GOSFORD HOSPITAL 70th ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR PUBLICATION

A HISTORICAL JOURNEY THROUGH 70 YEARS OF CARING FOR THE COAST 1945-2015
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On behalf of the Central Coast Local Health District Board, it is a privilege and pleasure to present this celebration of Gosford Hospital’s 70th anniversary.

This souvenir publication offers a brief overview of the tremendous growth and development of the hospital over the years and pays tribute to some of the many individuals and organisations who contributed to our proud history.

We have come a long way from the most humble of beginnings, but throughout the years the hospital has remained the heartbeat of the community and continues to provide vital services and care for the Central Coast.

The patients who come to Gosford Hospital continue to be touched by the dedication and commitment of the nurses, physicians, staff, countless professionals, donors and volunteers who have devoted their time and energies to enhancing the health and wellbeing of our community.

As we reflect on our past, I hope this will not only serve as a celebration of Gosford Hospital’s milestone achievements but a source of inspiration to continue to reach for excellence and innovation.

Paul Tonkin
Chair of the Board
**Timeline** A snapshot of key events in Gosford Hospital’s evolution

- **1945** Gosford District Hospital officially opens.
- **1947** Foundation Matron Knight commences the School of Nursing.
- **1958** Hospital extended to 63 beds with new wards, maternity beds and nurses’ home block.
- **1969** Maternity extended, adding 12 more beds.
- **1971** More upgrades take place with a new building for pathology and administration as well as a new theatre block. This year also marked the naming and formation of Central Coast Area Health Service.
- **1977** Facilities leased for a rehabilitation workshop named in honour of Harry Mattocks.
- **1978** Family Support Cottage opens.
- **1980** Expansions and upgrades continue with 120 new surgical beds, six new operating theatres and a new accident and emergency department.
- **1984** The Harry Mattocks Rehabilitation Workshop moves to a purpose-built facility on hospital grounds. New diabetic centre and renal dialysis centre also opened. The hospital enters the technological era with its first computer system.
- **1994** Gosford Hospital becomes a teaching hospital. A major bushfire devastates the Central Coast with hospital staff assisting those affected. Helipad opens.
- **1997/1998** Gosford Hospital recognised by NSW Health as a principal referral hospital.
- **1998** Cancer Care Centre opens.
- **2002** Major redevelopments begin.
1961
First mock disaster exercise takes place. Iris Inskip appointed as Matron.

1967
Bed numbers grow to 135. New four-storey nurses’ home and training school built along with a bigger Children’s Ward. New services include pathology, blood bank and outpatient clinics.

1975
Construction of a three-storey building for a new X-ray department, casualty, medical wards, nurse’s home and undercover transfer area for ambulance bays.

1976
New Health Services Building completed for dentistry, children’s health, audiometry, speech therapy, geriatric rehabilitation, community nursing and health education.

1987
The final intake of Gosford Hospital’s nursing students graduate.

1989
New psychiatric services offered at Mandala with 12 beds for involuntary patients who previously had to travel to Sydney.

1992
Major redevelopment completed including 120 new beds and new facilities for orthopaedic, surgical, maternity, intensive care and medical imaging.

2010
New Mental Health Centre opens with 30 beds, living rooms, courtyards and recreational equipment.

2014
Simulation Centre opens to enhance the hospital’s clinical training. Commissioning of a new state of the art CT scanner – the first public hospital in the state to receive this model.

2015
The NSW Government commits $368 million for the redevelopment of Gosford Hospital to be completed in 2019.

2016
NSW Health Minister announces funding for further redevelopments.

1977
New Children’s Ward opens.

1989
New Radiology Services Building completed for pathology, children’s health, audiometry, speech therapy.

1993
New Children’s Ward opens at Mandala with 12 beds.

2010
Bed numbers grow to 135. New Health Services Building opened.

2013
New Cancer Centre opens to provide public radiotherapy services for the first time on the Central Coast.

2014
Simulation Centre opens to enhance the hospital’s clinical training. Commissioning of a new state of the art CT scanner – the first public hospital in the state to receive this model.

