



Care Community Manager Tess Beniga, right, enjoys a movie with Macpherson Smith resident Barbara.

Stawell residents are off to the pictures

It's lights, camera and action for residents at Macpherson Smith Residential Care!

Generous funding from Halls Gap's Mangle family has paid for a disused sunroom in Macpherson Smith Residential Care to be transformed into a purpose-built cinema complete with big screen, external audio system, bar and snacks and of course, a genuine popcorn making machine.

Macpherson Smith Care Community Manager Tess Beniga said the cinema provided residents with the opportunity to relive their younger days when cinemas were the major entertainment.

"Residents have always been able to watch movies on big televisions in the main living areas, but this is providing the complete cinema experience of a sun-blocked room and all the facilities," she said.

"There will be snacks available at every showing and the refrigerator will have ice creams and icy poles and there will be a team member on hand to help.

Tess said the cinema was named the Pinnacle Picture Theatre to honour the generosity of the Mangle family.

"The family's support for Macpherson Smith is overwhelming and we are very thankful to them," she said.

"Our local Engineering team led by Phil Hutton coordinated and completed most of the work and they have done an exceptional job," Stawell Site Director Sue Campigli said.

"It just looks amazing."

Surgeon opens up on ‘world class’ Stawell theatre

Mat Jacob really enjoys his working trips to Stawell.

While he likes the 90-minute drive from Ballarat, Mat said it was really the campus theatres and the surgical team that impressed him most.

“It’s fantastic being able to work at Stawell hospital,” he said. “Their new theatre facilities are world class.

“The endoscopy towers are advanced and we are using the latest equipment at Stawell. It’s a pleasure to work there because you get to provide a high-quality service using modern technology.”

“The staff there are incredible. They are always so lovely to work with and they emanate that nice ‘small hospital team’ environment, which makes the patients feel safe and cared for.”

The new \$5.15 million operating theatre features an expanded recovery area, a dedicated endoscopy reprocessing room, sterile stock storage, a staff write-up space, an eye block anaesthesia area, and improved staff amenities.

Mat performs general surgery at Stawell which can include gall bladder surgery, hernia repairs, skin operations and endoscopies. He said an average day at Stawell could include three or four operations and about eight endoscopies.

“I’m seeing 10 or 11 patients each trip but I’m hoping to increase my surgical list there when the opportunity arises,” he said.

With the opening of the second theatre in Stawell, the campus now has 14 surgeons working in rotation there.

Chief Operating Officer Ben Kelly said Mat’s sentiments toward the Stawell theatre facilities and team were a common theme echoing through the surgical community.

“The new theatre has been such a great outcome for the Stawell community and it’s reassuring for all to know there is a great team there delivering quality care.”



Surgeon Mat Jacob with patient Mathew Jenkins at Stawell Theatre.

‘Paws’-itive program arrives

Stawell has recently introduced Paws on the Ward—a pet therapy initiative that features trained therapy dogs and their volunteer handlers making weekly visits to hospital wards, designed to reduce stress, promote healing.

Volunteers Manager Leah Ferguson says the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

“Pet therapy helps ease worries and anxiety, offering comfort against feelings of loss, loneliness, and emptiness, while also providing valuable social and physical engagement.”

Handler Michelle Dunn and Golden Retriever Eric are among the visiting teams at Stawell.

“Eric loves coming in. The moment we enter the hospital, he knows he’s off to do something special—and the way people light up when they see him makes it all worthwhile.”

The program is designed to lift the spirits of patients and their families, while also giving staff and volunteers a chance to pause and connect in a meaningful, light-hearted way.

Simpson Ward patient Norman Eagles said a visit from Eric was the highlight of his day.

“I really enjoyed the visit from Eric. Being in hospital can be tough, and I’ve been missing my pets at home a lot. Having Eric come by and spend time with me made me feel a bit more at home.”



Michelle, handler of therapy dog Eric, shares a special moment with patient Norman Eagles during a visit on Simpson Ward.



Installation of new patient monitors

Stawell has recently gone live with the installation of five new Draeger portable patient monitors in the theatre patient holding bays.

The new portable patient monitors, which support the hospital's theatres, were installed thanks to the collaborative efforts of Stawell theatre staff, Biomedical Services, Capital Projects and Engineering.

Stawell Theatre ANUM Rachel Nicholls said the new monitors allowed continuous patient observation from pre-procedure holding bays through to theatre, as the devices could be detached from their mounts and travel with the patient throughout their perioperative journey.

“The patient monitors improve patient safety by enabling uninterrupted monitoring of vital signs and supports nursing staff in providing high quality care,” Rachel said.

