



CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Mid North Coast Local Health District
2024-25 Year in Review



Mid North Coast
Local Health District

The Mid North Coast Local Health District acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across the Mid North Coast.

We pay our respects to past, present and emerging Elders of the Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti, Birpai and Nganyaywana nations.

Nganyaywana



Gumbaynggirr



Dunghutti



Birpai



Contents

02	Our Strategy Map
03	About Us
05	Key Achievements
08	Our Governing Board
09	Our Executive Team
10	Our Health Care Teams
11	Our Community
12	Our Volunteers
14	Directorate Highlights
20	Progress Against Priority Initiatives
24	Capital Works
25	Sustainable Healthcare
26	Closing the Gap
28	Community Engagement
30	Recognition and Awards
32	MNCLHD Excellence Awards
36	Patient Story
38	Our Facilities

Our Strategy Map

Our vision

Building thriving communities through excellence in people-centred health care

Our purpose

To deliver safe, effective, sustainable services that protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our Mid North Coast community

Community and consumer perspective

1. Informed, engaged, empowered community
2. Positive and personalised care experiences
3. Strong prevention and early intervention

Internal process perspective

4. Partnering, collaboration, communication
5. Streamlined processes that support safety and best practice
6. Research, health intelligence, strategic management

Internal capacity perspective (our people and resources)

7. People, culture, capability
8. Resource stewardship

Our ways of working

We always put people first
We are caring and compassionate
We work as one team
We focus on quality outcomes

Our values

Collaboration, openness, respect, empowerment

2024-25 SNAPSHOT



149,626

Emergency
Presentations



25,872

Operations



16,234

MNC Virtual Care
Referrals



2,124

Babies Born



5,059

Employees

About Us

Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) extends from the Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area in the south to Coffs Harbour Local Government Area in the north and provides healthcare services across a geographical area of approximately 11,335 square kilometres.

Traditional custodians of the land covered by the District are the Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti, Birpai and Nganyaywana nations. It is estimated that more than 233,399 residents live within the District. People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage make up 8.2 per cent of the population, compared to 3.4 per cent* for all NSW.

An estimated 13 per cent of residents were born overseas. Coffs Harbour has a growing number of refugees settling in the area. The main refugee communities include Afghani, Sudanese, Burmese, Congolese, Togolese, Sierra Leone, Ethiopian, Eritrean and Somali. Smaller numbers of migrants also reside in Laurieton, Wauchope and Port Macquarie.

Over the next decade, the District's population is expected to increase by five per cent. The largest increases are being projected for the Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie-Hastings local government areas.

In 2025, residents aged 65 years and over comprise 27 per cent of the Mid North Coast population, a proportion projected to increase to 29 per cent by 2035. In comparison, across NSW, individuals aged 65 years and over represent 18 per cent of the population in 2025, with this figure expected to rise to 20 per cent by 2035.

The main health issues facing the District are chronic age-related illnesses such as cardiac, pulmonary, diabetes, renal disease and dementia, mental health illnesses and substance use disorders, cancer rates, and musculoskeletal conditions and falls.

The Mid North Coast also has significant groups of disadvantaged people, including Aboriginal people and refugees, people on low incomes, and people living in small, isolated communities. All of these groups are at risk of poorer health outcome behaviours and risk factors such as increasing weight and obesity, low levels of physical activity, poor diet, and the number of people who continue to smoke.

The MNCLHD managed a budget of more than \$884.6 million in 2024-25.

*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021



Mid North Coast Local Health District



Key Achievements



Eased emergency department demand through the diversion of more than 27,000 low-acuity patients to the seven-day a week Mid North Coast Virtual Care service, contributing to a 4.64 per cent drop in category 4 and 5 presentations across the region.



Launched the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Suicide Prevention North Coast Joint Regional Plan 2024-2029 in conjunction with Healthy North Coast and Northern NSW Local Health District to join primary and acute health services in a 'one health system' approach.



Partnered with BreastScreen NSW to enable women to access both breast and cervical screenings at one convenient location. The MNCLHD Women's Health initiative aims to increase the region's cervical screening rates, promoting early detection and improving health outcomes.



Launched the MNCLHD Paediatric Complex Care Coordination Service to enable rural and regional complex children and their families to access streamlined specialist care that supports the highest level of value-based service provision, reducing the cost to families and the health system.



Introduced the Rapid Recovery Joint Program in Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie with outstanding results, safely discharging patients on the same day as their surgery with post-operative multidisciplinary care provided in their home by the Hospital in the Home service.



Opened an additional 211 free car parking spaces at Port Macquarie Base Hospital as part of the NSW Government's \$33.97 million Helipad and Car Park Project to enhance accessibility to local healthcare services for staff and the community.



Expanded the Parents in Child Nutrition Informing Community (PICNIC) program to the Central Coast, Western and Southern NSW, Illawarra Shoalhaven and into new settings such as Supported Playgroups and Early Education, delivering responsive feeding training to more than 200 educators and support staff.



Launched a successful musculoskeletal collaborative research program in conjunction with the University of Sydney using collaborative grants to increase rural patient access to clinical trials and MNCLHD health services research and shape better access to evidence-based services to improve health outcomes.



Earned World Stroke Organization (WSO) Angels Awards at Coffs Harbour Health Campus for the fifth consecutive quarter for meeting global stroke care benchmarks, reflecting the strong collaboration and teamwork across various services and departments toward improving patient outcomes.



Implemented CALM falls prevention initiative (Connect, Assess, Listen, Manage) in the Port Macquarie Acute Geriatric Evaluation and Management Unit to identify patients at risk of falls upon admission, achieving a 73 per cent reduction in falls within three months.

Key Achievements - Reflections

The Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering exceptional health outcomes for our communities. Guided by our vision of a healthy well and thriving Mid North Coast – now and into the future – we continue to evolve and strengthen our services.

Over the past 12 months, we have embraced innovation and transformation across our hospitals, community health services, corporate teams and beyond. These efforts have helped build a more connected and resilient system of care.

Collaboration remains at the heart of our approach. We have worked closely with partner organisations to enhance healthcare delivery for patients, consumers and communities throughout the region.

Significant capital works have progressed, including the commencement of the Port Macquarie Base Hospital redevelopment, the relocation of Port Macquarie Safe Haven and the installation of a new CT scanner at Macksville District Hospital.

Our teams' achievements were celebrated at the 2025 MNCLHD Excellence Awards, which honoured outstanding contributions in innovation, sustainability, workplace culture and patient experience.

We proudly recognised our finalists in the 2025 NSW Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards, whose work in paediatric innovation, cultural leadership, harm reduction, flood resilience and compassionate care exemplifies the values we uphold.

Coffs Harbour Health Campus Volunteer Coordinator Denise McNeill was named a finalist in the 2025 NSW Health Awards in the Volunteer of the Year category, following her win at the MNCLHD Excellence Awards – a testament to the vital role our volunteers play.

Through strong partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations, we continue to embed culturally responsive care, strengthen workforce capability and address systemic barriers to health equity.

As part of the statewide Safe Staffing Levels initiative, we have continued recruiting additional nurses to our emergency departments, ensuring safer and more effective care.

Our volunteers remain the heart of our health district and we are deeply grateful for their unwavering support of our staff, hospitals and services.

Finally, we acknowledge the incredible dedication of our 5,000 staff members, whose compassion and commitment drive continuous improvement in health outcomes. They are the heartbeat of healthcare excellence across the Mid North Coast.





Our Governing Board



Peter Treseder AO
Board Chair



The Hon Luke Hartsuyker
Deputy Chair



Michael Coulter



Gary Humphreys



Susan McGinn



Dr Shehnarz
Salindera



Tracy Singleton



Jenny Zirkler

The Mid North Coast Local Health District Governing Board is responsible for establishing and overseeing an effective governance risk management framework, collaborating with key stakeholders on its strategic directions and ensuring high standards of professional and ethical conduct are maintained.