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1977
New Children’s Ward opens.
Matron Knight with one of the first babies born at the hospital

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<th>The beginning: in numbers</th>
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<td><strong>175</strong> babies were born in the first year of the hospital being opened</td>
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<td><strong>34</strong> beds were available</td>
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<td><strong>1,500</strong> local residents attended the official opening</td>
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<td><strong>40,000</strong> pounds was spent on the construction of the building</td>
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<td><strong>12</strong> nursing staff were employed initially including the Matron, seven sisters and four nursing assistants</td>
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<td><strong>32,000</strong> people lived on the Central Coast</td>
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GOSFORD HOSPITAL 70th ANNIVERSARY
Months before the doors opened and patients began streaming in, foundation Matron Nona Knight was busy readying and staffing the hospital. She even prepared all the meals for the first four days as she hadn’t yet employed a cook or domestic staff.

At 36 years of age, Nona Knight already had 20 years of nursing experience under her belt and was previously Matron of the MacLean District Hospital on the NSW North Coast.

She commenced the School of Nursing at Gosford in 1947 which became a highly regarded program throughout its duration before nurse education was transferred across to universities in 1984.

One of the many major contributions made by Matron Knight was the development of the area’s emergency disaster plan.

After attending a course in Victoria, she ensured 70 locals were trained in first aid and could be mobilised in a timely fashion if the need ever arose.

This was tested in 1961 during the first Mock Disaster Exercise. The drill was conducted at the waterfront to practice disaster reactions on both land and water, in conjunction with Brisbane Water Ambulance Service.

The bed numbers more than doubled during the 17 years in which Matron Knight worked at the hospital.

In September 1961, she announced her well-earned retirement and left to marry David Walker, a local timber merchant.

Iris Inskip was employed to replace Matron Knight in December of the same year.

Matron Inskip had been a captain in the Army during the Second World War and served in Greece and New Guinea.

She was in charge of the nursing administration; admission of all patients and purchasing of drugs.

It was a time of the stiff white uniform and large veil (which were all cleaned by the on-site laundry service who desperately struggled to keep up with the washing and pressing).

Matron Inskip would perform daily inspections of all wards with many nervous, young nurses feeling they had to almost “stand to attention” when being interviewed by the Matron.

During her era the first male nursing students began their training at the hospital. Walter Ross was the first male nurse to graduate and Stan Evans was also employed as a male tutor at this time.

Matron Inskip was instrumental in designing the future direction of Gosford Hospital in the early sixties, along with Chief Executive Neville Boyce and Chairman of the Board Ron Mathews.

She rounded off a lifetime of nursing with 11 years in the role of Matron.
Gosford Hospital is in operation

The first surgical patient had no complaints about his stay.

Nineteen-year-old Neville Wallwork, of Gosford, was working in Sydney only a few days before the official opening when he felt sick and decided to come back home to the Central Coast.

When he eventually made his way to Gosford Hospital he was told he had appendicitis.

“It was very lucky timing because the visiting surgeon, Dr John Dowling had only just started,” Mr Wallwork said.

Mr Wallwork had his appendectomy upstairs in the theatre room which was still receiving some finishing touches.

“As they wheeled me in the local sign writer was still printing Operating Theatre on the doors,” he laughed.

Mr Wallwork spent his recovery in an unlikely place – the Maternity Ward.

“There was no lift to take me back downstairs and they wanted to keep the downstairs ward empty for people to tour on the opening day so they kept me in the maternity wing which was upstairs next door to the theatre,” he said.

“Luckily there were no babies delivered during my stay otherwise I think they would have had to kick me out.”

Mr Wallwork didn't have much company during his hospital stay. “I was the only one in the ward and the staff were all busy running around getting ready for the opening,” he said.

But he had a front row ticket to the official ceremony.

“The nurses sat me up at the window so I could watch the opening,” he said.

Despite being the first surgical patient, Mr Wallwork said he didn’t feel any nerves at the time. “I knew I was in very safe hands,” he said.

He even enjoyed the hospital food during his week-long stay. “It was all really good home-cooked meals prepared by the cook,” he said.
From hospital bed to Chair of the Board

Neville’s family had strong links to the hospital – his father Robert (Bob) started the Central Coast Ambulance Service and was Gosford Ambulance Station Superintendent. The Wallworks lived in the ambulance cottage opposite the train station and Neville would often help his dad as an honorary ambulance driver on weekends. In the same year the hospital opened, Bob built a new ambulance station in Donnison Street.

