



2018 Merriwa Local Health Report

## Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land covering Hunter New England Local Health District and remind people that we live and work on Aboriginal land.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.



## Year at a Glance

Welcome to the Merriwa Local Health Report for 2018.

Merriwa Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) had a big year that saw a number of service upgrades.

We started the year celebrating the resumption of radiology services for the people of Merriwa and the surrounding district.

The radiology service is an important asset for our community and our MPS residents who no longer have to travel to Muswellbrook and Scone for routine x-rays and imaging. *(You can read more about that in our Highlights section.)*



*Merriwa resident and Upper Hunter Shire councillor Ron Campbell, Merriwa and District Progress Association Secretary Beron Arden-Woods, Upper Hunter MP Michael Johnsen and Acting Health Service Manager Annie Inder were on hand last week to announce the return of x-ray services at Merriwa MPS.*

## New telehealth service

We finished the year with the introduction of a new telehealth service that will make things a little easier for people needing urgent mental health assessment.

This program aims to bring fast and reliable mental health assessments to smaller rural and remote facilities within Hunter New England Health.

Patients who come to the local emergency department with urgent health needs can access the telehealth assessments. The service provides a safe and confidential space for professional consultation.

More broadly, the use of telehealth continues to grow in Merriwa.

So what is telehealth?

Clinical telehealth is the secure transmission of a clinical consultation by videoconference over the internet. It is a way for

you to have consultations with health professionals without the need and inconvenience of you travelling to hospital.

It is being used in an increasing number of consultations locally across a growing list of clinical areas. Many Merriwa patients and MPS residents are taking advantage of the opportunity to have face-to-face consultations with their medical specialists and allied health providers without the need to travel to Tamworth and Newcastle.

## Living well

Throughout the year we continued our participation in the statewide 'Living Well in an MPS' Collaborative', which aims to improve the quality of life for residents who call Merriwa MPS home.

The program is designed to ensure all multipurpose health services in our Hunter New England Local Health District provide consistent and transparent care.

The Living Well principles provide for a respectful, homelike environment for all residents, and Denman MPS residents enjoy a full and varied life.

## Our Health Committee

Merriwa Health Committee's role is to be an advocate for the needs of the community, and to help promote and enhance the health of our community.

Members work closely with the local Health Service Manager and key community partners.

Each year our enthusiastic committee sets key priorities and focuses on health promotions and disease prevention.

The reintroduction of x-ray services for the town has been one of the highlights of the past year.

A focus for 2019 will be increase health information available to the Merriwa community via social media.

We meet second monthly and always welcome new members.

## Committee Members:

Diedre Peebles - Chairperson

Lesley Nixon - Community representative

Jenny Lees - Community representative

Mark Smith - Community representative

Ean Cottell - Community representative

Aileen Hogan - Community representative

Kathy Pratley – Staff Representative, Administration Officer

Annemarie Inder - Hunter Valley Sector Community Health Manager

Yvonne Patricks - Hunter Valley Sector General Manager

Maree Garside - Acting Health Service Manager



## Our Health Service



Merriwa Multipurpose Service (MPS) is one of 2 Multipurpose Services in the Upper Hunter region operated by Hunter New England Local Health District .

Multipurpose Services are unique health care facilities that provide a combination of health services including acute care, sub-acute care (including respite and palliative care), emergency, allied health, primary health and residential aged care to meet the needs of the local community.

Merriwa Multipurpose Service is an 25-bed facility. It has a 24-hour emergency department, and provides acute, medical, and post-surgical care for residents of Merriwa and the

surrounding district. It also provides care for long-stay aged care residents, as well as palliative and community health care.

Merriwa MPS offers a wide range of community health services to the community. These include:

- Aged care assessment and dementia support
- Community nursing including early childhood, audiometry and palliative care.
- Diet and nutrition
- Occupational therapy
- Foot care
- Health education and promotion
- Social work services
- Speech pathology
- Physiotherapy
- Radiology
- Women's health

Private podiatry services conduct clinics at the MPS.

Limited accommodation is available for family members of palliative care patients.

**Hours of Operation-** The MPS operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Community Health operates from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Appointments for community health support services can be made by phoning Hunter Valley Community Health reception, based at Muswellbrook Hospital, on 6542 2050.

**Visiting Hours** –Visiting hours to inpatient wards are from 8am to 8pm. Please check with staff prior to entering patient wards.

**Parking** – Free parking is available in the public car park inside the hospital grounds in front of the main hospital. Entry to the car park is from Mackenzie Street.

**Disability Access** – Disability parking is located in front of the main entrance and is clearly marked. Disability entry is via the main ramp entrance.

