

Caring for the Coast Awards

Recognising our people for
their outstanding contribution

24

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A message from our Chief Executive Scott McLachlan

Welcome to the Caring for the Coast Awards



Thank you for joining us as we pause to acknowledge and celebrate some of the amazing work our people do every day to care for our community.

We are privileged to be part of people's lives every step of the way, from the birth of a precious child to the last days of life, everything we do touches someone's life.

The Caring for the Coast Awards give us an opportunity to showcase some of the immense talent we have here on the Coast and the difference our people are making to the people who need our care.

Whether it's driving innovative research, pioneering new ways of working, building knowledge and capabilities across teams or going above and beyond in their role, our people are dedicated to advancing and enriching our health services to meet the changing needs of our community.

The high standard of this year's award nominations shows our unwavering commitment to quality care, innovation and improvement.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate a colleague or team and congratulations to all our amazing nominees, finalists and winners for your outstanding achievements.

Finally, thank you to our sponsors for partnering with us to champion quality healthcare for the Central Coast, we appreciate you making this celebration possible.

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Our finalists

Excellence in Improving Equity in Healthcare Award

Recognising exceptional healthcare, that is responsive to the needs of the local Aboriginal community, people from multicultural backgrounds or other diverse needs.



Culturally safe care – a commitment to practice

Violence, Abuse and Neglect services (VAN) undertook an extensive process to improve and embed culturally safe and humble practice when providing care for Aboriginal clients. Beginning with an Aboriginal Action Plan in 2022, the project culminated in the development of a tangible resource known as the 'tree'. Designed primarily for non-Aboriginal staff, the tool is an illustration of a tree which articulates the service's commitment to cultural safety and supports staff to lean into cultural conversations and explore with every client what culture means to them, and how we can consider and respect their cultural needs when providing care.

Developed in consultation with staff and illustrated by Aboriginal artist Jason Douglas, the tool assists with establishing engagement and building trust with clients from their very first contact with the VAN service.



Aboriginal early childhood screening clinic

The Nunyara Aboriginal Health Unit launched audiology and speech pathology clinics aimed at early detection of hearing and speech issues in Aboriginal children aged 6 months to 6 years. Seeking to reduce wait times for public hospital Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) services, the clinic offers initial specialist assessments and streamlines referrals, enhancing development outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal children.

The clinic's impact has been significant, with 34.5 per cent fewer children needing further specialist care after initial assessments, helping to improve timely access for those children who do require ENT specialist support. Additionally, the clinics have enabled clinicians to pick up vaccination gaps and development delays, providing a comprehensive and integrated model of care. A scalable and replicable model for culturally sensitive, accessible care, the project has been a successful example of how improved efficiency, better patient outcomes and community engagement can be achieved in a collaborative, open and respectful way.



REACH in the home

REACH in the home is an initiative launched by the Special Care Nursery (SCN), providing a dedicated phone line for parents of newborns under two weeks old to seek medical advice from specialist SCN staff. Adapting the existing REACH program to the home setting, a bright yellow sticker in the Blue Book guides parents to call with any concerns, ensuring timely, equitable access to care and avoiding the stress of an emergency department visit.

Led by skilled nurses and midwives, the initiative prioritises family-centred care and cross-departmental collaboration to reduce risks to babies in the early weeks, with potential to be replicated in other local health districts. This innovative approach not only enhances outcomes for babies but empowers parents and carers, ensuring prompt, empathetic care for their newborns.

Our finalists

Volunteer of the Year

Recognising a volunteer who provides excellent support for staff, patients, carers and families.



Janet Topp

Janet worked as a nurse for many years – 19 of them at Gosford Hospital – and tells us, “I’ve got the hospital in my blood.” Six years ago, an advert in the paper caught her eye and Janet became a volunteer, a role she holds with pride. Janet volunteers two days a week in the Cancer Centre providing support to patients and visitors, restocking supplies and helping with whatever tasks come her way, from making blankets for the special care nursery to assisting with flu vaccinations.

An excellent listener, Janet is often seen comforting or having a laugh with patients and is known for her warm, welcoming nature. She takes great pride in her work, enthusiastically participates in volunteer education and is one of the first the team looks to for the training of new volunteers. Janet has a special talent for connecting with others and says, “I like to help people. Even if it only makes a little bit of difference, I love to help.”



