Providing safe, high quality and consistent care is more than treating patients in hospitals. Everyday across the District our staff are providing care, not only in our hospitals, but in community health centres, in clinics and people’s homes. From encouraging new mums to breastfeed their little one, helping elderly patients to find the confidence to stay on their feet and return to their normal lives, to our dedicated nurses visiting patients in their homes, our services reach the community in many different ways.

Connecting people with the right services and at the right time, listening to our patients and using the latest technologies help our patients take control and manage their health needs with confidence. All these services, along with the thousands of patients that receive care at our hospitals, each and every day, we are working towards supporting and encouraging a healthy community.

Ms Amanda Larkin
Chief Executive, South Western Sydney Local Health District

Liverpool and Fairfield Hospitals reached out to the community to raise awareness of their health services at fun-filled open days in November.

Health Minister Brad Hazzard joined hundreds of visitors browsing a range of health promotion stalls at the open days, greeting staff and receiving information on a range of health and medical services. South Western Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Amanda Larkin said the open days welcomed the community into the hospitals so people could learn more about important health issues.

“The open days were a great success and were an opportunity to present useful health information to the community,” Ms Larkin said.

“Many of our staff were on hand to answer questions and inform people about our health care services.

“I was delighted to see such a wide variety of stalls and so many people engaging with them.”

Staff also offered information on career opportunities in south western Sydney, while the University of Sydney and Western Sydney University highlighted the education and training available within the District.

Performances by Liverpool Girls High School and an Assyrian cultural group were among the highlights of the events.

Stalls at the open days included DonateLife, Breastscreen NSW, oral health and Transforming Your Experience.
A vibrant and colourful lion dance added a cultural twist to the South Western Sydney Local Health District’s Annual Public Meeting at Bankstown’s Bryan Brown Theatre.

In his address, Professor Phillip Harris AM, the outgoing South Western Sydney Local Health District Board Chair, reflected on the District’s exceptional achievements, as well as his past eight years leading the District.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as chairman, and it has been fantastic to be part of the thriving south west community,” Professor Harris said.

“In particular, what I enjoyed the most was meeting the people of the south west, the staff and the various community members. My goal was to listen and take on board what the community wants from their health care provider, and I hope I made some changes to improve health care for the south west community.”

South Western Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Amanda Larkin presented a gift to Professor Harris in recognition of his outstanding leadership and vision as the District’s Board Chair.

“It has been a privilege to work with Professor Harris. His commitment to health is second to none, and throughout the years, we have had many great debates and discussions,” Ms Larkin said.

“His vision for how we deliver health in the south west is inspiring and he contributed so very much to our future goals.

“He leaves a strong legacy of leading safe, high quality care which will we continue to build on now and the future.”

A year in review

The Macarthur Child and Family Health nurses established the support group to help mothers breastfeed and discuss any issues or concerns they may be experiencing.

Clinical Nurse Consultant Anne McKenzie, Macarthur Child and Family Health Nurse Specialist Lorraine Thomas and Child and Family Health Nurse and International Board Certified Lactation Consultant Margaret Maloney are delighted the support group has achieved an increase in breastfeeding rates.

“We try to normalise breastfeeding expectations and give women reassurance they are doing well,” Ms Thomas said.

“The ability of a mother to successfully breastfeed her baby is a real confidence thing,” Ms Maloney said. “I see mothers walk into the group worried and stressed. When they leave feeling more confident and relaxed in their own ability to breastfeed their baby, it is so rewarding.

“The support group is located in four community areas which is convenient for mothers to attend and we are finding the women also support each other.”

As a result of the group sessions, breastfeeding rates have increased by 10 per cent for mothers with babies in three age groups, zero to four weeks, five to nine weeks and six to eight months.

Happy mums, healthy babies

The close bond shared with baby Jackson during breastfeeding is one of the joys of motherhood for Emma Lacey.

But like many mums, Emma needed a little extra support and encouragement to successfully breastfeed her baby.