Neville’s connection with Gosford Hospital continued many years after that first surgery. He became a member of the Board in 1976 and was appointed Chairman of the Board from 1982 to 1992 – which he remembers as a time of great expansion for the hospital.

HEALTH TRENDS

The life expectancy in 1946-1948 was 66.1 years for males and 70.6 years for females. This is compared to 80.1 years for males and 84.3 years for females in 2011-2013.

In 1945, 72 per cent of males and 26 per cent of females in Australia were smokers, compared to 19 per cent of males and 16 per cent of females who smoked daily or weekly in 2010.

The effects of smoking became evident in later years with lung cancer deaths increasing from 11 deaths per 100,000 for males in 1945 to 49 deaths per 100,000 in 2003.

Meanwhile the mortality rate from stomach cancer in males dropped from 46 deaths per 100,000 in 1945 to 8 deaths per 100,000 in 2003.

Tuberculosis deaths also decreased with improved living conditions, antibiotics, sanitation, screening and immunisation from 49 deaths per 100,000 for males in 1945 to 0.3 deaths per 100,000 in 2003 and from 25 deaths per 100,000 for females in 1945 to 0.2 per 100,000 in 2003.

Neville Wallwork
In early 1945 at the age of just 16, Lorna Mason was one of the first young girls to be appointed as an assistant nurse in the lead up to Gosford Hospital’s opening. Out of the four young teenage girls who took the job advertised in the Sydney Morning Herald, only two – Lorna and her dear friend Gladys (Glad) Butler – survived the first couple of months of training.

“The other two didn’t stay on past the opening,” Lorna said. “They didn’t like nursing but I loved it. I loved the life, the company and caring for people.”

But it wasn’t all smooth sailing for the young nurse. Lorna remembers feeling very homesick when she first moved into the nurses’ home.

“But Matron Knight came from Glebe where my family were so on weekends she would drive me home to visit my mother,” Lorna said. “She (Matron Knight) was a very nice woman – a real motherly type who cared about her girls.”

Lorna was Gosford Hospital’s first full nursing graduate but it took seven years in total because despite having three years of experience when the formal training scheme started she had to complete the four year course before being able to graduate in December 1951.

With few trained staff in the early days of the hospital, Lorna said the young nursing assistants had a great deal of responsibility on their shoulders – in more ways than one.

Having no elevator meant the young nurses actually had to carry patients on stretchers upstairs for their surgery and back downstairs for recovery.

They also had to carry the deceased through the bush at night to the mortuary which was located some distance away.

“The sister would hold the lantern in front of us and we would carry the stretcher but one night an owl hooted and we got such a fright we dropped the body and ran home leaving them in the bush until daylight,” Lorna said.

Frights like this meant the nurses would lock the hospital doors at night. Lorna remembers this became a problem one particular occasion when Dr Duncan was called after-hours to deliver a baby and had to climb up over the veranda and...
break into the maternity ward because the main doors were locked.

Lorna also remembers a polio “epidemic” in the early days which placed the new hospital staff under a lot of pressure.

“I had one patient present to me with a suspected kidney infection but he was stuttering and had strange symptoms so I went and got Matron Knight and it turned out he had polio,” she said.

“The polio patients were admitted for observation and then transferred to an infectious disease facility in Sydney but it was very scary to come so close to the disease.”

There were some things that Lorna was sheltered from however.

“Matron wouldn’t let me see a birth until I was 20 because she thought I was too young to see that,” Lorna said. “How times have changed.”

Despite the cold nights in the nurses’ home (known as Possum Lodge) which forced the girls to squeeze three in a bed to stay warm, Lorna said she loved living at the hospital.

It was at Gosford Hospital that she met her future husband Les Mitchell who was a delivery man for the Snow White Laundry service. They would spend Lorna’s off-duty evenings on dates at the Regal Picture Theatre.

Lorna left Gosford Hospital to have her three children and further her studies in obstetrics but later returned to run the Outpatients Clinic where she worked for another 20 years.

Although Glad left in the forties to marry her fiancé Athol Frewin, her and Lorna remained very good friends and still catch up regularly.

“I had a very happy career and worked with some wonderful people who were like family,” Lorna said. “Some of us are still very close today.”

Did you know?

