getting them started because when they first meet up it’s louder than the pub.

I often wonder if their cheek muscles get the best workout,” Jan jokes.

“The social element of these classes is really important, as well as the physical strength it gives them.

“We know that the recovery time from any surgery they need to have done is quicker when they have been doing the classes and building balance becomes really important as you age. We have even started doing a little bit of dancing at the end of the class for those who are keen.”

“I was completely shocked to have won this award. I am really honoured to be recognised for doing things I simply love doing. It is really wonderful,” Jan said.

“We commend each of these organisations and the Federal Government for being willing to think outside the box to arrive at this solution. It has the potential to make a big difference in how RG trainees are employed, and in turn how appealing RG is as a career path to junior doctors.

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Jan displays excellence and it is my privilege to work alongside her. The Snowy Valleys Region Citizen of the Year Award is truly fitting. Those 100 ladies that attend her weekly exercise classes have many amazing positive health stories to tell because of her.”

Alexandra C. Walker
Health Promotion Coordinator - MLHD

Dr Joe McGirr MP Member for Wagga Wagga presents Jan Locke with the Snowy Valley’s 2020 Citizen of the Year Award.
We can:
• Give you the information you need about rural medical training pathways
• Help navigate a rural medical training pathway for your career
• Connect you to career advice from rural specialists

Contact Us
Ph: 02 8204 4607  Int Ph: 4607
Email: RRTHenquiries@nd.edu.au

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF RURAL AUSTRALIANS

Part of the objectives for establishing the Regional Training Hubs program across Australia is to improve the health of rural Australians.

One the ways of doing this is to address the mal-distribution of doctors in rural and regional areas. It is interesting that the number of University of Notre Dame medical students who want to undertake the last two years of their training full-time at our Rural Clinical School here in Wagga Wagga continues to be higher than there are places available for them.

The Wagga Wagga Base Hospital continues to have far more applicants to train and work as junior doctors than available places for them too. The conversion of these enthusiastic rural trainees into rural doctors, pursuing their careers in a rural or regional setting, challenges us all.

In the Riverina Murrumbidgee region the Riverina Regional Training Hub (RRH) continues to collaborate with our health partners to create ways of meeting this challenge. Part of this response is to support our local medical students from the University of NSW, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Wollongong with the practical tools to successfully apply for training positions in our local teaching hospitals. For the first time in 2020 the RRTH, Murrumbidgee Local Health District, the NSW RDN and the UNSW through their Murrumbidgee Regional Training Hub, are collaborating to provide a weekend in which local medical students and junior doctors can build their career seeking skills and talk with local rural clinicians about training and pursuing careers here in our region.

All part of the concerted effort to support rural study, training and careers and to improve rural health outcomes.
The most important goal of the Murrumbidgee Local Health District is to ensure that in every interaction with patients and community members our service is of the highest quality and is safe. We will never accept anything else.

Every day as a health district we work to improve our care to our communities as every day we have an opportunity to learn through research, data and sharing ideas with others.

In 2020 the District has an opportunity to assess the care that we give against the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. National Accreditors will visit each one of our 31 sites to look at:

- the overall governance and leadership of quality and safe care
- how we partner with consumers to ensure their voice is heard
- the steps involved to prevent and control infections
- medication
- how we assess patients risk to harm
- how we communicate with patients at every stage of their journey
- blood management
- recognising and responding to patients when they deteriorate

Our staff are working hard to ensure they have everything in place for the accreditation process and have been for many months. The process we are going through will ensure that quality safe care is embedded in everything we do. This process will give our communities confidence in the health care they receive and that we will do no harm.

Consumers have an opportunity to be involved in the accreditation process.

- MLHD seeks your advice about safety and quality issues through complaints, feedback and compliments
- You may be asked if you would like to be interviewed about your experience as a consumer
- You may be asked to join a group within the district to give the valued consumers perspective

For those readers who are LHAC members ask your facility manager to update you on the accreditation process.

Keep Safe
Gayle Murphy
MLHD Board Chair

MEET OUR DIRECTORS

FAYE McMILLAN
MLHD BOARD DIRECTOR

Associate Professor Faye McMillan is a Wiradjuri yinaa (woman) from Trangie, NSW and currently resides in Coolamon. Faye is the 2019 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year and a Senior Atlantic Fellow.