“I was experiencing some problems when I started attending the Macarthur Breastfeeding Support Group and lacked confidence in my ability to breastfeed,” Ms Lacey said.

“From my first session with the group, I felt welcome and comfortable.

“The support from the nurses was amazing – and it is because of them that I am happily breastfeeding my baby.

“I am so thankful for the kindness, support and encouragement I received.”

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Keeping patients on their feet

A program pioneered at Fairfield Hospital is helping to keep patients at risk of falls on their feet.

The Able and Stable Falls Prevention program was developed to assist in the reduction of patients having a fall and ending up in the emergency department.

Patients who have experienced a fall are more likely to have another one within the next 12 months. Senior physiotherapist running the program Ms Minh Pham explains prevention is the best chance for the patients to return to their normal lives.

“The Able and Stable Falls Prevention program is a comprehensive program including gentle balance and strength exercise with education components,” Ms Pham said.

“Our aim is to reduce falls and the risks of them by helping participants improve balance, increase physical activity, improve confidence with a result of reducing the fear of falling, and providing education and advice on modifications around the home to reduce trip hazards.”

The program was developed by Fairfield Hospital staff including members from the aged services emergency team, allied health and the physiotherapy department.

Patients are referred to the team from the hospital emergency department, other inpatient acute wards or their local GP.

Classes run for nine weeks four times a year with 20 participants who receive individual assessments prior to commencing the program.

“It’s the first of its kind in our District and we have received lots of interest from other hospitals and non-government organisations. To date the program has been adopted by Campbelltown and Camden Hospitals, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’s Falls Clinic, Liverpool Specialist Aged Care and Anglican Aged Care facilities,” Ms Pham said.

The program has:

- Reduced falls by 89 per cent
- Increased balance and strength by 96 per cent
- Increased physical activity by 72 per cent
- 100 per cent satisfaction rate from participants
Mobile workforce pays off

Community nurses are giving patients better care because they’re more mobile than ever before.

Staff are now equipped with point of care devices that allow them to access client medical history before appointments and go over the patient’s information in their home.

All community health nurses have laptops and are able to document their client’s care at their home or straight after the visit.

For Macarthur Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Consultant Kathy Schofield, she can also assist colleagues who call for advice.

“If I’m on the road I can access the client’s notes and provide the appropriate advice on the patient’s symptom,” she said.

“When I first started in community nursing 20 years ago, you usually only received minimal information in the referral and you would be hoping the patient had hospital discharge papers to give us an understanding of the type of care they would need.”

Ms Schofield said being able to access pathology results before providing care was a key benefit of point of care.

Community nursing is a holistic specialty. We’re seeing the patient in their environment. That is very different to seeing a patient in a hospital setting.

“There is a power shift and our role is to empower patients to take control of their own health.”

Community nurses provide a multitude of care in the South Western Sydney Local Health District from teams specialised in wound care, catheter management, hospital in the home and palliative care.

A video was recently created as a means of promoting the point of care service and to add it to the library of community nursing videos used for recruitment drives. Starring alongside Ms Schofield in the point of care device video was Nurse Practitioner Tony Hecimovic, who has spent 15 years in community nursing and now is part of the hospital in the home program.

“The point of care device makes it a lot easier. I have a patient’s blood results on hand and it helps me decide what medications they need to take,” he said.

“We keep patients out of hospital for longer and, when they do end up in hospital, get them out quicker.”
Caring for the carers

There are more than 900,000 carers in NSW and their assistance is critical in providing help and support for their loved ones’ daily needs and activities.

Liverpool Hospital Consumer and Community Participation Coordinator Janet Harrison said taking time out was critical to both the carer and person they were looking after.

Ms Harrison highlighted how a clever idea from a consumer representative led to the transformation of a former lift lobby at Liverpool Hospital into a Carers Corner.

“It’s the little things that make a big difference in a person’s life,” Ms Harrison said.