Moira O'Neill

Moira joined CCLHD as a volunteer in 2022 and hasn't stopped since. She shares, “from the very first day, I knew I belonged. The staff have always made me feel that I mattered, so it has been easy to create the same feeling for everyone else.”

Her regular shift is on the main guide desk helping with wayfinding, but she's always busy doing any job she can turn her hand to, from putting together COVID swabs for the emergency department (ED) to kid's packs for the paediatric ward. One of the first to reply when a call is put out for extra volunteers, Moira embraces fun, participating in occasions like the Gathering of Kindness, and Christmas festivities. Moira tells us, “I am passionate about the work and just love it. To be uplifted by a smile, wave or a thank you is a beautiful thing and I love that my role helps me give that to others.”



Penny Kirchner

Penny's journey from her role as General Services Manager in a Sydney hospital to her multi-faceted volunteering commitments at CCLHD show her unwavering dedication to volunteering and healthcare. A volunteer for the past 11 years, Penny's most loved role has been as a Community Palliative Care Volunteer. Penny visits palliative care clients in their home, providing social support, respite and transport to appointments – supporting more than 200 clients to date.

A tireless advocate for our volunteer and consumer services, Penny often reaches out to her community networks to support CCLHD and generously uses her amazing sewing skills to create homemade items for patients. Penny shares, “I am proud to have supported so many wonderful people. Helping palliative care patients and their carers cope and take care of themselves is so appreciated, and something I hope I can continue to do for some time yet.”

Our finalists

Keeping People Healthy Award

Recognising work with the community to provide community-based health services, raise awareness of healthy choices, prevent ill health and improve the overall health and wellbeing of the community.



Healthy Bites

Healthy Bites is an innovative radio series aiming to enhance the health and wellbeing of people aged 50+. Produced by the Health Promotion team in collaboration with community health professionals—the series delivers concise, evidence-based health advice in bite-sized 60-90 second episodes. Covering topics essential for healthy ageing such as falls, chronic health conditions and healthy eating, the episodes air on local Central Coast station Radio Five-O Plus, reaching over 150,000 listeners daily.

The initiative has successfully turned traditional advertising slots into editorial content—leveraging in-house production capabilities to create high-quality content at minimal cost. The series empowers listeners to manage their health independently while aligning with CCLHD's goal is to improve health literacy, showcasing the possibilities for micro-podcasting as an educational tool in future.



Move Like a Mariner

A collaboration between the Health Promotion team and the Central Coast Mariners, Move Like a Mariner aims to improve the daily teaching of fundamental movement skills in children aged three to five. The six-week program, implemented in early childhood services to help them meet statewide 'Munch and Move' key performance indicators, integrates daily movement alongside healthy 'sip and snack' messages. The program provides training and resources for educators and has so far been introduced to 108 childcare services, benefiting over 9,000 children.

Educators are encouraged to evaluate their experience and provide feedback—which so far indicates improved movement teaching capabilities and high educator satisfaction—with the chance to win a team visit from the Mariners. This project shows the success of its sustainable train-the-trainer model, fostering collaboration and empowerment while promoting healthy movement and eating practices in early childhood.



Long Jetty Urgent Care Service

Long Jetty Urgent Care Service offers timely healthcare for non-life-threatening illnesses and injuries, improving access for our community and helping to reduce demand on our emergency departments. The service operates daily, from 8am to 8pm, providing medical, nursing and allied health support.

Accessed via healthdirect, the service also provides patient follow up calls within 48 hours to check how patients are managing and link them into other community care services if needed. Patient feedback has been positive supporting CCLHD's priority to enhance the care we provide in the community to meet changing health needs and improve patient experience and outcomes.

A true collaboration, the project mobilised expertise from multiple stakeholders to quickly establish the infrastructure and open its doors to patients.

Our finalists

Patient Safety and Experience Award

Recognising a commitment to quality improvement to safe, patient-centred care that leads to better health outcomes or an improved experience in acute care, community or other settings.