She was a founding member of Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) and was a board member of IAHA from 2009-2017 (and chairperson from 2010-2016)

Faye works at Charles Sturt University (CSU) as the Director of the Djirruwang Program - Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health).

Faye holds a Doctor of Health Science, a Master of Indigenous Health Studies, Bachelor of Pharmacy and is Australia’s first registered Aboriginal Pharmacist, Faye also holds a Graduate Certificates in Indigenous Governance from the University of Arizona, Wiradjuri Language Culture and Heritage and Education).

In 2017 Faye was recognised in the Who’s Who of Australian Women and in 2014 Faye was recognised in the Australian Financial Review and Westpac 100 women of influence. Faye currently sits on a number of boards across the Murrumbidgee, NSW and Australia and views these appointments as an opportunity to serve her communities and contribute to improved health outcomes for all Australians.

NEW MLHD BOARD DIRECTOR FAYE McMILLAN.

MLHD Board Chair Gayle Murphy
Opening doors for Pacific communities

The University of Western Sydney’s Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education (PATHE) program looks to empower Pacific communities to aspire to further education and training with options to develop and gain new skills and knowledge. PATHE aims to give Pasifika people greater opportunities across life. With a focus on student support, outreach activities and innovative projects, PATHE strives to encourage primary school (year 5 & 6) and high school (year 7-12) students to recognise their potential within.

New Interns at Wagga Base Hospital, graduates of UNDA Wagga Clinical School and proud Polynesians, Meleseini Tai-Roche (of Tongan heritage) and Gabriel Sanchez (of Rapa Nui heritage) were more than willing to offer up some guidance and advice to our Pasifika youth in the PATHE program last year.

As Meleseini said ‘In Australia, our pacific communities are growing, and within the islands, the health needs of our people are diversifying and fast becoming complex. We need passionate and dedicated medical professionals. Therefore, it is incredibly important that we encourage our Pasifika youth into a career in healthcare, particularly medicine. Endeavouring to serve our community is a duty entrenched deep in our culture- what better way to do this than to learn and offer quality healthcare’.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham

Currently a new Intern at Wagga Base Hospital, Gabriel Sanchez, when a final year medical student at Wagga’s Notre Dame clinical school, was accepted to do elective with the liver transplant team at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, England. This team performs the highest number of liver transplant cases in the world and has become a global centre of excellence for this surgical craft. As well as transplant surgery, the hospital is also well known for plastic surgery and burns management as it serves as the military hospital for the UK.

Thirty minutes after arriving at the colossal 1,213-bed hospital he was scrubbing in to a marathon 10 hour liver transplant operation. The recipient was a brave middle-aged woman whose liver was enlarged to 8kg (normal size is 1.5kg) due to advanced polycystic kidney disease. Gabe said that his shortest day was 12 hours and the longest was 31 hours. He found a friend in an Italian medical student with whom he shared late night meals (hot chips and gravy, although the Italian medical student refused to eat pasta cooked by a non-Italian and was disgusted that Gabe would even try).

The highlight of the elective was joining the team on a 2 hour ambulance ride to Manchester for a liver retrieval during the early morning hours. The subsequent operation required both an extended laparotomy and thoracotomy and Gabe said it made him appreciate the difference that one’s conscious decision of donating their organs can have on the life of others living with poor quality of life due to their organ failure.
IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Volunteer Gentle Exercise Leader

Kaye McCabe runs a gentle exercise group once a week in Deniliquin for community members and twice weekly at Orana - Southern Cross Care Deniliquin for their residents.

Kaye is very respected and loved by her participants and always has them laughing while exercising.

She has been leading exercise for around 21 years as a volunteer.

About Gentle Exercise

Get your whole body moving in these classes. You can stand or use a chair to do these exercises. Enjoy whole body benefits of:

- Improved strength and balance
- Improved heart and lung health
- Greater range of motion in your joints

DID YOU KNOW?

Keeping active as you age is important for good health and preventing falls.

Low cost physical activity programs are running in our local communities every week.

Led by trained volunteers these classes are ideal for beginners or people who haven’t been physically active for a long time.

With over 90 classes running every week there is sure to be a class near you!

MLHD volunteers also run Tai Chi and Aqua Exercise classes.

