

NSW Department of Health

Annual Report 2009–10



In Memoriam

The cover of the NSW Health Annual Report 2009–10 is dedicated to the memory of Sister Alison Bush, AO.

For more than 40 years, Sister Bush – as she was affectionately known – dedicated her life to improving the health outcomes of mothers and babies across Australia. She was the first Aboriginal midwife to be based at a major maternity hospital in NSW and delivered more than 1,000 babies throughout her career.

Sister Bush had a life-long love of midwifery and touched a countless number of lives during her career. She was determined to create a better future for Indigenous people, particularly Aboriginal mums and their babies, and provided a valuable link between the Aboriginal community and Maternity Services.

The family of Sister Alison Bush has kindly approved publication of the cover image.

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SHPN (MC) 100262
ISSN 0815-4961
ISBN 978 1 74187 521 8

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October 2010







Letter to the Minister

The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

In compliance with the terms of the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985*, the *Annual Reports (Departments) Regulation 2010* and the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, I submit the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the NSW Department of Health and program reports of selected NSW Health entities, for the financial year ended 30 June 2010, for presentation to Parliament. The Financial Statements of the entities are presented in a separate volume titled Financial Statements of Public Health Organisations under control of the NSW Department of Health 2009–10.

I am also sending copies to the Treasurer, the Auditor-General, Members of Parliament and other key government departments.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Debora Picone, AM
Director-General





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Director-General's

Year in review

We have seen another year of both challenges and achievement in 2009–10.

Much work has been undertaken across the system to implement the responses to two key inquiries – the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in NSW conducted by Peter Garling, SC and the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW conducted by the Hon. James Wood, AO QC. We are starting to see real changes in practice and improved communication flows at all levels, from the hospital ward, across government agencies, and critically with our patients and the community.

This year saw a record \$15.1 billion budget to enable continued improvements and better access in delivering health services and health infrastructure for NSW. Demand, however, continues to grow, with more presentations to our Emergency Departments, increased demand for both non-elective and elective surgery and for renal dialysis and cancer services. And although our life expectancy levels are amongst the highest in the world, the proportion of adults who were either overweight or obese has risen from 41.8% in 1997 to 52.5%. We are also seeing increasing incidences of chronic disease, and it is expected that 80% of the disease burden in Australia will be due to chronic disease by 2020.

We had a busy start to the year with the peak of the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza in July. By September, 1,203 confirmed Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza cases had been admitted to hospital since the commencement of the pandemic in NSW. September also saw the NSW roll-out of the vaccination for Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza and a significant decline in reported cases.

Despite these challenges, the latest patient survey has confirmed the superior care provided by public health facilities across the State, with 91% of patients rating their care as good, very good or excellent, up from 88% in 2007.

National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement

In April 2010, the NSW Government entered into the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement with the Australian Government, joining the other State and Territory governments, with the exception of Western Australia.

NSW leads the country across a range of key performance measures, despite having the highest demand for services, the largest population base in Australia and facilities that service residents across an enormous geographical area.

Through the National Health and Hospitals Agreement, we will build on existing strengths of our system to continue to provide equitable access to best practice healthcare for public patients across Australia, while ensuring the future sustainability of our public health system.

There is much to be done to implement the agreed health, hospitals and aged care reforms in NSW. Immediate priorities have included working with the Australian Government as well as provider and community stakeholders to develop criteria to shape the formation of the Local Health Networks and Medicare Locals; determining the scope of primary health and aged care services to be transferred to the Australian Government; and ensuring the necessary NSW legislative framework is in place.

As implementation progresses, work will continue in partnership with the Australian Government, health care providers and consumers, and the wider community to achieve the objectives of the National Health and Hospitals Reform.

Keep Them Safe

NSW Health is playing a key role in implementing a new approach to child protection in response to the *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*.

The implementation of the NSW Government's action plan, *Keep Them Safe: a shared approach to child wellbeing 2009–2014* aims to reform child protection in the State and establish a framework for a new way of caring for our children and their families.

As mandatory reporters, NSW Health staff who deliver health care to children, young people and families have an important role to play. The Department has been working with Area Health Services, Justice Health and the NSW Ambulance Service to implement a *Keep Them Safe* communication strategy.