“The Carers Corner is a time out place for families, visitors and carers of the aged care ward patients. Nothing beats a comfy chair when you’re away from home for an extended period of time. I think this concept would be a great thing for other hospitals to consider.”

Since introducing the Carers Corner, feedback has been very positive. A survey showed 100 per cent of family members who used Carers Corner found it a pleasant place to sit.

More comforting spaces are planned with a sensory room in the aged care ward underway.

“We want this space to be a home-like loungeroom, nothing like the clinical space, but just down the corridor,” Liverpool Hospital aged care Clinical Nurse Consultant Kelli Flowers said.

The space has chairs and furniture and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is preparing to create a mural on the wall.

“They are also planning on running art therapy in the space next year which will be wonderful.”

The art of healing

Participation doubled in this year’s Bravery Unmasked project with more than 100 masks on display.

The project is a South Western Sydney Cancer Service partnership with Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, involving participants working with art therapists to decorate radiation masks.

South Western Sydney Local Health District’s Cancer Supportive Care Programs Manager Gregory Webb said the project, now in its third year, was a great way for cancer survivors and their loved ones to express themselves.

“Patients often have mixed feelings about their radiation masks. For some it can be distressing, but by turning this pain into an artwork, we are empowering the patients,” he said.

“Evidence has shown there are really amazing benefits from art-based therapies in health care.”

Patients with head and neck cancer require a mask to keep their head still during radiation which ensures treatment can be delivered accurately.

On display at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre over October and November, all money raised from the sale of the masks was donated to the South Western Sydney Cancer Therapy Centre.

Guests admire the masks on display. Photo by Chantel Bann Photography.
Cultural lens on youth

The Bankstown Koori Youth Space Project is a partnership with Bankstown Community Resource Group (BCRG) which started earlier this year.

The project employs an Aboriginal Youth Worker seven hours a week and, from early February to September, 11 Aboriginal young people registered to participate.

It is delivered by Aboriginal Health Education Officer Tamika Briggs (Youth Health) and Aboriginal Youth Worker Maureen Underwood (BCRG).

Participants mark Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander significant dates, arts and craft activities, indigenous and sporting games.

South Western Sydney Local Health District Youth Health Services Manager Voula Kougelos said health checks and visits from clinicians including counsellors and nurses were incorporated into the program.

“Referrals have also been made to other health services like oral health,” she said.

“This term we are holding an eight-week session on diabetes awareness during group time on Friday afternoons.

“Sessions include information on how diabetes affects our community, preventing diabetes, cultural aspects of keeping healthy, fun activities, food tasting, sport and games.”

Ms Kougelos said paying off fines was also made easier, with young participants able to participate in the Work Development Order program if relevant to their needs.

Youth health services and BCRG have had a very effective partnership delivering this successful program and we welcome the opportunity to continue the program into its second year.”

Left. Harry Callaghan, Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, boxing with Richard Clarke. Below. Left to right Tarli Dennis with Brianna Crawly, Accredited Exercise Physiologist, and Mereki Dennis Reid.
Above and opposite. Registered Nurse Lisabeth Henry and patient Jacqueline Sarcasmo.

Bowral’s renal service

A single dialysis chair sits at the back of the short stay unit at Bowral & District Hospital. To many it is just a chair but to the Bowral community it stands for much more.

Once fully operational, the renal service will provide treatment to four local patients, opening morning and afternoon, six days a week.

To support this level of care, a staff recruitment drive is underway.

“It is an exciting step in bringing renal services to the area,” Bowral & District Hospital Cardiovascular and Medical Imaging Clinical Manager Jodie Ekholm said.

“The Southern Highlands Renal Appeal was instrumental in bringing the service to the area. The community should be very proud.”

The Home Therapies Unit is another branch of renal services. The team works with patients who can manage their dialysis at home.

“Nursing staff contact the patients frequently, monitor their bloods and manage them in their home environment,” Ms Ekholm said.