The Board engages with providers and the community in decisions that affect them, monitors the service delivery and financial performance of the agency against its targets and holds the Chief Executive accountable for their performance.

Our Executive Team



Jill Wong
Chief Executive



Dr Andrew Bailey
Director Research and
Knowledge Translation



Jo Campbell
Acting Coordinator
Hastings Macleay
Clinical Network



Dr Valerie Delpech
Regional Director North Coast
Population and Public Health,
Sustainable Healthcare



Sarah Fox
Acting District Director
Integrated Mental
Health, Alcohol and
Other Drugs



Sarah Grace-Booth
Acting Coordinator Coffs
Clinical Network



Carolyn Guichard
Acting Director
Communications and
Strategic Relations



Dr Philip Hoyle
District Director Medical
Services and Clinical
Governance



Penny Jones
Acting District Director
Nursing, Midwifery
and HSFAC



Robyn Martin
Director Aboriginal
Health and Primary
Partnerships



Tracey McMenamin
District Director People
and Culture



Melanie Mearns
Director Internal
Audit and Risk



Kate Meredith
Acting District Director
Integrated Care, Allied Health
and Community Services



John Slaven
District Director Finance
and Performance



Ian Treweek
District Director
Digital Health

Our Health Care Teams



Our Community



Our Volunteers

Celebrating Our Volunteers

Volunteers bring joy, compassion and optimism to the Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD), creating a welcoming environment that allows our staff to focus on delivering exceptional care. With more than 520 volunteers across the District, their contributions are felt everywhere – from guiding visitors and preparing patient packs to offering a warm drink or a kind word. Every act of service enhances the experience for patients, families and staff.



Donors Transforming Care

In the past year, our generous donors contributed close to \$1.9 million in equipment and patient care items. Their support has directly improved clinical outcomes and empowered our teams to deliver world-class care.

Thanks to a \$150,000 donation, the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute (MNCCI) is introducing kidney stereotactic ablative radiation therapy. A \$57,500 ultrasound machine now supports cancer diagnosis and treatment at Port Macquarie's MNCCI. Community donations also funded an \$11,000 nasal endoscope for Port Macquarie Speech Pathology, enhancing diagnostic capabilities.



Bellinger River District Hospital received \$123,000 in donated equipment, including an ultrasound machine that enables faster diagnosis and treatment. Across the District, Coffs Harbour, Macksville and Port Macquarie hospitals received Panda Resuscitation Warmers, vital for newborn care.



A \$6,000 donation now ensures children visiting Child and Family Clinics around Coffs Harbour receive a book to take home, supporting early literacy and family bonding.

Honouring Our Volunteers

We proudly celebrated the achievements of our volunteers. Denise McNeill was named MNCLHD Volunteer of the Year and became a finalist in the NSW Health Awards and the NSW Seniors Festival Local





Achievement Awards. Denise and the Coffs Harbour General Volunteers were nominated for the Mid North Coast Volunteer Team of the Year. President of the Kempsey UHA and General Volunteers Coordinator Maxine Walker was also recognised for her outstanding service.

President of the Nambucca UHA Michelle O'Keefe received the Nambucca Valley 2025 National Celebration Day award for 'Services to the Community'. We also honoured the memory of the dedicated volunteers we farewelled, like Doug Short, former President of Heart Health NSW Inc.

State UHA Life Memberships were awarded to Stephanie Wright (Camden Haven) and Margaret Mostyn (Wauchope), recognising their long-standing service.

Volunteer fundraising efforts delivered more than \$648,000 in equipment to our hospitals and health centres. Highlights include:

- Coffs Harbour Pink Ladies –\$362,000 in critical equipment
- BowraMacksville UHA –\$107,000 raised for Macksville District Hospital
- Nambucca Heads UHA –\$60,000 in donations, nearly double last year
- Bellingen Pink Auxiliary –\$28,400 in comfort and clinical items
- Dorrigo UHA –\$25,000 in equipment, including beds and chairs
- Wauchope UHA –\$22,000 for staff training and theatre equipment



- Kempsey UHA –\$20,500 in equipment and growing membership
- Port Macquarie Pink Ladies –\$17,500 in donations
- Heart Health NSW Inc –Donated a treadmill and Sara Steady standing aid
- Camden Haven UHA –Ongoing donations to Wauchope District Memorial Hospital and MNCCI

United in Health

We are deeply grateful to every individual, service club and charity who supported us this year, including the Jim Bruce Trust, Hastings Cancer Trust, Lilli Pilli Ladies and Pink Silks Perpetual Trust. Your time, generosity and heart make a lasting difference.

Thank you for being part of the MNCLHD family.

Directorate Highlights

Aboriginal Health and Primary Partnerships

Aboriginal Health Strategy Unit – MNCLHD’s first Aboriginal Health Worker (AHW) Talent Pool recruitment initiative was successfully undertaken in 2025. Developed in collaboration with the People and Culture Directorate to support MNCLHD’s framework for future recruitment options.

Oral Health – During 2024-25, general, urgent and specialist dental services were delivered to 17,707 patients and a further 7,167 patients were treated by external providers under the Oral Health Fee for Service Scheme (OHFFSS).

Of all the clients treated, 19 per cent identified as Aboriginal, reflecting the culturally safe service offered by Oral Health.

Health Promotion – MNCLHD’s Health Promotion team conducted a Healthy Ageing Needs Assessment to inform the planning and delivery of a Healthy Ageing Strategy that prioritises equitable access to healthy ageing activities for identified priority populations. Consultation sessions were held with Aboriginal elders, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and refugee communities and residents of community housing.



Coffs Clinical Network

Excellence in Stroke Care – Coffs Harbour Health Campus once again demonstrated exceptional performance in stroke care, achieving a Gold World Stroke Organisation (WSO) Award in the first quarter of 2025. This marks five consecutive quarters of WSO recognition – a testament to the hospital’s consistently high standards, robust systems and commitment to best practice across all departments. This sustained achievement reflects the strength of multidisciplinary collaboration, commitment to excellence and innovation, and the dedication of our stroke champions who continue to advocate for, and deliver, high-quality, person-centred care.

Service Growth – Macksville District Hospital has expanded its surgical capacity, treating around 1,000 more patients than in 2023–24 through successful surge surgery initiatives. Increased use of Macksville theatres has reduced wait times and improved timely access to care, reflecting the hospital’s commitment to meeting community needs and delivering high-quality patient outcomes.

Natural Disasters – 2025 has been a year marked by significant natural disasters, testing the resilience of our communities across the region. Throughout these events, Bellingen, Dorrigo and Macksville have each faced multiple periods of isolation due to severe weather and infrastructure disruptions. Despite these challenges, our staff and local communities have demonstrated extraordinary dedication, adaptability and teamwork. The unwavering commitment to maintaining services, supporting one another and ensuring the wellbeing of patients and residents, stands as a true testament to the strength and spirit of the people we serve.

Communications and Strategic Relations

Corporate Governance – During 2024-25, the Directorate advanced key governance projects, delivering the inaugural Corporate Governance Plan and refining Conflict of Interest frameworks. The Directorate also coordinated the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding visit, ensuring a robust and transparent response.

Major Communications Achievements – Transitioned to a new district intranet and achieved growth across all social media channels with Facebook reaching 21,125 followers (up six per cent), Instagram 1,614 (up 6.9 per cent), and LinkedIn 2,931. Other major projects included the creation of the Patient Information Library, recruitment communications initiatives and support for

major conferences and programs such as the Luminosity Youth Summit and the ACM Midwives conference held in Port Macquarie.