FIND OUT MORE:

Email: mlhd-exercise@health.nsw.gov.au or phone 0409 781 326 for further information.
WARM WELCOME

BARHAM COMMUNITY WELCOMES
BUSH BURSARY STUDENTS

Contributed by Kerry Stirling – Community Nurse, Barham

PHOTO: Bush Bursary students Hannah Derrig and Daisy Denton take a ride on a header

INSET: Cleo Crawford and Angus Begg enjoy the wide open spaces
During November and December, the Barham community were lucky to host four Bush Bursary students.

Bush Bursaries are administered by the New South Wales Rural Doctors Network and funded by individual NSW rural Councils. Murray River Council funded four students to be placed in our shire, two medical and two nursing. This is the first year the program has included nursing students.

All of the students spent two weeks of their university holidays in Barham. The Local Health Medical Trust coordinated the placements both clinically and socially, as the idea of the placement is that the students have the opportunity to experience both rural medicine and the enjoyable aspects of living in the country.

The first two students arrived in Barham in November, spending time with our local doctors and nurses at the Barham & District Medical Centre, at the Barham MPS including Community Health and time with the Child Youth and Family nurse, Toni Lake, Dorevitch Pathology, Rivergum Podiatrist, Lisa Farrant, and Murray Haven Homes. They also had the opportunity to experience an even more remote rural community and spent a day at Moulamein Community Health.

1st year nursing student from University of Newcastle, Daisy Denton grew up in Sydney. Prior to commencing her nursing studies, she worked as a make-up artist and also a pastry chef, even having her own food truck business. When Daisy completes her course, she would like to work in paediatrics or a neonatal intensive care unit.

Hannah Derrig is studying post grad medicine at the University of Notre Dame in Sydney, previously achieving a Bachelor of Advanced Science at the University of Sydney followed by an Honours Degree in Neuroscience at the University of New South Wales. Hannah grew up in Woy Woy on the NSW central coast. She says she is not a city girl and loves a much slower pace. Hannah’s twin sister is a 2nd year medicine student. Hannah’s interests are in geriatrics and adolescent medicine.

Daisy said “our placement in Barham has been an amazing experience! We’ve learnt heaps from the incredible health professionals in the town and have been warmly welcomed by the locals.”

Hannah was inspired by the rapport that can be developed in country towns.

“Prior to going rurally I think I had some concern that the country may not be interesting or challenging enough. Spending time with the local doctors I quickly came to appreciate that days are not quiet!”

The first two weeks in December saw 1st year nursing student Cleo Crawford and 1st year medicine student, Angus Begg, visit Barham for their placement. Cleo is studying her nursing degree at Notre Dame, and lives in Avalon on the northern beaches of Sydney. She travels two hours each way to attend university which is in the inner Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst. At 19 years of age Cleo is the youngest Bush Bursary student this year. In years 11 and 12 Cleo studied her Assistant In Nursing, and she works in a Nursing Home in Avalon. Cleo is interested in becoming a midwife or a Maternal and Child Health Nurse, in a country area.

“Overall the trip was incredible!” said Cleo. “I learnt so much from my experiences and it made me confirm that the rural lifestyle and nursing is one I want to be part of. All the community in Barham were so welcoming and supportive, getting me involved in anything and everything. Thank you to everyone.”

Angus is also from Avalon, and he is studying post grad medicine at the University of Sydney. He has a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Maths, and has an Honours Degree in Neuroscience and Maths. Following his honours year Angus took some time off and worked as an operating theatre orderly/assistant. Initially Angus had an interest in becoming a surgeon but now he is really keen on rural medicine and rural life in general, perhaps specialising as a rural GP or in medical oncology.

“Having grown up in the city, I had a lot of questions about country life and rural Medicine,” said Angus. “This experience broke down a lot of my preconceptions and opened my eyes to the opportunities that are available. I loved the people, the lifestyle and the diversity of the scope of medical practice.”

The Barham community ensured that the students got to experience the rural lifestyle they enjoy so much. Jason Telford from Elders Barham kindly took Daisy and Hannah to a sheep sale in Wycheproof and during the day the girls also had the opportunity to climb aboard a header and visit a dairy farm. All four students have also spent the day at Barham Avocados. Swimming in the river and a day out at the Moulemein Races were also highlights for the students.

We hope that all four students keep in touch, we would love to hear where their studies take them. It has been an absolute pleasure having them visit our area. The Local Health Medical Trust would like to thank everyone who has helped support this very important program.