This outreach service is in addition to renal supportive care, a South Western Sydney Local Health District program that started in 2015. There were 34 referrals in 2015, 112 in 2017 and this year there are more than 200.

Dr Angela Makris, a senior renal physician, said the program supported people whose main focus was quality of life and chose not to have dialysis or were considering stopping dialysis.

“Dialysis is not necessarily the right decision for every patient,” she said.

“Instead of patients opting out of dialysis and not receiving further assistance, we now offer a multidisciplinary support for them and their families.

“More importantly, it also gives patients a choice in their treatment and it supports them through that decision.”

The renal supportive care service is a nurse-led team comprising of a renal physician, palliative physician, social worker and renal dietitian.

“We’ve had some really positive feedback from patients and their families who have been part of renal supportive care,” Dr Makris said.

Leading care, healthier communities
Celebrating our finest achievements

South Western Sydney Local Health District staff members have been honoured at the highest levels for their professional excellence and dedication to improving patient care.

NSW Health Awards

The District celebrated two category wins at the prestigious 2018 NSW Health Awards.

Liverpool Hospital’s central venous access service and after hours clinical support team received the patient safety first award for their work on the extended dwell peripheral catheter program while Janette Du Buisson Perrine was named the Volunteer of the year.

The extended dwell peripheral catheter program provides patients with a tailored approach to ensure a cannula is put in the first time and with little pain.

Liverpool Hospital Clinical Nurse Consultant and team member Evan Alexandrou said one in three patients had veins that were difficult to locate.

“What we tend to find is there are multiple attempts of cannulation. This has a flow on effect with anxiety for the patient and delays in treatment,” he said.

“The biggest thing we want to avoid is distress and pain for the patient.”

Dedicated volunteer Janette Du Buisson Perrine has served as the District’s Mental Health Consumer, Carer and Community Committee Chair since 2014 and has volunteered for more than 20 years.

Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards

Two Liverpool Hospital nurses have been recognised for their commitment to outstanding patient care at this year’s NSW Health Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards.

Paula Thomas won the Excellence in Nursing/Midwifery Graduate Award while Sally Forrest-Horder received the Excellence in Nursing – Registered Nurse Award.

Ms Thomas is completing the Transition to Professional Practice Program at Liverpool Hospital’s surgical ward. She has designed in-service training for her colleagues about evidence-based care of patients with liver dysfunction.

Ms Forrest-Horder, the hospital’s trauma case manager, has been instrumental in achieving Focused Abdominal Scan for Trauma (FAST) ultrasound through the College of Surgeons.

JMO of the year

Nominated by her peers, Dr Lana Nguyen has received the NSW JMO of the Year at the Health Education and Training Institute’s 2018 NSW Prevocational Training Awards.

Dr Lana Nguyen was recognised for establishing a resident-led peer-to-peer teaching initiative and her advocacy for additional teaching sessions that respond to needs identified by JMOs.

2018 Mental Health Matters Awards

Bilingual health educator for South Western Sydney Local Health District, Minh Tam Nguyen, who has spent more than two decades working to break down the stigma surrounding mental illness within the region’s Vietnamese-speaking community, is the winner of this year’s NSW Mental Health Commissioner’s Community Champion Award.

Ms Nguyen works in the District’s Fairfield and Liverpool mental health units to support people in their recovery.

Outside of work, she is very active in Sydney’s Vietnamese community, helping families learn more about mental health and find support if they are struggling.
The unveiling of impressive plans for the $632 million redevelopment have revealed a modern state-of-the-art hospital five times the size of the existing facility.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Health Minister Brad Hazzard inspected progress of work at the site in October after the release of a new computer-generated flythrough showcasing the massive transformation of the hospital.

“I am very impressed with all the work that has gone into these designs, which follows a comprehensive process of planning and consultation with the South Western Sydney Local Health District, hospital staff, local medical and emergency personnel, community groups and patients,” South Western Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Amanda Larkin said.