To assist staff in their role as mandatory reporters, Child Wellbeing Units have been established to provide advice and support on how to respond to concerns relating to the safety and welfare of children and young people.

NSW Health's Child Wellbeing Units (CWUs) commenced operation on 25 January 2010 in three networks – Greater Eastern and Southern CWU, the Western CWU and the Northern CWU.

We are also piloting Family Referral Services to assist families who would benefit from accessing support to prevent the escalation of their situation to the statutory system.

This is a critical initiative, and I commend all of those who are involved, not only in NSW Health, but across government and within our partner Non-Government Organisations, in working together to effectively implement this new approach.

Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW

We have continued to implement *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW* which is the NSW Government's response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services at NSW Public Hospitals (the Garling Report).

Our focus remains on improving patient care through providing a safe and supportive environment for both patients and staff. In consultation with clinicians, we have been developing a Statewide program to drive cultural change and strengthen local decision making across the system.

We also saw the establishment of the Implementation Leadership Group in December 2009 to review and provide advice on high level progress and strategic directions. This group brings together the NSW Health Senior Executive, Chief Executives of our Area Health Services and Area Health Advisory Chairs.

Significant progress has been made over the past six months to strengthen the strategic leadership and substantial steps have been taken within the Area Health Services to implement specific initiatives aimed at improving patient care, enhancing the patient experience and building a better sense of collegiality and teamwork. Key achievements include:

- Launch of Between the Flags, a program to assist clinicians in recognising and responding to deteriorating patients
- Establishment of the Bureau of Health Information to support public accountability and access to information about the health system
- Commenced roll-out of the Severe Chronic Disease Management Program to provide targeted care to older people with chronic conditions with an additional \$22 million has been provided to support this in 2009-10
- Launch of the Anti-Bullying Advice Line, providing a central and easily accessible advisory service for health professionals across the system
- Establishment of additional rural prevocational medical training positions, clinical pharmacists, clinical support officers and clinical initiative nurses to enhance and support the health workforce.

One of the challenges we face in this climate of national health reform is the ability to sustain our energy and commitment. We have achieved so much to date, and I remain committed to the continued implementation of *Caring Together*.

Get Healthy – Information and Coaching Service

Our health system is not just about providing care in hospitals. We recognise the importance of providing effective care outside hospitals, through support program and preventative initiatives.

This year we launched the *NSW Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service*. This is a free, confidential telephone service designed to help individuals make lifestyle changes such as healthier eating habits and enjoying being more physically active. Since the launch, we have received nearly 9,000 calls to the service, with approximately 3,000 people registering for the six month coaching service.

It is the first time a program like this one has been implemented on a Statewide basis and we have engaged the University of Sydney to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the service.

Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (Randwick and Westmead)

Following extensive public consultation, we have established a single public health organisation to deliver improved health services for children in Sydney called the Sydney Children's Hospital Network (Randwick and Westmead). This new network brings together The Children's Hospital Westmead and the Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick under a single chief executive, which was a key recommendation of the Garling Inquiry.

NSW Kids

A new branch within the Department of Health will also be established with specific responsibility for child and youth health. These new arrangements will allow us to harness the skills and expertise of both organisations and will simplify access to the full range of child health services.

Bureau of Health Information

The Bureau of Health Information has been established under Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson to provide independent and comparable information about the performance of the NSW public health system.

The Bureau's first report, *Insights into Care: Patients' Perspectives on NSW Public Hospitals* was released in May and is based on analysis of the *NSW Health Patient Survey 2009*.

One of the most important things that this report has told us is that whether the care received was exceptional or fair, how well the doctors and nurses worked together was the main factor that influenced the patient ratings. We know teamwork is critical to a good health system, and we will be increasing our focus on giving our staff the tools and skills they need to facilitate this.

Agency for Clinical Innovation

This year also saw the establishment of the Agency for Clinical Innovation. As the work program for this Agency develops, it will play a vital role in the future sustainability of our health system, particularly with its focus on the identification, review and development of best practice, evidence based models of care.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my senior executive team, who once again have led with distinction. I will also take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Richard Matthews, Deputy Director General, Strategic Development on receiving a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honour's list.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to each and every one of the NSW Health workforce for their dedication and commitment throughout the last 12 months. None of these achievements would have been possible without your hard work and good humour.



