

Media Release

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Liverpool's cardiothoracic unit celebrates 20 years

Liverpool Hospital's cardiothoracic unit is celebrating 20 years of service and nearly 8000 surgeries.

The unit opened in 1997 bringing cardiothoracic surgery to south west Sydney for the first time, meaning patients no longer had to travel into Sydney hospitals like Royal Prince Alfred to receive life-saving surgery.

Over the years the unit has grown in size and now operates a training program for upcoming surgeons as well as contributing information to the national cardio surgery database for 10 years – a significant achievement.

Professor Bruce French, who has worked in the unit since it opened and has officially headed up the department since 2001, said the continued development of Liverpool Hospital in 2011 allowed the unit to increase the number of operations performed each year.

"The number of operations went up by around 25 per cent per year, about 350 to 450 operations per year," Professor French said.

"Every patient who has come through the cardiothoracic department has received life-changing surgery."

Professor French said the presence of the cardiothoracic unit in Liverpool Hospital also benefited other departments, including the vascular, head and neck and general surgery departments, which work closely with the cardiothoracic unit.

But the main benefit, he said, was for the patients.

"Patients can be treated without having to leave Liverpool and that continues to be the most important reason for our existence – to provide world-class treatment within the area where people live," he said.

Looking to the future, Professor French said there was the potential for both cardio and thoracic surgery to continue to evolve and to make the most of minimally invasive surgery techniques and multidisciplinary approaches to diagnoses and treatment.

"Over the past five years minimally invasive thoracic surgery has become the surgical modality of choice for patients requiring surgery for lung cancer, and Liverpool Hospital is up there with the biggest providers of this surgery in the state," he said.

Other significant achievements at the unit include the multidisciplinary cardio surgery Heart Team and the hybrid operating theatre.