Costly home service real district asset

Despite its rapid expansion in recent years, Gosford District Hospital is not only concerned about the care and treatment of persons confined to its wards, or visiting its out-patients’ department.

Its care extends further to sick persons needing attention in their own homes — many of them pensioners who need regular treatment, but are unable to visit the hospital.

It was for these people that the District Nursing Service was started at Gosford in April, 1955, with one trained nurse.

Since then it has grown to the extent where it now employs eight nursing sisters and during the past year visited 30,380 patients in their homes.

These are Sisters Joan Fagan and Edna Warnecke, who cover the Woy Woy district, Eileen Pollock and Nanette Tindale (The Entrance), Joy Lackey (“A” Riding, Gosford Shire), Barbara Donnelly (Gosford), Elaine Mackay (Wyong area) and Barbara Tiller (holiday relief).

Profile

Every day these women visit homes where one, and often two, elderly or incapacitated people need their help.

It is their job to see that injections are given when needed, to carry out bandaging, medication, removal of sutures, sponging, bathing and supervise exercises.

An important part of their visit is often giving tuition to relatives on the proper care needed by the patient or arranging housekeeper services.

Sister Eileen Pollock, who is a returned Army nurse, believes that social welfare work is as important in the visits she makes as the actual medication given.

Sister Pollock estimates that she would visit an average 100 patients weekly in her Long Jetty-Tumbi Umbi district.

She said that she often finds two aged persons living in a home, but neither able to adequately cope with necessary treatment or daily household chores.

For persons such as these, there is no charge for the care provided by the District Nursing Service — for others the cost is a reasonable $1 per visit.

Because of the small income from actual fees and the tremendous coverage the service gives on the Central Coast, its maintenance costs are high.

The Secretary of Gosford Hospital (Mr. N. Boyce) expects that this financial year the cost will be $30,000.

Local fund-raising committees have this year paid $3130 to the hospital to meet the car running expenses incurred by the nurses.

The committees also provide various items of equipment needed by the nurse in their areas, and these include wheelchairs, walking sticks and emergency food parcels for destitute and sick patients.

But there are also many other organisations and clubs only too pleased to help out with equipment or money when needed.

One of these is the Tuggerah Lakes Memorial Club, which provides extra equipment for needy patients in its area.

Mr. Boyce believes that the home service is beneficial to the hospital as well as to the patients — a survey carried out recently showed that a saving of 100 beds at the hospital is made by the eight sisters supplying expert attention in the patients’ own homes.

Mr. Boyce attributes the success of the service — which caters to the needs of so many — to the support of local medical practitioners, the dedication of the nurses themselves and the hard-working fund-raising committees.