Multimedia Projects – The Directorate also delivered a suite of impactful multimedia projects that promoted health awareness and cultural inclusion. Signature productions included Reimagining FAST, a culturally grounded stroke awareness video, and storytelling pieces like Desley’s Journey, as well as supporting campaigns such as Kindness Lives Here and Commitment to Preventing Racism.

Digital Health

NSW Health Video Call – MNCLHD successfully transitioned to a new secure, convenient and accessible clinical video conferencing platform called NSW Health Video Call, powered by Health Direct. This replaces the legacy myVirtual Care platform to better support changing consumer expectations, new technology and clinical requirements. Video Call is more than just a video conferencing tool, it’s a flexible telehealth ecosystem, integrating technology to enable delivery of virtual care.



Enhancements to Business Systems – Digital Health has supported multiple enhancements to business systems to further protect NSW Health information, increase staff efficiency and user experience. Programs delivered include Information Classification and Sensitivity Labelling introduced to Microsoft 365 applications and modernising of the email archive solution.

Health Grade Enterprise Network (HGEN) Scheme – MNCLHD is prioritising activity in the HGEN scheme, which aims to modernise and standardise in-building networking infrastructure across NSW Health facilities. Kempsey District Hospital, as the first location to undergo participation in the scheme, is nearing commencement of the implementation phase, including upgrades to its networking and communication room infrastructure post completion of the design phases. Remaining MNCLHD sites within scope of the scheme are currently undergoing assessment, design and scheduling works for implementation activities.

Residential Aged Care eMeds Upliftment – Dorrigo MPS RAC (Highview) unit has successfully transitioned to the use of eMeds for the management of medications for its residents, aligning it with all other RACs in the MNCLHD/NNSWLHD electronic medical record area. The benefits of using eMeds include enhanced documentation practices, transfer and visibility of patient and medication information and support for prescribing and administration safe practice through access to alerts and reference information.

Finance and Performance

Port Macquarie Base Hospital Redevelopment – The Port Macquarie Base Hospital Critical Mechanical and Clinical Infrastructure Upgrade project commenced with early planning, site preparation and stakeholder engagement. This transformative project represents a major milestone for MNCLHD, aimed at expanding clinical capacity, improving patient flow and delivering state-of-the-art facilities to meet future healthcare demand. The redevelopment will enhance the patient and staff experience through modernised care environments, improved integration of clinical services and the creation of flexible spaces designed to support evolving models of care. Planning continues to progress in partnership with Health Infrastructure and clinical stakeholders, ensuring alignment with the District’s long-term strategic and service delivery objectives.

Revenue and Private Health Insurance Performance – Revenue operations were further strengthened through the consolidation of Patient Liaison Officers (PLOs) under a central Revenue Manager, enhancing coordination, accountability and data integrity across facilities. This restructure has been complemented by the statewide rollout of the Paperlight Project, a digital transformation initiative designed to eliminate paper-based admission forms and automate the collection of Private Health Insurance (PHI) and patient details. The Paperlight system streamlines

admission workflows, reduces administrative duplication and improves data accuracy for billing and revenue capture. Together, these initiatives have delivered more consistent revenue practices, improved private health insurance conversion rates and enhanced the overall patient admission experience across the District.

Hastings Macleay Clinical Network

CALM Falls Prevention Initiative – Developed and implemented CALM falls prevention initiative (Connect, Assess, Listen, Manage) in the Port Macquarie Base Hospital AGEM unit to recognise patients at risk of falls upon admission. Within three months of implementation, the unit saw a 73 per cent reduction of falls in comparison to the same period the previous year. This initiative was a finalist in the 2025 MNCLHD Excellence Awards.

Midwifery Continuity of Care – Introduction of midwifery continuity of care model for all women seeking public care at Kempsey District Hospital or Port Macquarie Base Hospital. Both sites have celebrated their 12-month anniversary of the commencement of these programs. This has allowed all women to be cared for by a known midwife or where they largely need obstetric-led care for them to have consistent midwifery check-ins.

Wauchope District Memorial Hospital Rehabilitation Unit – Developed a model of care change to ensure holistic patient-centred care, empowering each staff member to increase their skills. The Rehabilitation unit consulted with stakeholders and changed from team nursing to patient allocation. This has shown to improve identification of deterioration, leading to reduced instances of escalated care in a base facility. The change has also seen an increased patient governance and continuity of care and decreased transfers to Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

Integrated Care, Allied Health and Community Services

Discharge Patient Flow Concierge Program – Introduced this statewide initiative to address patient flow by working with complex patients earlier in their admissions and addressing discharge barriers in a timelier manner. The small Social Work teams in each of our networks have proved to be great resources within our emergency departments, back of house and peripheral sites, working collaboratively with staff from many departments and wards.

One visit, Two Screens – Through a partnership between Women’s Health and BreastScreen NSW, women who have booked for a breast screen can opt to complete both a breast and cervical screening in a single visit at monthly clinics in Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. This initiative also includes scheduled days collaborating with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCHOs) and Aboriginal Health Workers to support increased participation among under-screened First Nations women.



Aged Care Outreach Service – The MNCLHD Aged Care Outreach Service (ACOS) launched in August 2025 through MNC Virtual Care. The model integrates virtual consultations with a dedicated Geriatrician and an RN “flying squad” to provide timely, in-person assessment and treatment when required. ACOS delivers safe, high-quality care directly within Residential Aged Care Homes (RACHs) for residents with low-acuity or sub-acute conditions such as respiratory infections, UTIs, cellulitis or wound complications. In collaboration with NSW Ambulance, both paramedics and RACH staff can now refer directly to ACOS for non-urgent cases. Since the launch, 31 facilities have participated, with 90 per cent of referrals avoiding ED presentations – demonstrating ACOS’s success in hospital avoidance and patient-centred aged care.



Integrated Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services

Nurturing Connections – In 2024, IMHAOD established the Nurturing Connections program in Kempsey, a community-based program for parents and caregivers of children up to four years who are experiencing mental illness and complex life circumstances. It is designed to support the child-caregiver relationship and build positive mental health, skills and resilience.

The Hearing Voices Recovery Group – Established in Coffs Harbour in 2024, the group is led by a peer worker and a clinician and provides a safe space to explore the experience of hearing voices and strategies to better understand these experiences. The initiative won the Excellence in the Provision of Mental Health Services category of the 2025 MNCLHD Excellence Awards.

The Pathways to Community Living Initiative (PCLI) – Aims to connect people who are in a mental health inpatient unit for a long period of time to transition to supports and accommodation in the community. In MNCLHD, our PCLI program is Aboriginal-led and has been very successful in connecting and supporting Aboriginal consumers and families.

Internal Audit and Risk

Auditing What Matters – In 2024–25, a comprehensive program of assurance was delivered that supported the District’s strategic priorities and strengthened governance across key operational areas. Audits focused on sustainability leadership, recruitment practices, workforce planning, procurement card compliance and integrity frameworks such as conflicts of interest and corporate governance. Each engagement provided valuable insights and practical recommendations to enhance performance, reinforce accountability and support continuous improvement. Notably, the Aboriginal Health Transformation Agenda audit contributed to cultural safety and strategic alignment, reflecting the Directorate’s commitment to embedding Aboriginal health priorities in assurance activities. The Corporate Governance Attestation reinforced MNCLHD’s commitment to accountability and ethical leadership. These engagements not only met compliance obligations but also delivered practical insights to support continuous improvement across the District.

Strengthening Risk Governance and Culture – The Directorate led a full enterprise-wide risk reset with the Executive Leadership Team, ensuring risks are current, accurate and owned by those best placed to manage them. The launch of a new Operational Risk Governance Model and enhancements to committee risk reporting will embed risk management more deeply into executive and governance practice, with Risk Champions now appointed across Directorates to support a self-sustaining risk culture.

