



## ■ Patients and Visitors Guide





## Welcome

Welcome to our hospital. Our goal is to provide you with a quality health service experience.

This booklet is designed to provide you and your family with all the information you need for a comfortable stay. It will help you to understand the hospital systems in place to assist you. This booklet will also help your family understand how they can support you while you are in hospital.

Hunter New England Health's vision is Healthier Communities: Excellence in Healthcare and the values which we hold and against which we are prepared to be judged and measured are: Teamwork, Honesty, Respect, Ethics, Excellence, Caring, Commitment, Courage.

We want you to feel confident and comfortable with our high standard of healthcare and support services and your feedback is important to us. If you have any questions or concerns or if you do not consider that our values are evident in the behaviours of staff included in your care while in hospital, please speak with your nurse or the nurse manager in your ward.

With best wishes,

Dr Nigel Lyons

Chief Executive, Hunter New England Health



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## About Hunter New England Health

### General information

- Provides care for about 840,000 people
- Covers a geographical area of more than 130,000 square kilometres
- Has about 14,500 staff (approx 10,699 Full Time Equivalents)
- Has 1500 medical officers
- Has more than 1600 volunteers
- Provides health services to 12 per cent of the state's population
- Provides health services to 20 per cent of the state's Aboriginal population
- Spans 25 local council areas and 32 local government areas
- Spends \$1.3 billion per year
- Has an area administration office in Newcastle and a regional office in Tamworth
- Is one of four rural health services in NSW, but is the only one with a metropolis within its borders

## Hunter New England Health has public hospitals and health facilities at:

|                             |                 |                      |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Armidale                    | Guyra           | Quirindi             |
| Ashford                     | Gwabegar        | Raymond Terrace      |
| Barraba                     | Harrington      | Scone                |
| Belmont                     | Hawks Nest      | Singleton            |
| Beresfield                  | Inverell        | Stroud               |
| Bingara                     | Kurri Kurri     | Tambar Springs       |
| Bogabilla                   | Maitland        | Tamworth             |
| Boggabri                    | Manilla         | Tenterfield          |
| Bulahdelah                  | Manning - Taree | Tingha               |
| Bundarra                    | Merriwa         | Toomelah             |
| Cessnock                    | Moree           | Toronto              |
| Clarence Town               | Morisset        | Uralla               |
| Denman                      | Mungindi        | Walcha               |
| Dungog                      | Murrurundi      | Walhallow            |
| Eastlakes                   | Muswellbrook    | Wallsend             |
| East Maitland               | Narrabri        | Waratah              |
| Emmaville - Vegetable Creek | Nelson Bay      | Warialda             |
| Forster                     | New Lambton     | Wee Waa              |
| Glen Innes                  | Newcastle       | Werris Creek         |
| Gloucester                  | Nundle          | Windale - East Lakes |
| Gresford                    | Pilliga         | Wingham              |
| Gunnedah                    | Premer          |                      |

### Disclaimer

The Executive of this health service is grateful to the advertisers who make this directory possible. However, an advertisement in this directory does not imply endorsement by the Executive.

## The Code of Conduct

All Hunter New England Health employees and volunteers are guided by the NSW Health Code of Conduct.

Together with the Hunter New England Health Values, the NSW Health Code of Conduct provides a framework for decisions and actions that relate to conduct within Hunter New England Health and is applicable to staff working in any permanent, temporary, casual, termed appointment or honorary capacity.

Together, the Code of Conduct and Values provide a framework which promotes teamwork, honesty, respect, ethics, excellence, caring commitment and courage. The Code of Conduct and Values shape our culture and guide staff in their provision of care or daily work activity.

It's our commitment to our communities, patients and colleagues, to deliver healthier communities and excellence in health care.

To find out more about our commitment to you, visit [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/about\\_us/\\_values](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/about_us/_values) or [www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pd/2005/PD2005\\_626.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pd/2005/PD2005_626.html)

## Smoke-free Health Service Policy

Smoking (including exposure to other people's smoke) is the largest preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Hunter New England Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of patients, staff and visitors. Smoking is not allowed in any buildings, grounds or car parks. It is a condition of entry to our sites that you do not smoke. Please make sure your visitors know this.

To help patients not smoke while they are in hospital nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is available. On discharge, a three day supply of NRT (patches) and a referral to the NSW Quitline counselling service will be provided to patients that used NRT during their stay and want to continue their quit attempt.

There are many benefits for your health if you stop smoking during your treatment. Not smoking can improve the speed of your recovery from illness or surgery and decrease your risk of complications. The best thing you can do for your health is to quit smoking, so why not take advantage of a supportive environment while you're in hospital.