• The early nurses’ first duties included cleaning the walls and floors after the construction mess.
• Nurses were not allowed to get married up until the 1970s.
• The first male nurse, Walter Ross graduated in 1973.
• The first District Nursing Service commenced in March 1955 with the appointment of Sister Pollock who carried out 350 home visits in just one month.
Gosford Hospital’s Holden Street site was first gazetted in 1903 but it took more than 40 years for the dream to become a reality. For many of those years it was the Board that fought tirelessly to establish the hospital.

Initially intended to be named Erina Shire Memorial Hospital, the original Board formed in 1930 but the plans still didn’t come to fruition due to the financial depression. The Board continued to push however, with Chair Les Taylor suggesting the facilities be modelled off neighbouring Hornsby Hospital. The Board persisted in their lobbying efforts and by 1935 had made headway with a 50 per cent grant for construction approved by the State Government.

With the site located in Gosford, it was decided the name would be changed to Gosford District Hospital and the Board were now simply waiting for the funds to come through. The start of World War II proved to be another setback but the Board remained resolute. Local state member Mr Frank Finnan MLA added weight to the argument and in 1941 he managed to secure a commitment by then Minister of Health Gus Kelly who recognised the need for a general hospital due to a growing local population.

More waiting and planning ensued, with Minister Kelly finally laying the foundation stone in 1943. He returned on 26 May 1945 to officially open the hospital, with the Board members proudly watching on.

"It took 26 years for this hospital to reach the stage of 146 beds and only 3 more years to add a further 200 beds."

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From the outset, the Board have led, directed and monitored the activities of the hospital and planned for the future. Over the past 70 years the Board has delivered a wealth of industry experience and knowledge which has contributed to the growth and success – not only of Gosford Hospital – but the entire Central Coast Local Health District.

**The Board wins a long battle**

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**Former Chairs of the Board include:**

- A. L. (Les) Taylor
- C. J. Staples
- Frank Finnan MLA
- A. E. Lillicrapp
- C. R. Thew
- J. Little
- F. Spencer
- R. G. Mathews
- R. M. Vaughan
- R. S. Newton
- L. E. Hannell
- Neville Wallwork
- Prof. Donald George
- David Chandler
- Paul Tonkin (current)

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*RM Vaughan Chairman Report, June 1973*
Early Board member Harry Mattocks was one of the hospital’s most staunch supporters.

Mr Mattocks was appointed to the first Board in 1944 just prior to its opening and held the role right through until he turned 70 in 1960.

His backing and input during those founding years was instrumental. On the opening day he was named an Honorary Life Member of the Hospital in recognition of meritorious services rendered for and on behalf of the Board.

Mr Mattocks assisted with nearly every monthly stall of the hospital auxiliary for almost 40 years. Wife Jean was one of the first members of the hospital auxiliary and later secretary, going on to become a life member of the United Hospitals Auxiliaries.

Mr Mattocks donated £1,200 in 1945 to buy the hospital an “elaborate” x-ray machine to be installed when the hospital extended and continued to be a successful fundraiser for the hospital over the years, raising money to improve the care and comfort of patients.

The Mattocks also hosted hospital fundraisers in their basement known as Mattocks’ Hall but their work extended far beyond fundraising. Mr Mattocks and wife Jean opened their home for many organisations to use as a base, even offering a day centre for the frail. During this time, almost 60 people per week received care in the Mattocks’ home.

In honour of this vast contribution, the rehabilitation workshop which was opened by the hospital and the then Health Commission of New South Wales in 1977, was named the Harry Mattocks Rehabilitation Centre.

Mr Mattocks was presented with a certificate of appreciation from the Government of NSW in recognition of his voluntary services as a Director of the hospital and then awarded the British Empire Medal in the civil division for service to the community in 1981.

The Harry Mattocks building was moved onto hospital grounds in 1984, the same year he passed away and was repurposed as an education centre in 1998.

Muriel Westerweller served on the Board for 27 years from 1958 to 1985 and was in the role of Vice Chair for 10 of those years.

“Her untiring efforts continually amaze everyone. In regard to the health problems of the community, she had a unique and constructive know-how.

There is no one who has fought with such determination for the upgrading of our health services and hospitals, and in support of the disadvantaged people of the Central Coast... Well done, Muriel.”

1984/85 Annual Report
Neville Boyce was working as Assistant Secretary at Kurri Kurri Hospital in 1963 when he saw the Secretary role at Gosford District Hospital advertised and decided to give it a shot.

