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## Surgery restores confidence and freedom

There was no specific cause of Dianne Hummel's daily battle with faecal incontinence. Becoming more and more confined to the limits of her bathroom, Mrs Hummel finally found a solution in Sacral Nerve Stimulation surgery at Bankstown Hospital.

"Until recently, my life revolved around wondering where the closest toilet was, just in case I had to go," Mrs Hummel said

"Prior to my surgery, I couldn't tell you when the last time I was able to wear light coloured pants or a dress due to the fear of embarrassment, even in the comfort of my own home.

Although initially uncomfortable to talk about her inability to control her bowel movements, Mrs Hummel said there's no shame in seeking help.

"It is important to know that help is available and treatments can cure, improve or manage symptoms. I'm definitely more confident now thanks to Dr Turner and the team and can leave my home comfortably without having to worry where the closest toilet is," she said.

Mrs Hummel was one of the first patients at Bankstown Hospital to successfully receive a surgically implanted stimulator. The implant transmits electrical impulses to a lead wire close to the sacral nerves connected to the spinal cord, a method which can be effective in dealing with faecal incontinence.

Bankstown Hospital Colorectal Surgeon Dr Catherine Turner who performed the procedure said the appropriate nerves are identified using a test needle and temporary lead wire.

"We test a patient's response to the stimulation through a two-week trial during which only the lead is implanted and an external battery pack delivers the electrical impulse," Dr Turner said.

"Patients like Dianne who have at least 50 percent improvement in their symptoms during the trial are eligible for long-term therapy, which requires a second procedure to implant the neurostimulator.

There are many reasons why people become incontinent according to Dr Turner who said the causes are a combination of factors.

"I am glad that we can now offer this treatment at Bankstown Hospital, for the first time in south western Sydney. Faecal incontinence is a big problem in our society, but very rarely discussed.

"The treatment for incontinence depends on the cause and should be discussed with your doctor before trying any method," she said.