Gosford Cancer Services – Rapid Assessment Unit

The Rapid Assessment Unit (RAU) at Gosford Cancer Day Unit offers an alternative pathway for cancer patients, to help reduce unnecessary ED visits and facilitate timely treatment in a familiar setting. Led by skilled cancer nurses, the unit provides prompt care through nurse-initiated orders for treatments from fluids to antibiotics, pain relief and pathology, supported by remote oversight by the treating consultant. Between January 2023 and April 2024, there were 907 patient presentations, with 701 avoiding a visit to ED – reducing length of stay, improving patient flow and ensuring the best patient experience with nurses who know their history and cancer plan.

With plans for expansion to Wyong, the approach of the Rapid Assessment Unit exemplifies the possibilities when collaboration and a patient-centred approach inform cancer care.



Midwifery Group Practice homebirth model

The Midwifery Group Practice team offers a homebirth model of maternity care focussed on low risk, well women, that promotes holistic wellness during pregnancy and birth through continuity of midwifery care. The service commenced in November 2023, receiving enthusiastic feedback from women and families who highlighted the transformative impact homebirth had on their birthing confidence and experience. With a 94 per cent rate of normal vaginal birth, this model of care demonstrates improved outcomes for women and babies, and a reduction in waste compared to birth in a hospital setting. It has enhanced midwives' experiences in their roles, allowing them to fulfil their full scope of practice within clear clinical pathways.

The service's success integrating midwifery care into home settings, alongside the suite of other maternity care options on the Central Coast, sets a benchmark focussed on continuity of care and enabling local families more choice in their place of birth.



Safe ways of working in Wyong Mental Health Unit

The team at Wyong Mental Health Inpatient Unit set out to address seclusion rates and their impact on patient and staff wellbeing by implementing the Safewards model, an evidence-based model designed to mitigate conflict. Through the model, a range of new initiatives were introduced including patient and staff debriefings and nurse-led groups and activities to help foster deeper therapeutic connections with patients and lasting cultural transformation in the unit. The result was a 66 per cent reduction in seclusion episodes with a 90 per cent decrease in their duration. Patient debriefings have become routine and provide valuable feedback for weekly multi-disciplinary team care plan reviews, ensuring insights are communicated across the team to improve patient experience. Staff are enthusiastic about the opportunities for further changes and skill development to enhance therapeutic engagement with patients.

Our finalists

Maree Gleeson Award for Excellence in Research

Recognising outstanding achievement in research positively improving patient experience and outcomes, our health decisions, policies and practices.



Co-designing an integrated model of palliative and dementia care

This research program delivered an evidence-informed model of palliative and dementia care, to better address the needs of people with dementia at end-of-life. The research included audits, interviews, surveys and an international evidence review of best practice. In 2023, seven multi-agency workshops were held with consumers including carers, bereaved carers and people living with dementia to co-design the new model of care. The co-design process was well-received by stakeholders and has led to wider engagement with industry partners, consumers and carers.

Based on the research findings, the team advocated for a dedicated dementia care coordinator at CCLHD to improve care coordination, while other findings supported the design of the new Palliative Care Unit at Wyong. Strong interest in the program through publications, conferences and awards underscore its role in advancing end-of-life care for people with dementia.



Multidisciplinary MND Clinic evaluation

Access to person-centred, multidisciplinary care for patients with the progressive neurological condition motor neurone disease (MND) has been shown to deliver improved quality of life, health outcomes and care experiences. This collaborative study brought together clinicians with expertise in MND working across CCLHD, the aged and disability sectors and researchers from the Central Coast Research Institute and Macquarie University to evaluate the impact of a privately-run Central Coast MND clinic.

The study showed that the clinic was valued by patients, improves knowledge of treatment modalities for clinicians, provides vital case management and care navigation and timely access to care close to home. The research informed proposals to continue the MND multidisciplinary clinic on the Central Coast, while also demonstrating the potential for the clinic to be replicated in other regional local health districts and adopted as a model of care for patients with other chronic complex conditions.



The CLEANing and Enhanced disinfection (CLEEN) study

The CLEEN study evaluated the effectiveness of improved cleaning and disinfection of shared medical equipment to reduce healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). The study, in partnership with the Infection Prevention and Control team and led by Prof Brett Mitchell and his team from Avondale University used a randomised, controlled design to improve the routine cleaning of equipment such as IV poles, infusion pumps, blood pressure machines, and computers on wheels across 10 wards.