His extensive qualifications and experience in hospital administration and accounting helped him land the most senior management role - which became recognised as Chief Executive Officer for the first time.

A former staff member told Mr Boyce “nothing would ever happen at Gosford” but within only months of being appointed to the position, plans to double the size of the hospital were announced.

During his 29 year tenure, Gosford Hospital’s 65 beds and approximately 100 staff members grew into the Central Coast Area Health Service with 800 beds across numerous sites and more than 3,000 staff members.

A true visionary, Mr Boyce would snap up real estate around Holden Street as it became available with the hospital’s future growth in mind.

Mr Boyce, who still lives just a stone’s throw away from the hospital, said in the early days they had no medical superintendent, resident medical staff or resident specialists which forced many local patients to be transferred to Sydney or Newcastle by rail or road.

Even pathology items were forwarded by train to their visiting pathologist Dr Peter Hendry in Newcastle and results came back by mail or telephone.

Mr Boyce remembers many of the nurses would dread the trip to Sydney with patients in the back of the ambulance as they would get car sick from the long, winding drive on the old Pacific Highway.

With a shortage of beds and around 600 babies being born each year, Mr Boyce said he can remember patient beds spilling out of the wards and babies being born in the corridors.

Specialty services were soon introduced under Mr Boyce’s watch and in 1965 a major redevelopment commenced.

Balls were a popular fundraising activity for the hospital throughout the sixties and seventies and Mr Boyce said he endured a total of ten balls in one single year.

He still laughs when he remembers one particular ball in 1970 when then Minister for Health, Harry Jago attended the celebration in the Dwyer Pavilion at Gosford Showground.

“I will never forget he walked in wearing his white tuxedo and the roof of the pavilion was galvanised iron sheeting,” Mr Boyce said.

“Drops of rust fell from the roof and stained the Minister’s tuxedo. It caused a bit of embarrassment for us organisers as he was not amused.”
Put to the test

He has a career spanning 50 years in health and an OAM for his services to the health industry and the community, but Chief Executive Graham McGuinness faced some of his toughest challenges at Gosford Hospital.

He remembers a serial bomb threat case which caused havoc for the hospital in the mid-eighties.

“That really put us through our paces and was a real test of the time as we had to perform evacuations and one of the threats was in the Children’s Ward,” he said. “Interestingly the culprit turned out to be a policeman.”

Mr McGuinness was later in the Chief Executive role when the devastating fires swept through the Central Coast in 1994 posing a serious threat to the hospital and cutting off all access to the area.

“That was a very challenging day,” he said. “I still remember standing in the Intensive Care Unit watching the flames coming down Presidents Hill and the Minister for Health called me and said have you got everything under control there?”

Mr McGuinness and his staff played a major role in protecting and caring for the community during the major bushfires. Many local families as well as residents from nearby nursing homes took shelter at the hospital, while fire-fighters and victims sought treatment and support from staff.

Former Chief Executives

A number of passionate and committed leaders have managed Gosford Hospital over the past 70 years. This esteemed list includes:

- 1946 – 1961  John Walker
- 1961 – 1963  George Walker
  (no relation)
- 1963 – 1992  Neville Boyce
- 1995 – 1997  Dr Stephen Christley
- 1997 – 2003  Jon Blackwell
- 2004 – 2007  Dr Stephen Christley
  (NS & CC)
- 2007 – 2011  Matthew Daly
  (NS & CC)
- 2011 – present  Matt Hanrahan
The local community has been supporting Gosford Hospital long before it was even built. The first donation dates back to 1905 when it was decided by the community in Gosford Council Chambers that the £81 raised from the annual flower show would go towards the Central Coast’s first public hospital.

Since then, in addition to the stalwart donors acknowledged in this section, many other organisations have helped provide financial support to the hospital, including 2GO and the Give Me Five for Kids Appeal, the Malibu Boardriders Club through the Magoo Charity Classic, Woolworths, and the countless patients and families of patients who simply donate to show their appreciation for the care they received.

It is not just financial donations that make a difference to our patients and staff – many people generously donate their time by volunteering or providing handmade gifts such as patient blankets or newborn clothing.

The selfless contribution of all these loyal supporters – whether it be individuals, businesses, service and sports clubs or community groups – has helped shape the hospital’s history and continues to make our vision a reality.