Embedding Aboriginal Health Priorities in Assurance – Internal Audit continued its commitment to cultural safety and accountability by embedding Aboriginal Health priorities into the audit program. Two targeted engagements – on the Aboriginal Health Transformation Agenda and the Aboriginal Cultural Self-Assessment Tool – were included on the internal audit plan to provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen cultural capability and governance. These audits elevate Aboriginal Health within executive assurance discussions and reinforce transparency through documented action tracking.

North Coast Population and Public Health

Successful Grants – An \$800,000, three-year grant from the NSW Cancer Institute was secured to implement an anal cancer screening and prevention program (the PEACH Project) for approximately 700 local People Living with HIV. A \$93,000 grant from NSW Regional Health Partners and MNCLHD was received for the *LIVER CARE* (Liver Innovation and Vital Enhancements for Regional Clinical Access and Research Excellence) project to review current liver services for people with metabolic-associated and alcohol-related liver disease, identify service gaps and develop improved care pathways. A \$76,000 grant from NSW Regional Health Partners and MNCLHD has been awarded for the *VITAL* (Vaccination Innovation for Transforming Aged Care Lives) project. This research will explore barriers and enablers to immunisation in aged care facilities through focus groups and surveys with aged care staff, GPs and pharmacists.

Naloxone Awareness Strategy in Hospitality Venues – The pilot project aims to raise awareness among hospitality venues and patrons about the increasing presence of synthetic opioids, such as nitazenes, in recreational drugs. It seeks to promote action by encouraging venues to include naloxone in first aid kits and by providing staff training on recognising and responding to opioid overdoses.

HARP Prevention Events – North Coast HARP team continues to coordinate and promote a range of STI and BBV prevention focused events, including National Condom Day, Youth Week, Hepatitis Awareness Week, International Overdose Awareness Day, World Sexual Health Day and World AIDS Day. These initiatives raise awareness and deliver coordinated, evidence-informed activities designed to engage hard to reach populations across regional communities in the North Coast area. It also strengthens community partnerships to enhance education and access to HARP services, supporting improved overall patient care.

Nursing and Midwifery

Expansion of the Nurse Practitioner Workforce – Several Transitional Nurse Practitioners (TNP) have been endorsed from the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia to become Nurse Practitioners (NPs) with more transitions to come. This growth represents a significant milestone in our nursing workforce development strategy. To qualify for endorsement, each TNP must demonstrate a minimum of 5,000 hours of advanced clinical practice within the past six years. They must also show proficiency in clinical leadership, therapeutic management, and an extended scope of practice.

Graduate Nurse Exchange Program – In 2025, MNCLHD welcomed its first participant in a new Graduate Nurse Exchange Program, marking a milestone for Kempsey District Hospital and Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health at the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. Each facility recruited a graduate nurse to rotate between the two sites, spending six months at each before returning to their home facility. This innovative model enhances early career development by broadening clinical experience across acute and correctional health settings.



Paediatric Palliative Care Funding – Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie Paediatric and Adolescent Wards were awarded funding of \$300,000 from MoH End of Life and Palliative Care Team. The purpose of the funding is to enhance paediatric spaces to be more like home environments, multi-purpose spaces that support children with chronic and limiting life conditions, equipment and furniture. A community artwork by Gumbaynggirr and Birpai artists will complete the project.

Medical Services and Clinical Governance

Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement – MNCLHD underwent Initial Organisation Wide Short Notice Assessment against the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards in February 2025. The resulting 32 recommendations were addressed by strengthening existing safety and quality systems. Final Assessment in June resulted in 14 actions rated as 'Met' with 18 actions remaining as 'Met with Recommendation'. MNCLHD was awarded full three-year organisational accreditation in July 2025. Due to the number of recommendations identified during the Initial Assessment, a Mandatory Reassessment will occur during December.

Policy Governance Project –has redesigned policy governance. The Policy Governance and Engagement Plans have seen the Policy and Procedure Governance Committee established. Diagnostic work is exploring governance and platform opportunities, including stakeholder consultation.

Safety Capability and Improvement –Access to formal safety, quality improvement and redesign training and education has improved in 2025 with more than 50 clinical staff engaged in improvement methodology training.

People and Culture

NSW Health Flexible Work Policy –Implementation of a new NSW Health Flexible Work arrangement policy in February 2025. This saw the implementation of a new SARA ticketing system for remote working applications.

IPTAAS and Patient Transport Transition to HealthShare –As part of a centralised service delivery model, Patient Transport and Isolated Patient Travel And Accommodation Service operations were transferred from local health districts to HealthShare NSW.

People and Culture for Future Health –The Interim Standardised Recruitment Model was implemented. This has seen the introduction of hiring briefs and ROB enhancements that are aimed at streamlining recruitment within NSW Health. Employment Transactions process mapping and due diligence has commenced with a potential transfer of these transactional tasks to HealthShare in 2026. People analytics due diligence and process mapping are underway.

Research and Knowledge Translation

Research and Knowledge Translation Strategy and Clinical Trial Strategy –the release of these strategies marks a significant milestone for the District. Over the next five years, the Research and Knowledge Translation Strategy will focus on strengthening research capacity, fostering innovation and ensuring that research outcomes are translated into meaningful improvements in clinical practice and community health. Complementing this, the Clinical Trials Strategy will drive clinical trial excellence by expanding trial activity across multiple disciplines. This work will ensure our communities benefit from access to cutting-edge therapies and treatments, generating the evidence needed to improve clinical care and health outcomes.

Clinical Trials in Accreditation –The Research and Knowledge Translation Directorate (R&KTD) played a lead role in successfully implementing the National Clinical Trials Governance Framework across the MNCLHD, integrating clinical trials into routine health service accreditation. In close collaboration with researchers, Clinical Trial Units, and the Clinical Governance Unit, R&KTD supported stakeholders in preparing for assessment under the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. These coordinated efforts led to an excellent accreditation outcome, with MNCLHD receiving commendation from the assessor.

Aboriginal Research Partnership and Knowledge Sharing Framework 2025-2030 –The development of the Aboriginal Research Partnership and Knowledge Sharing Framework 2025-2030 is the first of its kind for MNCLHD. A desktop review of NSW Health found few comparable frameworks, highlighting its uniqueness. Designed to support culturally safe, community-led research, it ensures research is respectful, inclusive and grounded in shared values. The framework was well received following extensive internal and external consultation.



Progress Against Priority Initiatives

Promoting Culturally Safe Care

The Mid North Coast Local Health District has a population of more than 233,399 people with 8.2 per cent of the population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This is higher than the New South Wales average of 3.4 per cent.

Aboriginal people experience more life risk factors, poorer health and less acceptable outcomes in a range of life areas when compared to other Australians. As a result, Aboriginal people are among the most disadvantaged population groups in the community.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 states:

Cultural safety is about how care is provided, rather than what care is provided. It requires practitioners to deliver safe, accessible and responsive health care that is free of racism by:

- recognising and responding to the power imbalance between practitioner and patient
- reflecting on their knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours, and conscious and unconscious biases.



Aboriginal Patient Incident Notification Review and Analysis Project

During 2024, the MNCLHD Aboriginal Patient Incident Notification Data Review and Analysis Project examined incident notifications, with a particular focus on outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

This work was undertaken to ensure our incident management processes are culturally competent and responsive, effectively meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients while adhering to national safety and quality standards.



Action 1.11 of the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards calls for incident management systems to analyse and report incidents by Indigenous status.

Through this work, our aim is to enhance safety and quality of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients by identifying systemic vulnerabilities and guiding targeted improvements.