Working closely with environmental services staff, the study implemented increased cleaning hours, education on cleaning and disinfection techniques and auditing of cleaning efficacy, including feedback on cleanliness. This resulted in a 34.5 per cent reduction in HAIs and optimised resource utilisation and efficiency, with flow-on benefits of shorter hospital stays and improved patient outcomes. The study demonstrates the critical role of dedicated cleaning protocols in infection prevention, with potential to inform global hospital policies. The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of proactive infection prevention strategies and show how these improvements can positively impact healthcare delivery and patient care.

Our finalists

Innovation and Sustainability Award

Recognising innovations in models of care, systems or services, or achievements to reduce our environmental footprint or improve our financial efficiency, whilst continuing to deliver high quality health care and patient experience.



Emergency medication management review project

This multidisciplinary project aimed to address inefficiencies and waste associated with emergency medications used in inpatient and clinic areas and by the ICU rapid response team. Using open communication and education the project tackled accepted norms that emergency medication stock holdings should be available everywhere. Yellow emergency drug packs and 'tackle boxes' were removed and replaced, imprest medications were streamlined and intubation kits removed from areas where they were non-essential.

The team undertook risk assessments, audits and initiated QR-coded checklists to assist staff. There were no negative impacts to patient care but many service benefits including medication cost savings of \$24,000, reduction in waste, time saving for nurses and pharmacy staff and a donation of excess equipment to a medical aid mission in Rwanda.



Early intervention for lymphoedema and shoulder dysfunction

The physiotherapy team saw an opportunity to introduce a patient-centred program of early intervention for patients at risk of lymphoedema while undergoing treatment for breast cancer. When patients join the program, they are given support with any shoulder dysfunction and are monitored for up to two years post-operatively to detect early signs of lymphoedema so it can be prevented or proactively managed. Using this model of care, CCLHD has reduced chronic lymphoedema to less than 10 per cent, aligning with international guidelines, and paving the way for the program to be rolled out in 13 other local health districts.

Other benefits include significantly improved patient outcomes, cost savings and demonstration of the program's potential to be used for other cancers. Through comprehensive stakeholder engagement and collaboration across treatment stages, the project has achieved fantastic outcomes for patients.



Alternate care pathways: improving sustainability and patient experience

Central Coast Health at Home (CCH@Home) provides a range of alternate care pathways via comprehensive virtual care and triage for partners like NSW Ambulance and local residential aged care services (RACFs).

Developed by the Community, Chronic and Complex Care team, the service supports avoidable emergency department presentations and hospital admissions. In the first nine months of CCH@Home's operation, 4,389 people were able to receive high quality care in the comfort of their own home. The service helped to avoid over 280 NSW ambulances presenting to Gosford and Wyong EDs between July 2023 and March 2024 and supported 1,380 RACF referrals through the Aged Care Response Team, leading to 1,046 hospital avoidance encounters.

Improving patient experience is at the core of the alternate pathways and feedback from patients and their families is extremely positive. The service supports improved patient outcomes and a reduction in unnecessary hospital transfers.

Our finalists

Staff Member of Year

Recognising a clinical or non-clinical staff member who makes an exceptional contribution, inspires others and supports effective teamwork.



Margie Fletcher

Neurology Clinical Nurse Consultant

Margie is renowned for her passion and expertise in neurological care, in her role as the Clinical Nurse Consultant for neurology. She loves nothing better than sharing her knowledge and infectious enthusiasm with everyone she works alongside. Margie is always finding creative ways to deliver training and developed the 'neurology trolley' to provide brief education sessions to colleagues, enabling them to receive important teaching without leaving the floor.

Margie has developed a strategic plan focussing on integrating research and education into clinical practice for patients with Parkinson's Disease, seizure disorders and other neurological conditions. Margie is a champion for patient safety and continuous learning and has been instrumental in the success of the Older Person's Patient Safety project, driving change, supporting staff and managing the associated documentation.

Margie is always looking for improvements and new ways to deliver safe patient care.