Remember, all Hunter New England Health facilities are smoke-free.

## Your property

Please do not keep valuables such as jewellery, mobile phones, or large amounts of money with you in hospital. A small amount of money for daily needs is sufficient. Staff will arrange safekeeping of valuables for patients who are admitted unexpectedly. Notify staff immediately of any lost property. Found items may be handed in to Security.

## Single Rooms

Single room accommodation in public hospitals is allocated firstly on the clinical needs of patients and then according to bed availability and health insurance cover. If bed shortages occur, you may be transferred to another bed in your unit or to other units. Please be aware in shared wards you may be required to share with the opposite sex.

## Televisions

In those hospitals where a television service operates, charges will apply to access this service. Personal television sets are strictly not allowed as they can cause interference to medical equipment. Where television sets are available, private patients have theirs connected free of charge.

## Safety

### Electrical appliances and radios

Any electrical appliances brought into the hospital, such as hair dryers, shavers or portable radios must be in good working order and used only by the owner. You will be asked to remove any item that is considered unsafe or causes interference to medical equipment. An earpiece must be used at all times with portable radios.

### Food safety, meals and snacks

Hunter New England Health has an accredited Food Safety Plan in place and would appreciate your assistance to maintain the high standards of food hygiene and food handling practices. To do so, we ask that you:

- eat your meals within the specified meal time period
- don't reheat food in the microwave
- don't bring in food from outside sources that requires reheating or refrigeration
- wash (or ask staff to wash) fresh fruit prior to eating.
- if you bring formula for your baby, make sure the can is unopened

Visitors are asked to check with staff that snacks and meals they bring for their loved ones are suitable and that storage requirements can be met.

Please note that packaged food, such as confectionery and biscuits, are fine.

If you have any questions or special dietary requirements, please ask a dietary assistant.

## Alcohol

Alcohol and other drugs are not to be brought into the hospital by patients or visitors.

## Zero tolerance

You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to receive treatment in a violence-free environment. You must also respect the rights of the health professionals treating you, your family and friends, and the rights of other staff, patients and visitors.

You must not harass, abuse, threaten or put health staff or any other person on health service premises, at risk of physical or psychological harm.

Violence makes it harder for health workers to provide good health care to you and your loved ones.

## General emergency procedures

The hospital building incorporates safety features, including an automatic fire detection system. Staff are trained to manage general emergency situations within the hospital, including evacuation of patient areas. If evacuation of your area becomes necessary, staff will escort you to a designated assembly point in the hospital grounds.

In the event of a general emergency:

- Stay calm
- Remain near your bed
- Wait for instructions from staff or fire officers

*Under no circumstances should the lifts be used during a general emergency.*

## Staff identification

Hospital staff wear various uniforms. All staff wear name badges. The staff directly involved with your care will introduce themselves and explain their role in your treatment. If you need further information, please ask the staff caring for you.

## Health Care Interpreter Service

An interpreter service is available at no cost to assist patients and their families from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds who are not fluent in English, and people who are deaf that require a signing interpreter, in accessing hospital services. Please notify a member of staff if an interpreter is required.

## Social Workers

Social Workers assist patients and their families by providing support for issues or concerns that relate to your stay in hospital. This can include adjustment to health conditions, coping with a traumatic event, grief and bereavement counselling, family conflict, liaison between a patient, their family and other health professionals, information about resources and referral to community services when you are discharged. Please ask a member of your care team if you would like to see a Social Worker.

## Aboriginal Liaison Officer Service

The Aboriginal Liaison Officer is available to assist Aboriginal patients if they or their family need help in accessing hospital services. The officer also visits Aboriginal patients in the hospital and can liaise with other Aboriginal organisations on request.

## Care and Treatment

### How do I protect myself from infection: the importance of hygiene

There is always a risk of infection whilst patients undergo procedures or are hospitalised. The healthcare system encourages patients, visitors and staff to practice good hygiene and hand washing to reduce transfer of infectious bacteria and viruses.

Healthcare staff are required to wash hands and/or use hand gel prior to and after delivering care to patients. Patients are encouraged to

speak to their nurse manager if they have concerns about neglect of hand cleaning by staff or have other concerns about the cleanliness of their hospital area.

Ask staff for a brochure if you would like more information on how to protect yourself from infection.

### Doctors' visiting times

Staff will advise you of the times that doctors visit. If you wish to speak to your doctor outside of these times or your relatives wish to see your doctor, please notify staff. It is also advisable to keep a written list of questions for your doctor.

### Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning involves having conversations about your health care preferences for the future in case a time comes when you can no longer make or communicate decisions for yourself. It involves getting information about your illness and reflecting upon your choices for treatment and what is important to you. Advance Care Planning can help you think about, understand and make decisions about your treatment preferences. Please speak to a member of staff if you would like further information.

### EDuCARE Support Service

The EDuCARE Support Service is a Hunter New England Health initiative that aims to improve the health and well being of carers within the Hunter. EDuCARE consists of a team of health professionals who provide educational support to carers and advice to Hunter New England Health and other service providers who offer a service for carers. We aim to promote health, foster

independent living skills and ensure equity and access of services for all carers. Our service is non-profit based and is offered free of charge to carers and their families. Respite is also available to carers whilst attending our education program.

Our education service offers you and the family practical hands on techniques as well as coping skills, stress management, information regarding legal and financial issues, community services and disease specific education.

For further information and details regarding our education program, please call the EDuCARE Support Service on: 4921 4895 or 1300 887 776.

### Students in training

Many of our hospitals are teaching hospitals, and they play an important role in training future health professionals. While in hospital, you may be asked to discuss details of your condition and undergo examinations by students who will be under supervision. However, if you choose not to participate in teaching programs, your wishes will be respected.

### Medical records

Medical records are kept for all patients with access strictly limited to those directly involved in patient treatment. The contents of your medical record can only be released with your consent or if required by law. The medical record remains the property of the hospital.

You have the right to see your medical record. The hospital will nominate a member of staff to be present to assist you if you wish to access your records to help you explain what is written.

## Safe lifting

All Hunter New England Health facilities have implemented a "Safe Lifting" policy, which is intended to safeguard patients and reduce injury rates among nurses and other staff. The policy requires an assessment of each patient's capabilities to help identify the appropriate equipment and techniques that may assist in mobilising and allow patients to gain independence, to the degree possible, without infringing on the wellbeing of their caregivers.

## Chaplaincy Service

Hunter New England Health values the religious and cultural needs of those for whom we care. Religious representatives of all faiths are welcome to visit patients from their community of faith.

## Keeping in Touch

### Mail

Patient mail is delivered daily and should be clearly addressed as follows:

- FULL FIRST NAME followed by FULL FAMILY NAME
- Bed Number and Ward (if known)
- Hospital
- Hospital address

Outgoing mail can be sent from the Nurses' Station in your ward.

### Mobile telephones

Mobile telephones and two-way radios can interfere with delicate medical equipment, so please refrain from using these within two metres of such equipment. Please consult with staff if you are uncertain.

## Community transport

There are community-run services that provide transport to hospital and medical services for people in need. Please ask staff for the contact details of the services available in your area.

## Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)

IPTAAS is a transport and accommodation subsidy scheme that assists people in isolated and rural communities to gain access to specialist medical treatment not available in their own area. To be eligible for assistance under NSW IPTAAS, you must:

- Be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of NSW
- Have a referral by a medical practitioner to the nearest treating specialist
- Live more than 100km (one way) away from the nearest specialist treatment
- Have claimed the maximum benefit from any private health fund
- Not be eligible for assistance under any other government assistance scheme.

There are specific terms and conditions relating to Transport for Health – IPTAAS. Please phone 1800 660 361 for further information.

## Leaving Hospital Going home

You will be provided with discharge information before you go home. This includes instructions on any care you need to continue at home. You are encouraged to ask questions about any special treatment, wound care, medications or appointments you will require when you go home.

You will be involved in deciding what, if any, service and support you may require at the time of your discharge.

Staff will arrange services, such as Meals on Wheels, home help, community nursing or rehabilitation. If you need support or changes to your house to go home, staff will help organise it.

## Transport home

If you were brought to hospital by road or air ambulance, you will return that way only if it is medically required. Otherwise, you will need to make private arrangements for your return home. If you have difficulties arranging transport, please discuss this with your ward staff.

## Transfer to another facility

If you need to be moved to another hospital or a nursing home for continuing treatment or care, the transfer will be arranged in full consultation with you and your family.

## Leaving against medical advice

Every patient has the right to leave hospital, with very few exceptions. If you decide to leave against medical advice, you will be asked to sign a form releasing the hospital from responsibility for your decision.

## Payment of accounts - Simplified Billing

This hospital is a registered Simplified Billing Agent, which means that accounts are forwarded directly to Medicare and nominated health funds on your behalf. All payments from Medicare and your health fund are sent directly to us. We

distribute payments to the appropriate service providers – saving you the inconvenience of managing the claiming and payment process.

When claiming is complete, we will post you a Patient Claiming Statement detailing the accounts claimed.