**Gosford Auxiliary** is the oldest auxiliary attached to the hospital. It was first formed in 1944 while the hospital was still under construction. Its formation was instigated when the Board of Directors was visited by Miss Fraser, an experienced organiser of hospital auxiliaries, who outlined her recommendations for the formation of an auxiliary in Gosford. The idea was met with enthusiasm from the Board and a series of advertisements highlighting the benefits of a local hospital were shown in picture theatres throughout the area. The response from the community was overwhelming with auxiliary groups immediately popping up in the area. Even before the hospital’s completion, auxiliaries had been formed in Saratoga, Empire Bay, Tumbi-Berkeley Vale and The Entrance. Within one year of the hospital opening, a total of 12 auxiliaries were operating across the Central Coast and had raised £344. Ourimbah Auxiliary formed in 1946, not long after the hospital opened, and since then has solely fundraised for Gosford Hospital, with more than $90,000 in donations since 1998. Auxiliary donations in the early decades included tea trolleys, spin dryer, sewing machine, furnishings, nurses’ graduation veils, projection lamp, wheelchair, refrigerator, piano, rubber mattresses, kitchen equipment, electric range, napkins, garden plants and more. Gosford, Ourimbah, Woy Woy, Wyong and Long Jetty auxiliaries now raise more than $150,000 each year for the District through a range of activities such as stalls, raffles and sightseeing tours. Their phenomenal fundraising efforts continue to enable our hospitals to purchase a wide range of new equipment to enhance the wellbeing of our patients.

**The Lions and Lioness Clubs of the Central Coast** have been long term supporters of the hospital, with a special connection to renal services. In 1984 the clubs contributed $100,000 to equip the first Satellite Renal Dialysis Unit at the hospital, which meant local patients could avoid hours of travelling to Sydney and Newcastle each week for treatment. In later years the clubs contributed significant funds towards two additional renal units, the construction and expansion of cancer care centres and new exercise rehabilitation facilities.
The Chapman Trust was set up by Alfred Ingham Chapman to maintain and distribute the proceeds of his estate. Alfred and his wife Ella were enthusiastic supporters of the Gosford district and with no children of their own, they wanted to set up a trust to allow donations twice a year to help local organisations prosper. The trust started in 1963 with $389,000 and today it is worth more than $30 million thanks to sales and investments. The Chapman’s generosity and foresight has allowed millions of dollars to be distributed to a number of local beneficiaries each year, including Gosford Hospital. In the past 15 years alone Gosford Hospital has received more than $1.3 million from the fund.

Rotary Clubs of the Central Coast have played a significant role in the history of Gosford Hospital. In 1967 Gosford Rotary Club, assisted by local citizens, constructed a new kiosk at the hospital with funds from the Hospital Auxiliaries. Since that time, Rotary Clubs have supported many important projects and initiatives, such as building and refurbishing Rotary Lodge.

Volunteers have played an integral part in the day-to-day operation of the hospital over the past seven decades. Originally known as the Pink Ladies Auxiliary, the group officially formed in March 1969. As stipulated in their pocket guide, their role was to assist, as requested by the supervisor in any ward within the limits of their duties. Those duties included distributing reading matter; reading to patients; distributing mail; assisting patients with meals; taking patients to wards following admission; trimming, shampooing and setting of hair; arranging flowers; distributing and teaching of handicrafts; and child-minding when required. Many of the duties have changed over time and our volunteers are no longer referred to as “pink ladies” because we have a lot of men who also offer their time and services. But the aim of our volunteers remains the same to this day – to help staff improve the comfort and wellbeing of our patients and their relatives.
Dr Ian Walters was appointed first Medical Superintendent in 1966 and was responsible for the implementation of the honorary medical scheme before his tragic death in a car accident in 1969. The honorary medical staff were a body of dedicated medical practitioners who freely offered their time and skills to assist in the provision of medical treatment to outpatients and inpatients. This made specialist services available, when up to this point they were previously only offered from the metropolitan hospitals. The “Honoraries” actively participated in training resident and nursing staff, and many gave their time in their own rooms to train resident medical officers. Their qualifications and expertise in the general medical and surgical disciplines was deeply appreciated and the envy of many other hospitals.