Emma Thomson

Senior Dietitian

Emma is a highly respected member of our community and allied health team who demonstrates a continuous commitment to providing evidence-based quality nutrition services. A skilled and knowledgeable clinician, Emma integrates her compassion and knowledge in the way she works with clients with very complex needs. Emma has long advocated for patients with chronic complex conditions like motor neurone disease (MND) and was instrumental in the set-up of a clinic to support patients with gastrostomy tubes. Her colleagues credit her knowledge and experience as a key driver behind the community allied health team's outstanding nutritional support for people with MND and end-of-life patients.

Emma shares her knowledge freely - she speaks at conferences as an expert in her field and has been acknowledged for her development and mentoring of junior team members. She has extensive clinical and leadership skills and consistently exceeds the expectations of her role.



Nola Harrison

Patient Experience Officer

Nola exemplifies the role of Patient Experience Officer, providing compassionate care to all who present to Wyong emergency department (ED). Numerous community compliments affirm Nola's ability to create a calm and welcoming environment in the ED waiting room, keeping patients and families up to date on processes and expected wait times.

Her empathy, clear communication style and respectful approach see her navigate complex and emotional situations with calm professionalism. She innovatively engages with patients such as decorating a glove for a distressed child, as well as flagging changes in a patient's condition with clinical staff.

Nola's skills are evident in her proactive management of the waiting room and advocacy for patient welfare, even in rapidly changing situations. Nola's approach is characterised by inclusivity and respect. Feedback from patients and staff is that she creates a space where people feel acknowledged, cared for and informed.

Our finalists

People and Culture Award

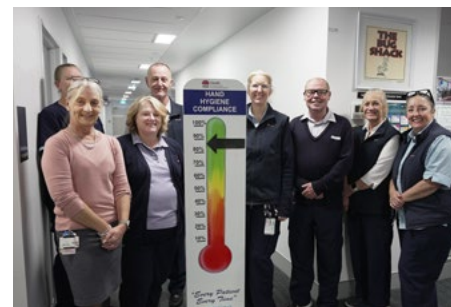
Recognising a team or project that supports our workforce to deliver safe, reliable, person-centred care that drives the best outcomes and experience for patients and staff.



Capital Works Team –Capital Program Delivery

This small team is dedicated to making a big difference, delivering a diverse range of clinical and non-clinical projects to enhance the built infrastructure of our facilities. The team delivered over 30 projects in the past year, from the refurbishment of Long Jetty to create the Urgent Care Service, linear accelerator upgrades for cancer services, replacement of medical imaging's angiography machine at Gosford, the new Wyong Safe Haven, upgrades to the uninterrupted power supply at Gosford and Wyong operating theatres as well as roof and lift replacements.

Using an innovative two-tiered procurement strategy the team have streamlined operations, saving time and costs. All their projects are driven by a culture of inclusivity and consultation, collaborating with clinicians and consumers to improve patient and staff experience and deliver welcoming and culturally safe spaces.



Infection Prevention and Control Team

Keeping bugs at bay and keeping people healthy is what drives this team. With a focus on hand hygiene and environmental cleaning, the team work collaboratively across every clinical area to educate, audit and improve capability in infection prevention and control.

Recent successes include an award from the Clinical Excellence Commission for an educational display and work with the Gloves Off project at Wyong ED, a sustainability initiative to use less gloves with the added benefit of improving hand hygiene education.

A supportive team environment is at the centre of delivering innovative solutions like dedicated hand hygiene auditors. The team are most proud of their success in improving hand hygiene across CCLHD, and the way they work together to empower their colleagues to deliver safe, quality care for everyone.



Wyong Hospital Breathlessness Clinic Team

The clinic is led by a multidisciplinary team, comprising a respiratory nurse, psychologist, physiotherapist and respiratory physician, who collaborate to provide evidence-based, tailored interventions for patients experiencing breathlessness. The team ensures every member's clinical opinion is valued equally and cross-discipline education is fostered.

Fundamental to improving the health outcomes for these patients is understanding what matters most to them and what they want to achieve. The clinic team ensures patients and carers are regularly invited to have their say and be part of decision-making about their own health.

The results show the team is enabling people with a high level of disease severity to lead more fulfilling lives. Patients say they feel more hopeful, more supported and have attempted activities they had previously avoided, while hospital presentations for patients of the clinic have reduced.

