

Enhancements to HNE Health Cancer Services

- Hunter New England Health **invested \$18 million to expand radiotherapy facilities at Calvary Mater Newcastle** as part of the \$212-million-dollar redevelopment of that campus. As a result, Calvary Mater Newcastle has the largest radiation oncology service in NSW and **funding to support five linear accelerators**.
- Calvary Mater Newcastle has recently made a number of process changes to **streamline the co-ordination of patient care and the management of clinic time**. For example, previously patients would have a blood test on the day of their treatment. Now patients are asked to have blood tests done the day before treatment whenever possible so results are ready at the time of treatment. Small process changes like this will contribute to a significant streamlining of services over time. CMN has also mapped the flow of patients through the medical oncology department to identify issues and gaps and identified ways to improve them. (see recommendation 9)
- Hunter New England Health has **hired a new full-time medical oncologist at Manning Hospital in Taree** who will start work in March 2012. It also put on a transitional nurse practitioner for cancer services there. Staff at the Calvary Mater Newcastle had provided outreach oncology clinics at Manning Hospital since the early 1990s, and having a new full-time oncologist at Taree will take pressure off staff and services in Newcastle. It also means cancer patients in that region can access quality care closer to home. (see recommendation 1)
- As a result of the Cancer Listening Posts held across HNE Health in 2011, HNE Health has **introduced a project to track a cancer patient's journey between our services, particularly their experiences before, during and after surgery**. Cancer patients identified a number of factors that would improve their patient journey, including support and information during surgical treatment for cancer. The project will reveal what support and education are currently available to patients, and what further improvements can be made to achieve more patient-centred care. (see recommendation 9)
- The Federal and State Governments are working together to establish a **\$41.6 million Regional Cancer Centre** on the grounds of Tamworth Hospital, which is expected to be operational in early 2013. Once operational, the Centre will further relieve some of the pressures from services in Newcastle. More patients from Northern NSW who have traditionally been treated at Newcastle will now be treated in Tamworth. This will greatly reduce the patient load on the Newcastle services and reduce the time Hunter patients spend on the treatment waiting list. The Centre will include:
 - A linear accelerator to provide radiation therapy and two radiotherapy bunkers
 - An additional six chemotherapy chairs (four at Tamworth and two at Armidale)
 - Major diagnostic equipment including a new CT scanner
 - An additional 14 accommodation places for rural and regional patients and their carers (see recommendation 1)

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- Hunter New England Health **expanded medical oncology consultation and treatment clinics across the region.** In 2010, clinics at Muswellbrook resumed with the assistance of a Tamworth medical oncologist. A clinic was also established in Moree to reduce the need for cancer patients from across North West of the state travelling up to eight hours for appointments. (see recommendation 1)
- In 2010, Hunter New England Health established the **first publicly available breast reconstructive surgery in NSW.** The appointment of a surgeon at Calvary Mater Newcastle meant women, including those in need of breast reconstruction after breast cancer, could have a consultation and surgery in Newcastle rather than travel to Sydney.
- In 2010, Hunter New England Health's Cancer Network secured funding to begin a **project aimed at raising the profile for breast cancer screening amongst Aboriginal women.** This program continues.
- In March 2009 the Hunter Prostate Cancer Centre was opened. Funded by the NSW Government, it was the **first facility in NSW to provide a dedicated prostate cancer counseling service in NSW.** The two new counselors will help affected men and their families by providing information and support for men diagnosed with prostate cancer and those supporting them. HNE Health works in partnership with the Centre to establish links with cancer treatment services across HNE Health to help provide more co-ordinated care.
- Hunter New England Health **appointed a full-time dedicated medical oncologist to Tamworth Hospital in late 2009.** Prior to this the Calvary Mater staff travelled to Tamworth provide medical oncology services. The appointment helped ease pressure on staff and services in Newcastle and provided greater opportunity for people from the New England region to access services closer to home. (see recommendation 1)