“I loved the people, the lifestyle and the diversity of the scope of medical practice...”
It might have been a career in Agricultural Economics had the University classes been more appealing, but fortunately enough for us they weren’t, and our District Community Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Manager, Alison Thorne ended up doing a nursing degree instead.

“I came home from my first week at university and said to my mum that I didn’t think Ag Economics was the career for me.

“Her response was ‘well don’t think you are going to sit on a couch all day for the next year!’, so I called the Nepean College of Advanced Education (now the University of Western Sydney) and asked what courses they had available. It was Education or Nursing – so I enrolled in Nursing with the idea I would swap to a communications degree after a year.

“But I loved nursing and now it feels like I have never not been a nurse.”

Alison began her career at Royal Prince Alfred and the Children’s Hospital in Sydney doing stints in plastic surgery and the burns unit among other things. When a rural opportunity arose in Bourke in north-west NSW in 1995 she took it.

“I had spent four years living in Cootamundra when I was a teenager and really found it pretty amazing. I enjoyed the country lifestyle so it was nice to get back to a rural area.

“I was working in the Emergency Department in Bourke and I became really interested in the mental health presentations we were seeing. I really felt like I could make a difference in that space.

In 2006 Alison made the move to the Echuca Moama region and took a position at Deniliquin Community Mental Health which is where she is now based. She now lives permanently in Deniliquin and began her current role in 2012.

“In the first couple of years in this role I did a whole lot of travel, however this has changed over time. Now I travel one week in two and that’s okay.

“We have a lot of technology available to feel more connected and that has made a big difference. However, there are still some things that still need to be done face to face.”

A normal day for Alison is one that is far from a desk job.

“I might start my day at my office in Deniliquin but every day can look different. I may be anywhere across the district for the Mental Health Executive meeting, catching up with some of our NGO [non-Government Agencies] partner organisations or recruiting for new staff.

“In the past four weeks for example I have done four lots of interviews and completed the sign-off of new staff to fill positions.
“I also spend quite some time dealing with complaints and responding to Ministerial requests for information and these usually need a quick turnaround.

“One of the most important things I do is making sure everyone in our team has what they need to do their job.”

This became a very significant responsibility when Alison recently was called on to coordinate the mental health teams to support the bushfire response across our District.

“Things changed very quickly, I was having a couple of days off before Christmas and a few of us had come together over a different urgent issue in one of our communities, planning some media interviews and then suddenly I was live on ABC radio talking about how people could take care of themselves during the bushfire crisis.

“From that day, things got busier and busier. I remember looking at the calendar on 30 January and wondering where my month had gone. I did some big hours in January that’s for sure.

“We were pulling together lists to provide support for the South Coast fires and suddenly it became apparent that those staff couldn’t go anywhere as they were needed here.

“Several of us worked around the clock for a few weeks. Fortunately our service model means we have senior staff spread across the District so we could get them where and when they were needed quickly.

“We also needed to make sure our Triage line was well informed to make sure any referrals relating to bushfire impact went to the right place.

“It was great to get the call from the Ministry of Health to arrange staff to come here from both Northern Sydney and Sydney Local Health Districts. It gave us the opportunity to get more people out where they were needed.

“We were able to arrange teams to be out on the ground door knocking in those really remote affected areas and now that the services have been returned to Tumut we have been able to organise for staff to stay up there – which means we are able to support that community even further.

“Our capacity to work within the local community is a crucial part of our response. We are holding drop in sessions where people can call in sit down with a cup of tea and have general chat, and get some psychological support in a non-clinical environment. I was talking to a lady who had called by and happened to notice that her eye looked sore. Turns out she had conjunctivitis. It was great to call on my nursing skills to help someone who had come in to see us for a different reason.”

The ongoing drought has also increased demand for mental health care in our District and Alison has been busy recruiting and filling positions specifically created to improve support for drought affected communities.

“I was really keen to get people with lived experience and having an affinity to the area to fill these roles. You need to make connections with your community. You need to be comfortable, knowing how a farm functions and to be able to work with the Local Lands Service or Department of Primary Industry officer.

“Making early connections is important to improving mental health outcomes in these areas.”

Alison’s passion for her career choice shines through when she talks about her nursing roles and her current position in mental health.

“I have had a great career so far and I have no regrets. In this role I have a lot of autonomy and lots of responsibility. I really feel my opinions are valued and I can influence change for our community.