You will be asked to sign an Assignment/Claim Form for Medicare and for your health fund. These forms establish the hospital as your billing agent. The Simplified Billing service requires valid Medicare and health fund numbers.

## Patient Rights and Responsibilities

All clients, patients and visitors have rights and responsibilities when accessing health services.

### Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights of patients and other people using the Australian health system.

Hunter New England Health seeks to actively support these rights and invites your feedback if you think that your rights have not been supported.

Under this Charter, you can expect:

- 1. To access services to address your health care needs.**
- 2. To receive safe and high quality health services provided with professional care, skill and competence.**

For instance, to help prevent hospital-acquired infection, healthcare staff are expected to clean their hands before and after touching every patient.

- 3. To receive care in a way that shows respect to you and your culture, beliefs, values and personal characteristics.**
- 4. To receive open, timely and appropriate communication about your health care in a way you can understand.**

This means being informed about services, treatment options and costs in a clear and open way, including:

- Being given clear explanations about your condition and what to expect during your healthcare before any treatment is carried out;
- Being fully informed about all costs before treatment;
- Having assistance arranged from the free and confidential interpreter services as needed;
- Reading your own medical files if desired.

- 5. To be included in making decisions and choices about your care and about health service planning.**

For instance, this might include:

- Discussing your treatment options, including any significant risks or alternatives before giving your consent to treatment;
- Being told if the proposed treatment is experimental or part of medical research (you can refuse such treatment);
- Asking for treatment to stop at any time (with the exception of involuntary mental health patients);
- Asking for a second opinion (advice from another doctor) about your diagnosis or treatment;

- Leaving hospital at any time (except in the case of some infectious diseases or psychiatric conditions). If you do leave without the hospital agreeing that you are ready, you will be responsible for any injury or illness caused by your own actions.

**6. That your personal privacy is maintained and proper handling of your personal health and other information is assured.**

This means that:

- the details of your condition and treatment are kept confidential by staff;
- you can choose to not be identified to callers or visitors, or have any information given to them without your consent;
- you can inform staff if you do not wish to see a visitor.

**7. To be able to comment on or complain about your care and have your concerns addressed properly and promptly.**

We welcome your feedback, whether it is a compliment or a complaint. All feedback is viewed as an opportunity to improve our services.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or wish to compliment a staff member please feel free to speak to your treating doctor, nurse or healthcare worker. If you feel uncomfortable speaking directly to the staff involved you can lodge a complaint or compliment with the manager of the service or facility concerned.

Alternatively, contact:

Chief Executive

Hunter New England Health

Locked Bag 1, New Lambton NSW 2305

Fax: (02) 4921 4939

Phone: (toll free) 1800 605 172

If you are dissatisfied with the way Hunter New England Health has managed your complaint you can contact the Health Care Complaints Commission, which is independent of the health service.

Health Care Complaints Commission

Locked Bag 18

Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Ph: (02) 1800 043 159

For further information about the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights, please visit [www.safetyandquality.gov.au](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au)

You can assist staff to provide a safe level of care by adhering to the following responsibilities:

- Inform your doctor if you are getting treatment from another health professional (including alternative therapists).
- Provide information about your own medical history. This includes details of any medications you may be taking (including vitamins), and the side effects of any treatment you are having and any other health concerns you may have.
- Participate in the use of any medical equipment or mechanical / lifting aids as instructed by staff.

**Zero Tolerance to violence**

All staff and patients have the right to work and be cared for in a safe environment.

As a result, Hunter New England Health has a Zero Tolerance policy in place to protect staff, patients, visitors and health service property from the effects of violent behaviour.

Under this policy, violence and verbal abuse will not be tolerated.

### Smoke-free environment

- All clients, patients and visitors are to comply with the NSW Health Smoke-free Workplace Policy, by not smoking in any of the health service's buildings, grounds or vehicles.
- Quit smoking information and counselling support is available from health service staff.

## When your child is a patient

Hunter New England Health is committed to providing the best possible care for your child, or a child in your care, including respecting and maintaining their dignity, safety, cultural needs, developmental needs, rights and values.

We know that families play a vital role in supporting children and young people receiving healthcare and our staff work together with parents and families to achieve this. We will include you as part of your child's health care team and will make every effort to ensure that your child feels secure and receives a clear and age appropriate explanation about any service provided, procedure performed, or treatment to be undertaken.

We encourage you to ask questions so that you can understand your Rights and Responsibilities. If at any time you are dissatisfied with your child's care, you can, and are encouraged to, discuss your concerns with a member of your health care team.

