



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW PATIENT MENUS FOR JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL

Patients at John Hunter Hospital will now be able to recuperate with enhanced meal options due to the introduction of new menus, Health Minister Jillian Skinner said today.

Mrs Skinner said the improved menus meet state-wide nutrition standards and have been developed with help from local dietitians to cater to the dietary requirements of local patients.

The new menus are being introduced by HealthShare NSW, an agency of NSW Health, which provides 22 million meals to hospital patients every year. They offer:

- A hot breakfast option for all patients on a “full” diet;
- Fresh salads and sandwiches;
- A greater range of nutritious meals, soups and desserts;
- More choice of hot meals at lunch and dinner.

“Food is an important part of a patient’s hospital experience and it’s vital we get it right when it comes to taste as well as nutrition,” Mrs Skinner said.

“At hospitals where the new menus have been introduced, patients are telling us that they are enjoying their meals and appreciate the extra choice that is offered.

“Dietitians say the new menu supports their work to achieve the best nutritional outcomes for patients, and nurses report a pleasant aroma on the ward at meal times.

“New meals include chicken and potato pie, oriental chicken and lamb curry. There is also a greater range of fresh sandwiches and nutritious soups and desserts like lemon drizzle cake,” Mrs Skinner said.

As it is common for patients to have a poor appetite and to only eat small amounts of food at a time, a high-energy mid-meal snack is offered to all patients at morning tea.

Maitland MP Robyn Parker welcomed the introduction of the new menu saying pre-prepared meals prepared locally at NSW Health’s Hunter Corporate Catering are complemented by fresh salads and sandwiches made on site by the hospital food services team.

“I commend the hospital food staff for working hard to deliver better health outcomes for patients in this region,” Ms Parker said.

Mrs Skinner said the new menus complement a number of measures undertaken by the NSW Government to enhance patient experiences in public hospitals, including better food packaging.

“Just two weeks ago I was able to announce a partnership between HealthShare NSW and Arthritis Australia that has transformed food packaging in NSW hospitals,” Mrs Skinner said.

“This joint initiative has dramatically increased the ease of opening of items such as biscuits and cereals, and made labels easier to read at hospitals including John Hunter.

“Hard-to-open food packaging is not just a source of frustration for patients but a barrier to nutrition. It is vital that the elderly and those with conditions affecting fine motor skills, such as arthritis, can open or easily access food.”

NSW Health is the first health system in the world to make easy to open food packaging part of the tender process for suppliers.

Mrs Skinner said new patient menus will soon be introduced at hospitals across the Hunter New England Local Health District.