“There is always been a lot of change in the mental health and drug and alcohol field and I am really pleased to be able to influence how it we deliver service in the community across the District.”

MLHD wins again the Healthy Town Challenge Grants

Murrumbidgee Local Health District has won two out of five grants for Healthy Town Challenge in NSW for 2020. The Health Promotion Service of MLHD has been partnering with the Snowy Valley Council (SVC) and Greater Hume Shire in successful gaining of the grant. The winning towns are Tumut and Holbrook.

The Healthy Town Challenge is a joint initiative of the NSW Office of Preventive Health and the Heart Foundation NSW. The challenge supports regional and rural communities to facilitate healthy living activities to improve the health of their community members.

The challenge will take place from 10 February to 11 September 2020.

Through partnerships with SVC, MLHD and community gardening stakeholders, the Move & Grow project in Tumut will be implemented consisting of the following two main elements:

• Improving healthy eating of the population through the creation of public vegetable gardens and developing skills and capacity for families to grow vegetables at home

After being affected badly by the recent bushfire the community finds this project timely to boost their spirit to be united.

Holbrook forms part of the Greater Hume Shire as does Culcairn who was last year’s Healthy Town Challenge winner. Holbrook is excited to follow on from Culcairn’s success and aims to increase participation rates of physical activity for older adults. Holbrook will also aim to achieve greater engagement with youth to improve health outcomes for them, engage local clubs and groups to encourage them to develop healthier menus and catering options, improve community infrastructure including walking trails and exercise equipment and mental health support and strategies to residents, particularly farmers and others who are isolated and/or living alone.

For further information about this grant and the local projects, contact Alex Walker, Health Promotion Co-ordinator on 02 6947 0906.  ■
It’s a big ask for anyone to stay in one job for 33 years but Dental Therapist Mary-Anne Menhennitt has been looking after children’s teeth in Deniliquin, Berrigan and surrounding areas for that long and has loved every minute.

Mary-Anne, who retired in January has actually been practicing children’s dentistry for more than 38 years.

In the early 1970s the Whitlam government set up a bursary scheme for young Australian women to train in New Zealand and return to work in Australia. The Government then established a school dental service model to be administered by the States.

At that time the New Zealand Dental Nurse training scheme was very highly regarded.

“I grew up in Colac in Victoria’s western districts and when I finished high school I was offered this opportunity to train in New Zealand while they were building the dental therapy training school in Victoria,” Mary-Anne said.

“They offered us a trainee wage and accommodation and food and a flight back home once a year. I was pretty lucky to get on this program.”

“When I came back I worked in Melbourne for five years. However my father was a very keen glider pilot and we would often have our family holidays in Tocumwal. I was there for holidays, met someone, and I decided to stay.

“I was quite surprised when a job came up locally as a full time therapist because country positions are quite rare. I took it and have been here ever since.

“My sister Libby is the other therapist here (Elizabeth Russell).

“I have seen lots of changes in my time as a Therapist. I started in a wonky old van and a man with a truck would come along and move us around.

“It was always so hot in the summer and so cold in winter. The pipes would freeze and one summer we had a snake under the steps so we couldn’t get in or out! We were stuck in the van and had to call out from the window to a parent to get the Principal and a shovel.

“Then we got brand new clinics built in Berrigan and Deniliquin and they have been wonderful.”

Mary-Anne finds it hard to put her finger on the best experiences she has had because there have been so many. However, she says she will really miss the patients and their families.

“Having been in one area for so long – over two generations – I am seeing parents who I treated as children bringing their children to see me, and that’s a lovely thing.

“I have really enjoyed travelling to our other rural towns to run education sessions. I have been lucky enough to visit Barham, Moulamein, Mathoura, Conargo, Oaklands, Savernake, Barooga, Jerilderie, and as far as Urana to offer dental assessment programs too.

“One of the other wonderful opportunities I had it to have spent some time working in the Northern Territory in remote communities.

“In 2009 there was some Federal funding to provide dental services for people in remote areas and they were recruiting staff for three week contracts. I applied and have been going up there regularly.

“It’s a great experience. I am very skilled in what I do and it was great to challenge myself again. And it was wonderful to have been supported by the management team here to have that opportunity.

“I am going to miss all the lovely people I work with – they are a great group of people and I will miss seeing them every day.”
Murrumbidgee Local Health District provides a range of general and preventative dental care services.