Dr John Connolly was a pioneering surgeon on the Central Coast. He came on board as an honorary consultant surgeon in January 1966. At the time of his appointment, concern had been expressed about the anaesthetic services at Gosford so he spent some time securing sufficient anaesthetists to allow surgeries to be carried out for much longer periods. Dr Connolly retired as a surgeon in 1997 but continued to contribute to the Area Health Service through his Emeritus Consultant appointment.

Sister Bell joined the hospital when it first opened and was in charge of the dispensary and operating theatre. She became the first tutor when the hospital was declared a Nurses’ Training School in October 1947.

In the 1961 Mock Disaster Exercise, Gosford Hospital ran a drill at the waterfront on both land and water in conjunction with Brisbane Water Ambulance Service to practice reactions during a disaster.
Dr Bob McGuinness was appointed to the position of Director of Anaesthetics on 22 January 1968, a position he held for many years. Dr McGuinness was appointed as Clinical Assistant Dean in January 1995. This position would facilitate the new affiliation of Gosford Hospital as a teaching hospital associated with the University of Newcastle’s Faculty of Medicine. Dr McGuinness was responsible for the undergraduate medical education program in the hospital.

Catering staff have always been accustomed to withstanding the heat in the kitchen but it was reported in the 1964-65 Annual Report that at the height of a heatwave in February 1964, two cooks fainted in “oppressive conditions in the tiny, overcrowded kitchen”. They reportedly quickly recovered and returned to work. Over the years the catering department didn’t just prepare meals for patients and staff, but also supplied hot meals for the Meals on Wheels services and to various community centres. Staff produced just under one million meals in the 1991-92 financial year.

District Nurses made 50,000 home visits in 1971 - close on 1,000 in each week. All this was accomplished by a devoted band of 11 nursing sisters. Sister Eileen Pollock (above) was Gosford’s first District Nurse.

Marie Lowndes was appointed as the hospital’s third Matron in 1972 – a position which was expanded to the role of Area Director of Nursing. When Miss Lowndes became Matron, she had already been on the nursing staff since 1956 and retired in 1988 after 32 years of service to the hospital, during which she played a key role in expanding nursing services to meet the needs of the community.

Dr Rod Kennedy took up the position of Medical Superintendent in 1975. Prior to his appointment Dr Kennedy spent 15 years in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. He held the position of Medical Superintendent until his passing in April 1995. He also established the Public Health Unit to identify and monitor local health issues.

Though it was years in the making, the construction of the first inter-denominational Chapel was thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Pink Ladies’ Auxiliary, who raised more than $70,000 for the project. When the development was stalled due to construction work, a temporary chapel was built in 1986. The new Chapel was finally opened in 1992 and featured a spectacular stained glass window by artist Rod Marshall. The theme was “faith, peace and healing” to provide comfort during moments of quiet reflection or private prayer. The stained glass work was relocated when the chapel was moved in 2004.

The hospital’s laundry services produced 924,000 kilograms of linen during the 1978-79 financial year but when the hospital first opened in 1947 everyone including off-duty nurses had to help hang out the linen to dry from ropes attached to trees.
An underground tunnel linking wards to the operating theatres and other sections of the hospital was built in the 1980s. The tunnel was once part of a huge river system which extended from Port Stephens to Wollongong and back to the Blue Mountains and cut through rocks which date back 49 million years from the Triassic Age. Local artists created a ‘Hope for the Future’ mural to make the journey through the tunnel a more pleasant experience.

In 1980 the hospital’s over-loaded telephone system was upgraded and the telephone directory had to grow because of the increasing size of the hospital and health service. A single page directory no longer met communication needs for staff.

Bobbie Carter-Brown was appointed as the Head of School of Nursing and Deputy Director of Nursing in 1972 and went on to be appointed to the position of Area Director of Nursing in 1987. She retired in 1998 after a long and distinguished nursing career in which she made a significant contribution to the development of the Central Coast Area Health Service.
As part of a major goal to prioritise and improve the health of the local Aboriginal community, an Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer was appointed in 1994 and in 1997 the Aboriginal Health Unit Nunyara was established and the Aboriginal Health Strategic Plan was launched.

In 1993 a new $1.4 million Children’s Ward opened after the local community raised $275,000 to support its refurbishment and help purchase equipment.

A major customer focus project in 1994 was the production of “The First Time” video which is aimed at allaying the fears of those about to come in for surgery with an “informative and personal glimpse” into the procedures involved.