“The upgraded Campbelltown Hospital will be a first-class facility. With millions of dollars being invested locally, this is a really exciting time for the people of Campbelltown and surrounds.”

The redevelopment includes a new clinical services building with modern wards and patient facilities, a bigger emergency department with more treatment spaces and enhanced medical and surgical children’s services.

The mental health service will be centrally located within the clinical services building along with state-of-the-art operating theatres and intensive care unit, new women’s health services and increased access to cancer, outpatient and ambulatory care services.

Work has already begun on the $34.1 million multi-storey car park which is due for completion in late-2019, while construction on the main hospital building is expected to start next year.

“A1 commemorative plaque is unveiled in honour of the late Fred Borg, the founder of the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer.”

“We are so grateful to benefit from this outstanding initiative and I would like to thank everyone who participated as the funds help us purchase specialised equipment and services which greatly benefit our patients.”

The fundraising movement, which includes a number of other events throughout the year, has helped purchase:

- A 12-seater wheelchair-accessible patient transport bus
- Salary of a full-time driver
- Staff training for specialised paediatric care nurses
- Purchase of specialised mattresses, chairs and cushions for terminally ill patients to borrow for their home
- Cool caps to help during chemotherapy treatments
- Digital TV access
- Vouchers for children receiving cancer treatment
- Laser machine to treat bladder stones and tumours
- Commode chairs for oncology and palliative care

Campbelltown Athletics Stadium was filled with a sea of orange T-shirts for the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur walkathon in October.

In the 12 years of the fundraiser, more than $3.7 million has been raised by the local community to support Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals’ cancer services.

Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals General Manager Alison Derrett said it was wonderful to have such generosity in the community.

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“I want a super fund that understands my industry.”

Anne Mitchell, HESTA member

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Name: Alison Holderness

Position: Nurse Unit Manager of the Bulundidi Gudaga and Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service teams, which is an Aboriginal home visiting program.

Tell us a bit about your role? I lead a team of dynamic and inspiring health professionals to provide support to families who have identified that they are having an Aboriginal baby. We work in partnership by focusing on their strengths from the antenatal period until the child reaches their second birthday. It’s a multidisciplinary program with a range of staff providing care including Aboriginal health workers, child and family health nurses, social workers and mental health professionals.

Why is your role important? My role as the leader of this program is to help empower my team to be the best that they can be in their roles as individuals as well as a team to work together with the Aboriginal community.

What led you to it? I was previously a clinician within the team and fell in love with the program. The model of care allows us to work alongside families, letting them take the lead, helping them unpack their own lives, both past and present, while we walk alongside them. I wanted the opportunity to lead this amazing and dynamic program.

What do you love most about your job? Being part of the change management process for the program itself and staff being the best version they can be working within it. It’s hard work but very rewarding and exciting.

What are the changes/improvements you’ve made or programs you’ve implemented that you are most proud of? It’s definitely been a team effort and a work in progress from all to have the team where it is today. But I suppose, as a team, we have implemented some processes in terms of client recruitment, case reviews processes and team self-care. Our latest is having a quiet-time period each afternoon, where conversations are kept to a minimum, phone calls are taken out of the room as much as possible and paperwork is given priority. We also do meditation at the start of each team meeting.

Greatest career achievements: Everything is an achievement in my mind. I love where my career has taken me and feel excited about the future.

Nickname: Ali or Al

Earliest memory: Vague memory of being in nappies when I was a toddler and the local dog chasing me.

What did you think you were going to be when you grew up? From Kindergarten I knew I wanted to become a nurse.

Hobbies and interests: Keeping as well and as healthy as I can be. My own self care is very important to me. I also enjoy spending time with family and friends, eating delicious multicultural food, reading each morning and being creative.

Favourite quote: Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it’s amazing what they can accomplish - Sam Walton.

Hidden talent: I’m told that getting up at 3.45am four days a week is a talent.