During this Project, a number of safety and quality improvement opportunities were identified including:

1. Systematic and accurate data recording processes
2. Potential bias in incident reports
3. High rates of falls, medication errors and treatment issues
4. Efficient clinical handover and patient information processes

Implementation of endorsed recommendations continue including:

- Utilising existing systems and processes, implement clinical education strategies to support increased recording of Aboriginality
- Review and refinement of reporting of ‘concerning behaviours’
- Leveraging on existing trauma-informed care programs, expand access to these and cultural awareness programs across services
- Expand access for our patients to culturally safe and appropriate clinical care environments
- Embed Aboriginal Health Impact Statement into revised Clinical Handover procedures
- District wide implementation of Aboriginal Cultural Engagement Self-Assessment Tool (ACESAAT)



Caring for Families on the Coast

Our District Maternity and Newborn Services Team has progressed several quality improvement strategies across 2024-25 which encompass:

- District maternity models of care and Service Capability Assessments (for example Pregnancy Connect)
- Analysis of clinical incidents involving maternity and newborn care and implementation of district wide quality improvement program. An example includes the development of a multidisciplinary clinical education program to enhance identification, response and management of foetal deterioration.

Improving Surgical Outcomes for our Community

During 2024-25, MNCLHD advanced a strategic redesign of surgical services led by the Surgical Clinical Stream and key stakeholders. Focus areas included strengthening data capability, optimising surgical sessions, evolving models of care and using satellite sites to ease pressure on base hospitals. The redesign was a flexible, needs-based approach with a focus on sustainable, long-term solutions and continued progress toward improved capacity across the District's surgical services.



Strengthened waitlist management continues, with weekly audits, data monitoring and patient engagement supporting alignment with NSW Policy. Development of a Power BI platform is nearing completion, enhancing oversight and risk escalation.

These actions reflect MNCLHD's commitment to proactive management and reducing overdue surgeries through consistent, policy-aligned strategies.

The MNCLHD Rapid Recovery Program continues to progress positively, with more Day Zero and Day 1 discharges and reduced length of stay for joint replacement patients. Strong leadership, cross discipline engagement and alignment with national standards are supporting redesign efforts, despite some patients accessing private care through collaborative care pathways due to maximising efforts to address overdue surgeries and long waits.

MNCLHD is actively progressing Hospital In The Home (HITH) and Day of Surgery models, with Criteria-Led Discharge approaches implemented in select cases. The focus on reducing cancellations, stronger Allied Health involvement and early redirection into the OACCP pilot is supporting improved patient flow, discharge planning and access through collaborative, best-practice strategies.

Both Port Macquarie Base Hospital and Coffs Harbour Health Campus have participated in the National Surgery Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) for several years. Throughout 2024-25, the majority of patient outcome measures have been sustained at benchmark or at exemplary levels with data supporting quality improvements in pneumonia and prevention of surgical site infections.

Building Safety and Quality Capability

During 2025, the MNCLHD Clinical Quality Redesign and Innovation (CQRI) team continued delivery of the Safety and Quality Essentials Pathway (SQEP) with a strong focus on the Intermediate level. The Intermediate level includes Introduction to Improvement Science and Readiness to Lead for Safety and Quality eLearning. Improvement science is a framework used to systematically improve the performance of systems – a problem-solving approach centred on continuous improvement, testing and learning. By then end of the calendar year, the CQRI Team, with support from Quality Managers, will deliver six face-to-face Improvement Science workshops across the District with more than 80 staff trained in this methodology.

More than 600 staff (10.11 per cent) have completed the Foundational level of the SQEP which builds an awareness of our shared role in healthcare safety and quality. The Foundational level is included in staff orientation and is a pre-requisite for the other levels in the SQEP.

The Applied Safety and Quality Program (Adept level of the SQEP) will commence in March 2026 with applications currently open. This program is designed for local leaders of safety and quality with a focus on workplace application to build local capability to lead continuous improvement. The program consists of five two-day workshops delivered across 12 months, active learning groups, quality improvement advisor meetings and applied learning tasks between sessions.

Quality Improvement Hub

The Quality Improvement Hub was created and launched on the MNCLHD staff intranet in late 2024 and hosts a suite of tools and resources related to improving patient and safety initiatives in the MNCLHD. The tools have been developed to assist individual clinicians or teams in a systematic quality improvement approach supported by the MNCLHD Quality Improvement Framework and MNCLHD Quality Improvement Guide.



Capital Works

Port Macquarie Safe Haven

A purpose-built Safe Haven building was officially opened in Port Macquarie, providing a safe space and immediate support for people who are experiencing suicidal crisis or distress.

Part of the NSW Government's Towards Zero Suicides initiative, the Safe Haven is a non-clinical service that offer support from trained peer workers in a calm and welcoming environment as an alternative to attending a hospital emergency department.



Located in the grounds of Port Macquarie Community Health campus, the service aims to reduce stigma, support communities to better cope with challenges, and offer culturally appropriate care.



Port Macquarie Base Hospital Critical Mechanical and Clinical Infrastructure Upgrade

The master planning for the Port Macquarie Base Hospital Critical Mechanical and Clinical Infrastructure Upgrade project commenced in 2025 following the appointment of project architect Silver Thomas Hanley (STH).

The project will include essential upgrades to the mechanical systems of the existing hospital buildings and the expansion of the Emergency Department and new Maternity and Neonatal Care Units.

It will address existing service and asset-related issues and opportunities, including rising demand for health services in emergency, inpatient (including maternity) and outpatient services.

The project is being delivered in a partnership between Health Infrastructure and Mid North Coast Local Health District.

Fighting Cancer project

The Fighting Cancer project, funded by a Commonwealth grant, is designed to expand cancer treatment capacity throughout regional Australia by enhancing existing facilities and investing in new health infrastructure.

In 2025, work was completed at the Port Macquarie campus of the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute and Kempsey District Hospital to enhance clinical spaces and telecommunications infrastructure with the aim to improve virtual care opportunities for cancer patients based in Kempsey.



This work has reduced the need for many patients to travel to Port Macquarie for consultations.

The final portion of the work – installing a CT scanner at Macksville District Hospital to enhance local diagnostic services and improve cancer detection – is about to be completed, with the new service expected to be operational in early 2026.

Sustainable Healthcare

Choosing Wisely initiative

The Rational Investigations Project is a Choosing Wisely initiative which was highly successful in Coffs Harbour's Emergency Department.

In its first two years, the project demonstrated a reduction in unnecessary blood tests by up to 21 per cent, reducing waste, 1.5 tonnes of emissions and achieving more than \$1.7 million in savings.

The project has now evolved into a statewide Sustainable Pathology initiative led by Coffs Harbour ED Physician Dr Brian O'Connell, supported by NSW Health Pathology and collaborators, and is being rolled out in multiple districts in a phased approach. This patient-focused initiative has many co-benefits and has led to a culture change with clinicians being empowered to 'stop and think' and help reduce the estimated 30 per cent of low value healthcare in our systems. All patients continue to have every test that is indicated, and feedback has been highly positive.



The Gloves are off!

The *Gloves Off* initiative was started in Great Ormond Street Hospital in London by three nurses in 2018 and reduced one hospital's annual glove use from more than 10.3 million to 5.6 million. This project innovation delivers reduced infection risk, reduced waste, decreased cost and saves time for staff while patients reported higher satisfaction.

The MNCLHD team, led by District Infection Prevention and Control CNC Lindy Ryan, has achieved a 10 per cent reduction in glove use in the first phase of roll out and has stimulated a campaign in Emergency Departments across the world in the new *Global Emergency Gloves Off Campaign*.



The Rational Cannulation Project

Harnessing Sustainable Futures Innovation funding, the Port Macquarie Emergency Department team, led by Dr Cobus Weise, piloted a successful project focusing on the use of IV cannulas. The project resulted in an estimated 20-27 per cent reduction in the total number of cannulas used.