A new regional Cancer Centre opened in 2013 to provide public sector radiotherapy services on the Central Coast for the first time. The $38.6 million centre meant local patients no longer needed to travel to Sydney or Newcastle for treatment.
The Grapevine staff newsletter was always the source of internal news, social events, holiday tales, staff movements, recipes, poems, puzzles, cartoons and hilarious jokes.

Staff would swap scalpels and scrubs for microphones and outrageous costumes when they performed comedy skits and musical numbers in the annual (infamous) Hospital Revue.
The Nurses’ Graduation Ball was always a memorable occasion and a rare chance for staff to dress up and dance the night away. The final graduation was held in 1987.

Gosford Hospital doctors were crowned touch football champions of the Central Coast in 1978. Paul Schofield, Phil Cowdrey, Bob Bonomi, Rich Van Goningen, Denis Wilkie, Peter Hall, Michael Patrick, Greg Aroney, Terry Vandeleur, Malcolm Fraser, Chris Doolan and Bob McGuiness were all part of the winning side.

Gosford hosted the Inter Hospital Olympic Games in 2001 and the home turf advantage was clear with our staff collecting 113 medals. Pictured celebrating is Sean Kelly, John Clucas, Glenda Gilmore, Jon Blackwell, Margaret English, Vicki Hayward, Les Hayward and Matt Wynter.
Major redevelopment commences in 2002.
The Central Coast is an incredible community which we are lucky to be a part of. I am sure you would all agree it is a wonderful place to work and live. For the past 70 years Gosford Hospital has been a driving force in promoting and enhancing the health and wellbeing of the local community - something we continue to do today and will strive to do even better tomorrow.

The true mark of a good hospital is its ability to move forward and meet the needs of the local community. Gosford Hospital has continued to embrace change and opportunities over the years in order to improve the care and outcomes for our staff, patients, families and visitors. In doing so, the hospital has grown from just 34 beds to more than 1,000 across the entire District, but just like we were in 1945, our hospital is operating at capacity. Now more than ever we are focussed on tackling new challenges, demands and plans as the population is tipped to reach more than 355,000 by 2022.

The Gosford Hospital redevelopment, for which the government has committed $368 million dollars in funding, is already underway and will deliver major new and updated facilities including a new and larger Emergency Department, Intensive Care Unit, maternity services and much more. Gosford Hospital and the Central Coast Local Health District is clearly a health service ready for the future and one that our founders would be very proud of.

While reflecting upon our remarkable history which has been brought to life in these pages, one thing has stood out to me: it is not simply about remembering dates or buildings, but the people who made it all possible.

Gosford Hospital’s position as the acute principal referral hospital of the Central Coast is a testament to the vision and dedication of our staff – and their unwavering focus on putting every patient first – every time. We are also forever in debt to the many individuals and organisations who have provided their support and service over the years including Board members, donors and volunteers.

Every single person who has contributed to the history of Gosford Hospital should feel very proud. I would like to say thank you for the role you have played in our 70 year journey and I look forward to your continued support and contribution as we embark on the next exciting chapter, in Caring for the Coast – every patient every time.

Matt Hanrahan
Chief Executive
"The hours worked by the staff and consistency of concern and attention is almost unbelievable."

Thank you letter from the "S" Family in 1997
PHYSIOTHERAPY
DEPARTMENT
Acknowledgement

The Gosford Hospital 70th Anniversary Platinum Dinner and souvenir publication could not have been possible without the support and encouragement of:

Central Coast Local Health District (CCLHD) Board, Chair of the Board Paul Tonkin and Chief Executive Matt Hanrahan;

The many individuals – including current and former staff and members of the community who have been actively involved in the hospital – who provided information, dates and personal memories so that the history could be presented factually and in line with the hospital spirit;

We also would like to acknowledge Bobbie Carter-Brown for commissioning Ben Smith’s book Celebrating 50 Years of Caring for the Coast as it has been a comprehensive source of information and stories;

And the CCLHD Corporate Communications and Design and Print team for their enthusiasm for this project.

Please note we have endeavoured to accurately present all dates, names and events gathered from various archives and personal accounts. We apologise for any inadvertent errors or oversights.

We hope you enjoy this journey through 70 years of caring for the Coast.