FREE dental care is available at NSW Public Dental Clinics for:

- All children under 18 years of age
- Adults who hold any of the following Centrelink concession cards:
  - Pensioner Concession Card
  - Commonwealth Seniors Healthcard
  - Health Care Card
- Anyone listed on your card is also eligible for free public oral health care

All patients must be eligible for Medicare and should have a valid Medicare card. For Medicare information call 13 32 54.

LOCATIONS
Clinics are located in Albury, Berrigan, Cootamundra, Deniliquin, Griffith, Hay, Hillston, Junee, Leeton, Temora, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong and Young.

CONTACT
For enquiries or to make a dental appointment call our FREE number: 1800 450 046 (Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:00pm).

FOR MORE INFORMATION visit our website: www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

CHILD DENTAL BENEFITS SCHEME
The Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) is a Medicare program that provides access to up to $1000 in benefits per eligible child for a range of dental services over two consecutive calendar years.

You can access care under the CDBS through Murrumbidgee Local Health District Public Dental Services.

FREE CHILDREN’S DENTAL CHECK
Has your child seen a Dentist yet?
FREE dental care is available at NSW Public Dental Clinics for all children under 18 years of age!
Dental care services are available across the Murrumbidgee district.

BOOK NOW!
1800 450 046
Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) is calling for the public to have its say with the launch of the 2020 Community Survey.

Community Engagement Manager Setchen Brimson said this is the perfect opportunity for people to provide feedback on how the health service can improve communication.

"Murrumbidgee Local Health District is serious about ensuring feedback received from our local community is acted on and incorporated into the day-to-day operations of the service," said Ms Brimson.

"This survey will help us to understand how much people know about our services and how we can communicate better with our communities about our services.

"We know that one of the barriers to health is an understanding about what services are available and how to access them. This survey will help us understand where there are gaps and what areas we need to improve our communications.

The survey forms part of MLHD’s Community Engagement Strategy which focusses on informing, consulting and engaging with consumers. This will be the third time MLHD has undertaken this survey, with the first released in 2014 and the second conducted in 2016.

"The previous surveys provided an insight into some easily achievable changes in the way we provide information,” Ms Brimson said.

"One of these was the redevelopment of the MLHD website to include more comprehensive information about the services. The other was the introduction of social media platforms which are now part of everyday connection for many residents across our region.”

The data from the previous surveys also revealed correlations between people’s age, sex and location and their level of understanding about services available.

"We will continue to work towards improving the way we go about planning, designing and evaluating our services, and this is another step towards ensuring we get it right.”

The survey is available online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020CommunitySurvey or by contacting Community Engagement Manager Setchen Brimson on 0477 359 764 or email setchen.brimson@health.nsw.gov.au
Late last year the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital Emergency Department (ED) hosted the first annual Emergency Management of Trauma Course, held at the Rural Clinical School, University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Speakers from our surgical, orthopaedic, emergency, and radiography teams covered topics about conducting an initial patient survey, managing spinal and neuro trauma as well as pelvic, chest and abdominal, musculoskeletal, paediatric and pregnant trauma patients.

The course also covered the role of radiology in trauma, and addressed managing major burns.

Participants were provided learning through two interactive case studies run by Dr Andrew Cumberlege, Director of Trauma at Wagga Wagga ED, and Stacey Casley, Trauma Clinical Nurse Coordinator, and facilitated by Robyn Freeman, Clinical Nurse Educator at Wagga Wagga ED.

There were 40 participants for the course, including nursing students, enrolled nurses, registered nurses and GP Visiting Medical Officers.

Crucially, they came from across the district including Wagga, Holbrook, Temora, Tumbarumba, Leeton, Griffith, Culcairn, Henty, Lockhart, Junee, Young and Finley. NSW Ambulance Service staff also attended.

“We’re keen to provide opportunities to staff from our region. They gain valuable skills and knowledge to take back to their workplaces to improve the care of trauma patients across the district,” Clinical Nurse Educator, Robyn Freeman said.

“We received a lot of positive feedback from the course participants which highlights how appreciated these opportunities are.

“Our aim is to keep delivering these so that our staff are further able to provide healthcare both here in the larger centres and across our district.”