#### Address

Corner Brisbane and Mackenzie Streets  
Merriwa NSW 2329.

PO Box 168, Merriwa NSW, 2329.

Location: Go to [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/facilities/mps/Pages/Merriwa-MPS](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/facilities/mps/Pages/Merriwa-MPS)

#### Main contact numbers:

##### Merriwa MPS:

Telephone: (02) 6532 5000

Fax: (02)-6532 5005

Email: [hnelhd-merriwa@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:hnelhd-merriwa@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)

##### Community Health

Telephone: (02) 6542 2050

#### Auxiliary services

There is an active United Hospital Auxiliary which meets in the

hospital meeting room on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 1.30pm to 3pm.

## Partnering with Our Community

### Close ties between services

Merriwa MPS and nearby residential hostel Gummun Place enjoy a close and collaborative relationship to the benefit of many of our senior citizens. And we look forward to it continuing and flourishing into the future.

Our residents socialise together and enjoy events such as Christmas, Melbourne Cup and musical concerts, and participate in community events such as Anzac Day. They have also been enjoying outings to whenever possible.



*Enjoying Christmas: MPS kitchen team member Janet Brandt gives her uncle, the late George Rowley, a hug while nurse Bec Coote chats with resident Frank Blake and visitor Louise Gill*



*Beris McPherson and husband Peter on an MPS residents visit to the Fellows car museum at Wybong*



*Ready and waiting to watch the Melbourne Cup*



*Residents view part of the passing Anzac Day parade*

Then there are more practical matters.

Merriwa MPS is part of Hunter New England Oral Health's ResiDENTAL program, which provides service to a number of residential multipurpose services across the Local Health District. Our aim is to improve residents' oral health by improving access to dental assessment and treatment.

Happily, ResiDENTAL also provides dental assessment and treatment to the residents at Gummum Place too.

Their visits also help our aged care staff. The dentists and hygienists take the time to provide education and training, giving staff the opportunity to learn more about this important area of health care.

## Community bonds

Merriwa MPS enjoys a great relationship with our local clergy. An inter-denominational church service is conducted fortnightly within the facility. Clergy also visit the MPS regularly to chat with residents and their families and provide pastoral care.

Merriwa Playgroup and local primary schools visit the MPS during school term, talking with and entertaining the very appreciative residents.

## Pups as therapy

Merriwa MPS has its own version of 'pets as therapy' thanks to a Corgi pup named Wynnie.

Wynnie visits regularly with her owner, Merriwa Health Committee Chair Deidre Peebles, bringing smiles and much joy to residents, visitors and staff alike.



*Therapy pup Wynnie blends right in*

# Hunter New England Local Health District



### X-rays back in business

The return of x-ray services to Merriwa has been a cause for celebration this year.

A weekly service run by visiting radiographers from Muswellbrook Hospital began in February. It is the first time radiographers have provided a hands-on service in Merriwa.

The retirement several years ago of a local GP, along with changes for other remote operators, meant that Merriwa residents needing imaging services have had to travel to Scone, Muswellbrook or other hospitals in the intervening years.

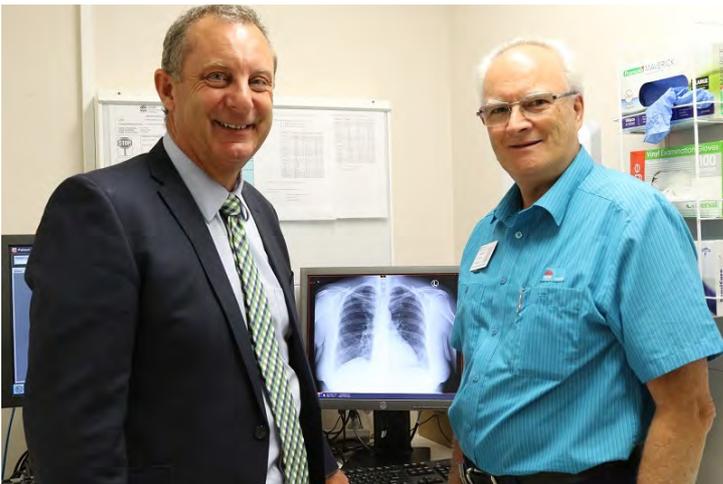
However, the existing mobile equipment was retained on-site with the hope that the service could one day resume.

That day came in early February, and MPS resident **Elizabeth Wurcker** was the first to use the service.

The radiologists visit Merriwa MPS each Wednesday and bookings can be made through local GP practices.

