

GOSFORD

# Hospital chalks up 70 years

## MORE EXCITING TIMES AHEAD

Denice Barnes

WHEN Gosford Hospital opened its doors 70 years ago Neville Wallwork was the very first patient.

Mr Wallwork went on to become chairman of the board and on Tuesday he was on hand to help celebrate the hospital's 70th anniversary.

Also joining in the milestone celebration which included a historical display and cake cutting ceremony was Verlie Kirkby, now 92, and still a member of Gosford Hospital auxiliary.

Both Mr Wallwork and Ms Kirkby were at the official opening on May 26, 1945.

Ms Kirkby has some memories of those early days.

"I remember that we had our stalls down town and we would have to cart every-

thing down there. It's much easier today," she said.

Mr Wallwork, now 89, met one of the hospital's newest recruits, Kristin Higgins, 21, who began her nursing career there in March.

Former longtime chief executive Neville Boyce was also there. Mr Boyce, 83, began his career there in 1963 with 100 staff and finished 29 years later when there were 3000 staff and more than 800 beds.

On display were photos from the Central Coast Local Health District's Archive and Research E-Library Repository. It includes images and articles published by staff. Central Coast Local Health District librarian Suzanne Lewis was thrilled with the result.

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Neville Boyce, Verlie Kirkby and Neville Wallwork talk about old times at Gosford Hospital.

Pictures: PETER CLARK



Chairman Paul Tonkin.



Neville Wallwork meets Kristin Higgins.



Gosford Hospital in 1954 with 34 beds.



The special care nursery in 1979.



A ward area at the hospital circa 1960s.

### HISTORY

It wasn't until 1941 and with a permanent population of 31,000 that the State Government was forced to admit the health care situation in Gosford was critical and money was needed to build a district hospital. It had taken from 1897, when the first public meeting was held and five acres of land bounded by Etna, Beane and Holden streets gazetted for a hospital site, for the government to recognise the need. Fundraising had begun in 1919 with a proposal to raise three pounds from every household to build the hospital, but in 1929 the government said no. Then the Great Depression and World War I intervened with government directing funding to the war effort. Finally in 1941, 20,000 pounds for construction of a hospital was approved and over 40 years of struggle finally ended. About 1500 residents attended the official opening on May 26, 1945, to celebrate their own 34-bed hospital. Current board chairman Paul Tonkin said celebrating the hospital's 70th anniversary was a wonderful milestone, but the next three years would be more than exciting with the \$569 million redevelopment of both Gosford and Wyong hospitals. "The change over the next three years will be dramatic."