“I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr Cumberlege and Stacey, as well as Dr Peter Chigwidden, Dr Michael Davoren and Ruth Scanlan from our ED, Dr Lauren O’Rourke from Orthopaedics, Dr Saksham Gupta from Surgical, and Shinu Thakadiparampil from our Traumatic Brain Injury team.

“They have volunteered their time, provided great presentations and delivered valuable courses.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) Emergency Departments (ED) are always open 24 hours a day, even when a doctor is not available.

Patients who present to ED are assessed and triaged by highly trained emergency Registered Nurses.

ED nurses are supported by a 24-hour remote medical consultation service which links them to a senior emergency medical consultant.

The medical consultant provides all medical advice and support from presentation to discharge or retrieval to specialist care if required.

The MLHD Critical Care Advisory Service also provides support through telephone and remote telehealth cameras.

As is standard practice, patients needing more acute care are transferred to the nearest appropriate hospital after being triaged.

Residents are reminded that in an emergency they should call triple zero (000) for an ambulance or attend the ED.

Health Direct on 1800 022 222 is also available for general advice and information.
PHOTO GALLERY

SHOUTOUT: A heartfelt thanks to our amazing MLHD staff and those clinicians who travelled from Northern Sydney and Sydney Local Health Districts, and the transport teams from Healthshare for your support and care provided after the devastation and sorrow associated with the recent bushfires. Your demonstrated kindness and compassion with our residents, patients, staff and communities has been exemplary. We are grateful for the amazing support we had during that time.
The devastating bushfires in the Murrumbidgee region and beyond have had an enormous impact on numerous communities. The resources below are intended to help individuals and communities identify relevant supports at this time.

**Mental health support**

It’s normal to be emotionally impacted during a natural disaster. If you need mental health information or support, or know a family member or friend who is struggling, there are a range of options available:

- MPHN Central Access and Navigation service **1800 931 603** (during business hours).

Need additional assistance? The Red Cross register will assist you with accessing a range of financial and other assistance. Register at [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au).

**Supportive Counselling**

Murrumbidgee Local Health District has free Supportive Counselling available for anyone and invites you to pop in for a coffee and a chat. They are located in Batlow at the CWA Rooms, Pioneer Street, weekdays from 10:00am – 3:00pm.

Supportive Counselling is also available in Adelong, Talbingo, Tumbarumba and Tumut. For more details contact Kathleen Manning on 0428 115 627 or Murrumbidgee Accessline on 1800 800 944.

**Medicare funded counselling sessions available**

If you need support, you can access Medicare funded counselling sessions through your GP or a psychologist, mental health accredited social worker or mental health accredited occupational therapist. Please note there may be gap payments required, please ask the GP or clinician prior to accessing the service.

To find a local service provider, please follow the links below.

- Psychologist: [www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist](http://www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist)

**After hours GP helpline**

The healthdirect after hours GP helpline offers you the option of having a phone or video call with a GP, depending on your circumstances.

You can connect with a healthcare professional from your home, from work, or from wherever is most convenient, using your device - smartphone, tablet or desktop computer.

The helpline can be reached on **1800 022 222**.

**Local and national bushfire recovery resources**

Below are several local and national bushfire recovery resources:


**Help in a crisis**

Call the following numbers for free, confidential support 24/7 from trained specialist counsellors.

- Murrumbidgee Accessline 1800 800 944 (24/7) for mental health and alcohol and other drug support
- Lifeline (Bushfire Recovery) 13HELPC or 13 43 57
- Mensline 1300 78 99 78
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (supporting ages 5 - 25) beyondblue 1300 224 636

If emergency help is required, call 000.

For more information and resources, visit [www.mpnh.org.au/bushfire-support](http://www.mpnh.org.au/bushfire-support) or scan the QR code:
The Community Care Intake Service (CCIS) aims to improve access to community health services by tailoring and streamlining care options available in the local area.

Our team of nurses work with clients and their families to understand their clinical and social needs and align them to the most suitable services close to home.

The CCIS team work closely with local clinicians including GPs, Specialists, Allied Health services, hospitals and service providers to arrange care and support.

The service also provides information and support to access other services, such as the Federal Government’s My Aged Care and external providers to assist with social and financial issues.

The service is available to people living in all communities across the Murrumbidgee region with strong partnerships being built with interstate services.

Information correct at time of printing: Feb 2020

1800 654 324 between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday

or email: MLHD-CCIS@health.nsw.gov.au