It has also embedded a culture of deliberate, evidence-based cannulation through a collaborative approach between nurses and doctors, fostering safer practice and supporting ongoing quality improvement.

Climate-Risk Assessment for our District

In April 2025, MNCLHD completed its first enterprise-level climate risk assessment, aligning with the *Climate Risk Ready NSW Guide* and NSW Health risk management frameworks. The process, led by the Sustainable Health Care team with support from NSW Health, involved two stakeholder workshops with more than 30 participants from across the District. The workshops identified site-specific risks to infrastructure, service continuity and vulnerable populations resulting from climate change impacts such as heatwaves, bushfires and flooding. A total of 27 climate-related risks were identified and assessed across three-time horizons – 2030 through to 2070. As a result, climate risk is now embedded into the MNC Enterprise Risk Management Framework.

Closing the Gap

Aboriginal Health Strategic Framework Annual Report

This year's Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) Aboriginal Health Strategic Framework Annual Report was presented to the Governing Board in October.

The report reflected MNCLHD's ongoing journey, guided by self-determination, cultural safety and community-led solutions.

Over the past year, MNCLHD strengthened partnerships with Aboriginal communities, organisations and leaders, ensuring strategies were informed by lived experience, cultural knowledge and local priorities.

The report acknowledged the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders, past and present, whose guidance shaped the District's work and inspired culturally responsive care.

Achievements reflected the dedication of Aboriginal Health staff, clinicians and community partners, reaffirming MNCLHD's commitment to walk alongside Aboriginal communities and build a future where health and wellbeing are equitable and celebrated.

Social Housing Initiative:

In 2024, MNCLHD launched a collaborative partnership with Mission Australia to address the interconnected health and housing needs of Aboriginal chronic care patients living in social housing. This initiative focuses on patients whose housing conditions directly impact their health, aiming to improve outcomes through coordinated care and hospital avoidance strategies. A key feature of the model is monthly interagency meetings, which enable effective collaboration, shared planning and resource alignment. Although still in its early stages, the partnership is already showing promising results.

NAIDOC Week

Culture, history and the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was recognised during NAIDOC Week. Across the region, staff and community members came together to participate in a range of events, including cultural performances, yarning circles and community gatherings, fostering connection and understanding.

Local Elders and community leaders shared their stories and wisdom, inspiring reflection and learning among all participants. The events provided a meaningful opportunity to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage while strengthening relationships between the health district, its staff and the communities it serves.



Healthy ageing needs assessment Yarn Ups

Health Promotion held Yarn Up sessions with the Aboriginal community across the District to inform a healthy ageing needs assessment and guide programs that truly met the needs of local communities.

More than 90 Elders participated, strengthening connections and partnerships with Primary Health Networks (PHNs), Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) and other Aboriginal organisations.

These collaborations supported the co-delivery and co-funding of programs, including the highly valued Ironbark initiative, creating opportunities for shared learning, wellbeing, and community connection.

Walk Together for Reconciliation

During Reconciliation Week, MNCLHD warmly welcomed the community to a walk and lunch event at the Jetty in Coffs Harbour.

The event encouraged everyone to carry reconciliation in their hearts, minds and actions, fostering a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Participants from partner agencies and the local community came together to enjoy a short walk and shared lunch. The group yarning about health and wellbeing, reflecting on the role each of us plays in reconciliation and celebrating Aboriginal truth-telling, ways of knowing and ways of doing.

Elsa Dixon Traineeship program

MNCLHD welcomed 12 new students in this year's intake of the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal School Based Traineeship Program, reaffirming its commitment to supporting Aboriginal employment and culturally safe healthcare.

Throughout their two-year traineeship, the students combined practical learning with formal education. On completion, they achieved nationally recognised qualifications contributing to their Higher School Certificate.



The 12 trainees joined eight continuing students in their second year of the program, which strengthens MNCLHD's partnership with Aboriginal leaders and supported the district's goal of increasing Aboriginal representation and creating meaningful career pathways in health.

Priorities for 2025-26 include:

- **MNCLHD's Connected Leaders Program** – MNCLHD's Emerging Aboriginal leaders are poised to create a lasting impact in their communities and workplaces. The program being developed by the Aboriginal Health Strategy Unit and Organisational Learning and Development Team, will enable the emerging leaders via a series of workshops over six months to engage in powerful storytelling, reflection and peer support, fostering deep connections and cultural pride.
- **Aboriginal Health Prevention Toolkit** – Implementation of a self-reflection tool designed to support Aboriginal Health Workers and Practitioners in planning, delivering and evaluating culturally safe, community-led health prevention initiatives. The toolkit will be accessible via a centralised hub for resources, templates, strategic guidance.

Community Engagement

Partnering with our community

We know that engaging with consumers, carers, families and community members leads to better health outcomes and a stronger health system. We value lived experience and actively involve consumers in shaping policies, programs and services.

Our commitment is reflected in the MNCLHD Strategic Plan 2022–2032 and the Partnering with Consumers Framework for Patient Safety and Quality 2021–2026, which guide our approach to patient-centred care.

The Local Health Advisory Council is our peak body for consumer engagement, providing insights to the Governing Board on local health priorities and service planning. Consumers contribute through surveys, advisory committees, hospital sub-committees, and working groups for new builds, like the upcoming Port Macquarie Base Hospital upgrade. Their input also informs design choices, language use and cultural inclusion, as seen at Macksville District Hospital.

We are committed to recognising and remunerating consumers, carers and community members for their time and expertise, in line with the NSW Health Guideline.

Community engagement highlights

This year, MNCLHD proudly participated in:

- Luminosity Youth Summit
- Reclaim the Night
- NEAMI Cup
- NAIDOC Week
- Various health expos and community events

At these events, we hosted collaborative information stalls, creating space for conversations about health and wellbeing across all areas of life.

We continue to build strong partnerships with our community to ensure our services are inclusive, responsive and shaped by those who use them.





Recognition and Awards

We were incredibly proud to celebrate the achievements of Mid North Coast Local Health District staff and volunteers who were named finalists in the 2025 NSW Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards and 2025 NSW Health Awards.

Recognised for their innovation, compassion and commitment to collaborative excellence, these finalists go above and beyond for our patients, consumers and communities every day.

2025 NSW Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards

Team of the Year finalist – Paediatrics Unit nursing team, Port Macquarie Base Hospital



This dynamic team has not only transformed paediatric care in the hospital but has shown visionary leadership and meaningful change at a state level. They pioneered a child-friendly approach to hospital accreditation that has been adopted in children's hospitals across NSW - setting the benchmark for inclusive, compassionate and resilient paediatric care.

The team exemplifies inclusive, compassionate and respectful care. They collaborate seamlessly with families, allied health and other departments to ensure holistic care, and their culture of openness and support has created a resilient, high-performing team.

Projects such as Yucky Medicine, Cartoon Nurses' Mask Effect and The Big Red Project enhance emotional safety and understanding for children, helping to ease fear and build trust.

Aboriginal Nurse of the Year finalist – Kristy Leonard

Registered nurse Kristy Leonard, a proud Gamilaroi woman, has exceptional commitment to culturally safe and compassionate care for Aboriginal children and families.

Kristy began her nursing journey as an Enrolled Nurse before undertaking her Bachelor of Nursing and joining the MNCLHD Aboriginal Nursing Cadetship Program. She later undertook a postgraduate certificate in paediatric nursing and worked in the paediatric unit at Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

Now working in the Keep Them Safe Out of Home Care (OOHC) Health Pathway and as a Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse Coordinator, Kristy supports some of our most vulnerable Aboriginal children. She builds trust, coordinates wrap-around support and ensures culturally responsive care.



Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Award – Nicole Knight

Nicole Knight, Divisional Nurse Manager of Critical Care and Surgical Services at Coffs Harbour Health Campus, exemplifies compassionate and authentic leadership.

Nicole leads with integrity, humility, and heart – whether supporting grieving families, running a ventilator alongside staff or mentoring her team through high-pressure situations.

Currently relieving as Director of Nursing and Midwifery/Manager of Inpatient Services, she expands her influence without compromising her grounded, human approach. Her leadership is quiet but powerful, shaping a culture of clinical excellence, respect and compassion.



Healing Heart Award finalists

Two exceptional nurses from MNCLHD have been named finalists in the 2025 Healing Heart Award, a category that honours compassionate, colleague-nominated contributions to healthcare.

Katherine Martin - Nursing Unit Manager, Kempsey District Hospital

Kate Martin capably runs the Inpatient and Rehabilitation wards at Kempsey District Hospital, always making time for her staff and patients alike.

Kate has her door open and will be a listening ear and pillar of support whenever needed. She champions growth and fosters a strong workplace culture.

When the area was recently impacted by flooding, Kate opted to stay at the hospital to support her team. She coordinated staff on the floor, checked in on team members impacted and isolated by the flood, and coordinated safe transport home for staff who needed it. She selflessly put many others first during incredibly hard circumstances.



Ruth Phillips – Registered Nurse, Harm Reduction Officer, Coffs Harbour Health Campus

Ruth Phillips' commitment to compassionate, dedicated and outstanding health care for some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our regional community in Coffs Harbour is outstanding.

Harm reduction nursing at the Needle and Syringe Program is grounded in empathy, respect and non-judgment, and Ruth embodies these values in every aspect of her practice.

Ruth goes beyond traditional clinical care by meeting people where they are – physically, emotionally and socially. She helps build trust with people who can often be stigmatised or overlooked in the healthcare system.



2025 NSW Health Awards

Volunteer of the Year finalist – Denise McNeil

Denise McNeill has shown outstanding leadership, innovation and dedication in her role as Volunteer Coordinator at Coffs Harbour Health Campus for the past decade.

In 2024, Denise led the development and implementation of the Ward Grandparent Program in the Paediatric Ward and Special Care Nursery, improving emotional and practical support for young patients and their families.

Through her strategic approach to volunteer recruitment, training and retention, Denise has created a supportive and well-organised program that makes sure volunteers are valued and engaged. She has championed consumer involvement which has strengthened collaboration between volunteers, healthcare teams and the broader community.



MNCLHD Excellence Awards

Celebrating Excellence Across the Mid North Coast

On 6 June, the Mid North Coast Local Health District gathered in Coffs Harbour for the 2025 MNCLHD Excellence Awards, an event acknowledging the innovation, care and dedication shaping health outcomes across our region.

The celebration welcomed guests from NSW Health, the MNCLHD Governing Board, community partners across health, education and the social sector, and featured a video message from NSW Health Secretary Susan Pearce AM commending the District's leadership and impact.



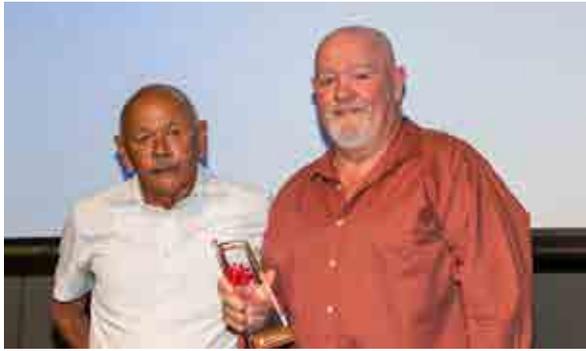
Environmental Sustainability – Highly commended

Two projects were recognised for their contribution to a greener, safer health system. The **Rational Investigations Program** reduced unnecessary pathology testing, lowering waste and harm while retaining high-quality clinical outcomes. The program is now spreading district wide. The **Grow and Play Outdoor Garden** at Ellimatta House in Port Macquarie created an outdoor therapy space for children with complex mental health needs, strengthening engagement, communication and emotional regulation in a non-clinical environment.



Multicultural Healthcare – Highly commended

Emergency Life Support international (ELSi) has delivered emergency care training across the Pacific and Asia for more than a decade, including hosting clinicians from Tonga at Coffs Harbour this year to build local capability in safety, quality and disaster readiness. The **Refugee Transition to General Practice initiative** supports refugee patients moving from specialist services into mainstream GP care through social work navigation, GP training and culturally competent practice support.



Excellence in Aboriginal Healthcare

The **Hastings Aboriginal Diabetes Education Service** co-designs diabetes care with Aboriginal patients, blending cultural knowledge with clinical guidance. The service builds trust, improves engagement and empowers clients with strategies that reflect lived experience.



Excellence in Mental Health Services

The **Hearing Voices Recovery Support Group** combines clinical practice with lived experience in a nine-week, trauma-informed program. Participants report reduced isolation, new coping strategies and greater confidence in managing distressing voices.



Corporate/Administration Employee of the Year

IT Support Officer **Warren Krantzcke** is known for calm, respectful and solutions-focused support that keeps clinical and corporate services functioning and builds digital confidence across the workforce.



Health Research

PSMA-PET Guided Radiotherapy for Prostate Cancer closed a major treatment gap for high-risk patients. Five-year outcomes show exceptional survival with minimal toxicity, demonstrating the impact of bringing precision medicine to a regional centre.



Nurse/Midwife of the Year

Clinical Nurse Educator **Julie Claridge** drives advanced practice and education across units. As ALS Trainer and Sepsis Champion, she leads simulation, high-dependency upskilling and specialist competency training that lift safety and capability district-wide.



Keeping People Healthy

The **North Coast Youth Vaping Taskforce** created a coordinated regional response including an online Youth Vaping Hub and community-led forums. The model strengthens prevention, literacy and local solutions.



Health Innovation

The **Nurse-led PICC Insertion** model at the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute enables same-day or rapid access to chemotherapy by training nurses in ECG-guided insertion, eliminating long delays and improving patient experience.



Long Service Recognition

Fay James and **Valda Cooper** each received recognition for 60 years in nursing, a milestone reflecting a lifetime of skilled, patient-centred service and mentorship across generations.



Allied Health Professional of the Year

Occupational Therapist **Dr Heidi Lavis** led the community-driven “Re-imagining FAST” stroke literacy project co-designed with the Dunghutti people, demonstrating culturally grounded, place-based prevention.



Transforming the Patient Experience

The **Paediatric Complex Care Coordination Service** supports children with multi-specialty needs and their families through coordinated planning, telehealth and reduced disruption to home, school and work.



Patient Safety First

Friday Flex redesigned workforce models to add an additional surgical list without extra cost, clearing procedures sooner, improving flow and preventing avoidable delays in care.



Agency for Clinical Innovation Award and Governing Board Chair Award

The **Rapid Joint Recovery Program** delivers person-led, home-supported recovery for joint replacement patients who are discharged on “Day Zero” with in-home multidisciplinary support, improving access, flow and confidence in recovery.



People and Culture

The **Cartoon Nurses project** in Port Macquarie's Paediatric Unit uses Disney-style avatars of staff to help children recognise caregivers, easing anxiety and building trust during hospital visits.



Volunteer/Consumer Representative of the Year

Denise McNeill transformed volunteer services at Coffs Harbour with the Grandparent Program in paediatrics and neonatal care, strengthening compassion and consumer voice at the point of care. Denise was also named as a finalist in the NSW Health Excellence Awards.



Collaborative Leader of the Year

Anna Pascoe, Acting Executive Officer/ Director of Nursing and Midwifery at Macksville District Hospital, was recognised for community-rooted leadership driving safe, system-wide improvements.