The imaging equipment can cater for most routine extremity and chest x-rays. The images can then be uploaded, or transferred to Hunter New England Health's secure digital imaging viewing system (PACS) so they can be shared with doctors or specialists elsewhere if needed.

The return of services was made possible by the work of HNE Imaging Services, particularly Chief Radiographer Muswellbrook/Scone Hospital **Graham Westlake**, and Hunter Valley Sector General Manager **Yvonne Patricks**, as well as advocacy from the Merriwa and District Progress Association and local community.



*Upper Hunter MP Michael Johnsen with Upper Hunter Chief Radiographer Graham Westlake*

### Bus stop a healthy success

The Healthy Kids Bus Stop health assessment program, run in collaboration with Royal Far West, was held in Merriwa and Muswellbrook over three days during May.

This is the first time the 'bus stop' program has visited Merriwa but follows three successful years in Muswellbrook.

This year, 73 children were assessed and many were given referrals for follow-up for services such as oral health, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and further hearing assessment.

The Healthy Kids Bus Stop is an integrated 'whole of child' health and developmental assessment program which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children living in rural and remote communities through the early detection of lifestyle risk factors, delayed development, or illness.

This was the fourth consecutive year that Hunter Valley Community Health and Royal Far West have held the Bus Stop and demand is increasing every year. Royal Far West is an Australian not for profit charity that provides specialist medical care and allied health support services for children from rural and remote areas in Australia.

### Merriwa Family Expo

Hunter Valley Community Health also participated in the Merriwa Family Expo organised by Upper Hunter Shire Council in February.

Families were provided with important health service information and clinicians were available to answer questions and address concerns relating to child health.

### Did you know?

Hunter Valley Community Health provides general and specialist nursing and allied health services for the Merriwa community, either at Merriwa MPS, in clients homes or at the Muswellbrook Hospital campus.

Some specialist services, such as a multi-disciplinary feeding clinic and group, are conducted at the Muswellbrook health campus but are available to those in the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook Shires who require this care.

## Our Medical Leaders

### Dr Noman Jawaad

Dr Noman Jawaad began practising in Merriwa in May 2013. His private practice, known as Hunter Medical Practice, is co-located within Merriwa MPS. Hunter Medical Practice also provides a GP service in the townships of Muswellbrook and Denman.

Dr Jawaad is a visiting medical officer for some of our aged care residents and sees patients in the Emergency Department during the time he is on-call.

Dr Jawaad is dedicated to his patient's care and has a keen interest in mental health, diabetes control, geriatric health and preventative health. He is heavily involved in the local community, often giving educational talks when asked.



### Dr Emad Jasem

Dr Jasem was born in Iraq where he completed medical school. Dr Jasem then continued his postgraduate training in the United Kingdom, becoming a member of the Royal college of Paediatrics and child health. Dr Jasem practiced as a Paediatrician in the UK, before deciding to broaden and expand medicine to cover all population age groups and became a member of the Royal college of general practice. Dr Jasem was looking for a sea change and moved to Australia from London. Dr Jasem is a fellow of the Royal Australian college of General Practice and enjoys working as a general practitioner in Merriwa, NSW, with a special interest in emergency care medicine.



802

patients presented at our emergency department



94.9%

of patients presenting to the ED were admitted or discharged within 4 hours\*



13

patients accessed services (like blood tests, clinics & community nursing) but were not admitted



N/A

Babies were born



N/A

Day only surgical procedure were performed



N/A

of Category A patients received their elective surgery within the 30 day timeframe<sup>φ</sup>



N/A

of Category B patients received their elective surgery within the 90 day timeframe<sup>φ</sup>



N/A

of Category C patients received their elective surgery within the 365 day timeframe<sup>φ</sup>



17.41

Full-time equivalent staff



\$3,601

Expenditure budget<sup>^</sup>

## Feedback & Acknowledgements

The Merriwa MPS has a dedicated team of volunteers, community members and organisations who continue to support the hospital with financial donations and donations of their valuable time.

The Merriwa MPS Health Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank managers and staff for their support and dedication to the health service and the community. We have a wonderful team of enthusiastic medical, nursing, community and allied health staff, administrative and ancillary staff who are committed and passionate in providing positive outcomes for all our patients and clients, their families and carers.

Thank you to Local Health Committee Chairperson Deidre Peebles, Acting Health Service Manager Maree Garside, Administration Officer Kathy Pratley and the Merriwa MPS Health Committee members for their contribution in preparing this report.

### Contact us

Merriwa MPS Health Committee would like to hear from you. Please send your comments to:

Merriwa Health Committee  
Cnr MacKenzie & Brisbane Streets  
Merriwa NSW 2329

Our telephone number is 6352 5000