A couple of things to remember when your child is in hospital:

- If you are not the child's biological parents or you do not have "parental responsibility" rights, you need to let us know and advise us who has the authority to consent to medical procedures;
- Just as staff respect the privacy of your family, we ask that you also respect the privacy of other families at the hospital;
- It is important that you provide care for your child only. If another child needs assistance, please call a member of the nursing staff to assist;
- We understand that all families are different – please let us know of any special needs your family has, so that we can try to meet them.

For more information see Kaleidoscope brochure "Your Rights and Responsibilities".

## Donations, bequests and fundraising

Donations of any amount are appreciated and will continue to assist with our many specialist units, hospital and community projects. Your support of the hospital will help us maintain the highest standard of medical equipment and patient services, and conduct research into debilitating illnesses.

Your donation of \$2.00 and over is tax deductible and can benefit the entire hospital, a specific medical condition or a service that is close to your heart. If you would like to make a donation, bequest or join one of our many fundraising or volunteer groups, please contact the Executive Officer of the hospital.

## Organ donation

Organ donation and the decision to become a donor is an individual one. Hunter New England Health supports the decision of individuals to donate organs and tissue for transplantation following death.

Hunter New England Health is affiliated with community groups and organisations to ensure that information on organ donation is available to the general public. You can organise talks and information evenings through the Hunter New England Health Organ and Tissue Donor Coordinator by telephoning 4921 3000. For more about organ and tissue donations, telephone Australians Donate on the national toll free number 1800 777 203.

## Our obligations

We are committed to treating your personal information in accordance with privacy law.

## Collection of your personal information

We collect information directly from you wherever possible. If this is not possible, or in an emergency, we may also need to collect information from a family member, friend, carer or other person who can help us to provide you with appropriate health care.

## Security of information collected

Your information may be held in a variety of ways. Most commonly, your information may be held as a paper medical record, and/or an electronic medical record forming part of a secure computerized database. Your records will include information regarding both physical and mental health issues. Some information may also be held in the form of an image including x-ray or photograph, or as an audio or video recording.

We follow strict rules and policies regarding the secure storage of personal information in all formats in order to protect your information from unauthorised access, loss or other misuse.

## Use or disclosure of information

Your personal health information held either in paper or electronic format may be used by this health service or disclosed outside the health service to enable appropriate care and treatment to be provided to you, for both current and future health care episodes, for example:

- to other treating health services, hospitals or medical specialists involved in your care and treatment
- to your nominated GP
- to the Ambulance Service of NSW
- in order to process pathology tests, x-rays, and other relevant tests
- to contact you for feedback on the services you have received from us to help us evaluate and improve our services
- for billing and debt recovery
- to pastoral care workers, including hospital chaplains, providing spiritual and pastoral care
- to students and other staff for training purposes
- to other health services and authorised third parties to help prevent a serious and imminent threat to someone's life, health or welfare, such as in an emergency
- to claims managers and associated persons for the purpose of managing a complaint, legal action, or claim brought against the health service or a treating health professional

- for purposes relating to the operation of the NSW health service and treatment of our patients, including funding, planning, safety and quality improvement activities

If you do not wish for us to collect, use or disclose certain information about you, you will need to tell us and we will discuss any consequences this may have for your health care.

The law also allows or requires for your personal health information to be disclosed to other third parties, for example:

- to State and Commonwealth government agencies for statutory reporting purposes, such as to report notifiable diseases
- to researchers for public interest research projects as approved by a Human Research and Ethics Committee
- to other health services or law enforcement agencies, such as the Police, if you provide us with information relating to a serious crime, including (but not limited to) assault, domestic violence, child abuse
- to comply with a subpoena or search warrant if your personal information is required as evidence in court

## Access to your information

You are entitled to request access to all personal information including your medical record held by health services in NSW. Normally you will be asked to apply for access in writing and provide identification. You may be charged a fee if you request copies of your personal information or medical record.

Access to your personal information may be declined in special circumstances, such as where giving access would put you or another person at risk of mental or physical harm. If you believe the information we hold about you is incorrect or an error has been made, please let us know and we will correct it or add a notation to your medical record.

Requests for access to your medical record should be addressed either to the Medical Records Department or to the manager of the health service facility you attended.

## Contact us

If you have questions or a complaint about the privacy of your personal information, please contact:

### The Privacy Officer

#### Hunter New England Area Health Service

Locked Bag 1

Hunter Region Mail Centre 2310

Phone: 02 4985 5810

email: [privacyofficer@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:privacyofficer@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION can be accessed on the Hunter New England Health Service website [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)**

# HOSPITAL PATIENTS GUIDE

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