Staff Member of the Year

Shane Holten, Aboriginal Health Worker with Drug and Alcohol Services, was honoured for community-led partnership, cultural safety and co-designed service transformation that improves outcomes and trust.

The 2025 MNCLHD Excellence Awards recipients reflect a local health district advancing with innovation, equity, cultural safety and humanity at its core.

Patient Story:

Julie, Rapid Recovery Total Knee Replacement, Port Macquarie



In 2023, Julie began to experience pain in her right knee which was initially dismissed by her GP. Later that year the pain in her knee gradually became worse. She had an x-ray to investigate the cause of her pain and was informed that she had osteoarthritis. Julie was then referred to an Orthopaedic Surgeon and was told that she needed a knee replacement. It was a 12-month wait for surgery so she was referred to the Knee and Hip Osteoarthritis Program while she waited.

Julie attended her first KHOP appointment in January 2024 where she was seen by the Physiotherapist. At this appointment they discussed her health history as well as how much she could currently exercise. Julie was provided with education about how to manage her pain and nutrition and was provided with exercises to do in preparation for surgery. She found the information provided by the KHOP team was easy to understand and allowed her to adequately prepare for surgery.

Three months later, Julie attended her second KHOP appointment where she was seen by the Registered Nurse. At this appointment they discussed in further detail how to manage her pain with medications and practiced exercises to do at home. Julie also practiced using crutches and discussed the equipment she would need after her surgery.

At her nine-month review with KHOP, Julie noticed her pain was gradually getting worse and her knee had given way on one occasion. She was advised to see her GP and get another x-ray to make sure she had not hurt herself. During this phone call Julie was asked if she would be happy to participate in Port Macquarie Base Hospital's new 'Rapid Recovery Program'. The program focuses on a same-day discharge from hospital after surgery, where Julie would then be followed up in her home by a Physiotherapist and Registered Nurse. In November, Julie had her pre-admission clinic appointment where she was deemed fit for surgery to proceed in January 2025.

Just before Christmas 2024, Julie had her last face-to-face KHOP review prior to her surgery. At this appointment she met with the Physiotherapist, Registered Nurse, the Community Physiotherapist and the Rapid Recovery site lead. Despite her nervousness and anxiety about her upcoming surgery, Julie was reassured about the follow-up care she would receive after she was discharged from hospital.

The Rapid Recovery site lead told Julie she would be the first patient taking part in this initiative for Port Macquarie. She was reassured that even though it was a new process for Port Macquarie Base Hospital, it was not a new concept and had been performed with high success rates overseas and in other hospitals in NSW. The information and reassurance provided at this final KHOP session helped

Julie to feel more at ease in regard to her upcoming surgery, as well as giving her confidence in participating in this new surgical program.

On 7 January 2025, Julie presented to Day Surgery and was checked in within five minutes of her arrival. She said she was treated with respect and care by the entire team.

When Julie woke up from her surgery, the staff were saying she was the 'talk of the hospital' in regard to going home that afternoon. She was met by the site lead before being transferred to the ward.

The Physiotherapist came to see Julie about an hour after she was transferred to the ward. Julie was feeling slightly light-headed at the time while resting in bed but was willing to attempt walking. Despite some initial issues with her blood pressure, Julie successfully stood at the side of the bed with the 4WW and managed to walk outside of her room. However, she then became light-headed and felt hot and sweaty and was taken back to bed. She felt sick and her pain had also increased so she was provided with some medication for her nausea and some pain relief. The nursing staff encouraged her to drink fluid and the Physiotherapist said he would review her again in an hour to see how she was progressing.

Julie remained determined to go home that afternoon and continued to drink and eat as instructed by staff. Within the next hour she was feeling much better and the Physiotherapist came back to see her. She was able to walk further this time without feeling light-headed. The surgeon visited her before she was discharged from hospital.

When Julie got home she felt so happy to be in her own home, knowing she would be sleeping in her own bed that night and able to eat a home cooked meal. She had no doubts or concerns about being home so soon after surgery and felt confident with the decisions made by the staff at the hospital in enabling her to go home.

Julie experienced very minimal pain that evening, only requiring one pain relief tablet prior to going to sleep. The following morning the Community Physiotherapist called to check-in with her and confirmed what time she would visit. The Registered Nurse also called to confirm her visit time. Julie appreciated the calls early in the morning to inform her of what was happening.

The Physiotherapist checked her equipment, assessed her walking and knee bend, and checked her wound. She encouraged short walks, pain relief if needed and made sure Julie was eating and drinking enough for her recovery. She was also told to continue her exercises when able and was reminded to present to hospital if she had any concerns.

Julie received followed up visits at home by both the Physiotherapist and Nurse for three days before she was referred to Port Macquarie Base Hospital's knee class.

At one of the classes, Julie actually ran into the Community Physiotherapist who gave her a hug and asked how she was doing. Julie said the community team were all lovely and she couldn't fault the care they provided.

Julie said it was a great experience being able to complete her recovery in the comfort of her home. She felt she was equipped by the KHOP team with enough information in regard to her recovery at home.

Julie has only positive praise to give about her whole journey, saying the staff were wonderful in all steps along the way and they were all so caring.

She was surprised (and relieved) by what little pain she had after her surgery which she attributes to participation in exercises prior to surgery, as well as moving as soon as possible afterwards.

Julie said she felt privileged to have been a part of the Rapid Recovery Program for Port Macquarie Base Hospital and would recommend the program to anyone.

Our Facilities

Community Health Centres



Bowraville HealthOne
2 George Street
Bowraville NSW 2449
(02) 6691 1125



Camden Haven HealthOne
Laurie Street
Laurieton NSW 2443
(02) 5525 4760



Nambucca HealthOne
4 Fred Brain Avenue
Nambucca Heads NSW 2448
(02) 6598 6100



Port Macquarie Community Health Centre
Morton Street
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
(02) 6589 2100



South West Rocks Community Health Centre
7-9 Steve Eagleton Drive
South West Rocks NSW 2431
(02) 6561 2990



Woolgoolga Community Health Centre
29 Beach Street
Woolgoolga NSW 2456
(02) 6691 1110

Mid North Coast Cancer Institute



Coffs Harbour Health Campus
Pacific Highway
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450
(02) 6656 5737
Freecall: 1800 209 187



Port Macquarie Base Hospital
Wrights Road
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
(02) 6580 1807

Public Hospitals



Bellinger River District Hospital

1 Church Street
Bellingen NSW 2454
(02) 6659 5800

Bellingen Community Health Centre

(02) 6659 5842



Coffs Harbour Health Campus

345 Pacific Highway
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450
(02) 6656 7000

Coffs Harbour Community Health

(02) 6656 7820



Dorrigo Multi Purpose Service

Beech Street
Dorrigo NSW 2453
(02) 6692 7700

Dorrigo Community Health Centre

(02) 6692 7715



Kempsey District Hospital

119 River Street
Kempsey NSW 2440
(02) 6561 2600

Kempsey Community Health

(02) 6561 2790



Macksville District Hospital

100 Darruya Road
North Macksville NSW 2447
(02) 6598 3300

Macksville Community Health

(02) 6598 3500



Port Macquarie Base Hospital

Wrights Road
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
(02) 5524 2000



Wauchope District Memorial Hospital

69 High Street
Wauchope NSW 2446
(02) 6580 8000

Wauchope Community Health Centre

(02) 6580 8060



Mid North Coast Local Health District

PO Box 126
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
1800 726 997

Notes





 MNCHealth

 midnorthcoasthealth

 @mnclhd

 Mid North Coast Local Health District

 Mid North Coast Local Health District

 mnclhd.health.nsw.gov.au