Biomedical Services Manager Ashley Pollard said the monitors were sourced from surplus COVID response equipment, with Capital Projects supporting the articulating arms required for mounting.

“The installation of the portable patient monitors was expertly completed by the Stawell Engineering team, ensuring optimal positioning for clinical use and staff workflow,” Ashley said.



Stawell Theatre ANUM Rachel Nicholls, Stawell Engineering Services Leading Hand Phil Hutton and Biomedical Services Manager Ashley Pollard.

A sweet gesture from St Patrick's Primary School



St Patrick's Primary School student Jye Friend presents Registered Nurse Zoey Friend and SMC Administration Kat Boag with the gifts.

Students from St Patrick's Primary School recently visited Stawell Medical Centre (SMC), showing that kindness doesn't need a special occasion.

The students came together to make handmade appreciation cards and biscuits for the SMC team to recognise their ongoing care and commitment to the community.

We extend our thanks to these students — their act of kindness left the SMC team feeling truly appreciated.



New \$700,000 chiller project to boost capacity

A major upgrade to the cooling system at Stawell is well underway with the installation of a new high-capacity chiller that will improve efficiency and provide long-term reliability.

The \$700,000 project, delivered by the Capital Projects team with onsite support from Maintenance Manager Phil Hutton and team, will deliver more cooling capacity when operational than the combined output of two existing chillers on site.

Capital Projects Senior Program Manager Delivery Tony Van Eekelen said the chilled water it produced would supply the hospital's 15 Air Handling Units, ensuring consistent cooling across critical areas and enhancing comfort for patients, staff and visitors.

"The project also includes the construction of new acoustic walls around the chillers to minimise operational noise," Tony said.

"These specially designed walls will absorb sound and shield neighbouring properties from disruption, reflecting the hospital's commitment to community care and environmental responsibility."

Phil said this upgrade not only replaced a chiller that had reached the end of its life but also provided a modern, efficient system designed to support the hospital's growing needs well into the future.

The project, which is expected to be completed in the next two months, marks another step forward in ensuring the hospital's facilities can meet growing demand and maintain a safe, comfortable environment for staff, patients and visitors.

Independent renal hub status advances kidney care

Our organisation has transitioned to become an independent renal hub, marking a significant milestone in the delivery of care for those with chronic kidney disease across the region.

Previously operating as satellite services of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, renal units in Ballarat, and Horsham will now be managed directly by Grampians Health, allowing for expanded services and improved patient outcomes.

This transition is driven by a commitment to providing high-quality, effective, and consistent care closer to home for patients living with kidney diseases and ailments.

The new hub status enables us to significantly enhance the medical and nursing capabilities in renal medicine, introduce

surgical services for renal patients, and increase the number of specialist nursing roles to support those with advanced kidney ailments.

"Becoming an independent renal hub means we can deliver more responsive, locally managed care that reflects the needs of our patients and supports our dedicated staff," said Chief Executive Officer Dale Fraser.

It's about putting people first and making sure they receive the best possible care, close to home."

As part of its role as a renal hub, we will be responsible for home dialysis services for patients across the region. A dedicated regional coordinator is being introduced to streamline treatment pathways and support patients living with chronic kidney disease in regional communities.

"This is a major step forward in how we care for people in our region,"
– CEO Dale Fraser.

"Becoming an independent hub service means we can now be responsible for managing all the components of our renal services—staffing, equipment, and clinical decisions—and focus on delivering high quality renal and dialysis care across the region," said Dr David Langsford, General Manager – Medical and Clinical Programs.

"Being an independent hub allows for more agile responses to patient needs, better integration with other local health services, and a stronger focus on continuity of care across Stawell, Edenhope, Horsham and Ballarat."



Fresenius Medical Care Australia clinical sales specialist Rachael Clarke and Dialysis Nurse in Charge Je Vic Solante with one of the new machines.

Sandy helps spread the support

Support for our First Nations people has been extended with the appointment of Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, Sandy Stinten.

Working alongside colleague Danae McDonald, Sandy will help to provide support to patients, clients and team members in Horsham, Dimboola, Edenhope and Stawell.

The proud Gunai/Kurnai woman said she has settled into the role quickly, and has felt very welcomed by the community.

"It's a great role and I'm really enjoying it," Sandy said. "Danae and I are sharing the travelling so that we are both a constant presence at each of the campuses every week.

"Even the trips to Edenhope have been good because while there are not many First Nations people living there, a few team members at the campus are and they have appreciated the visits and the connection."

Sandy said she was impressed with the community space in Horsham and with the work Danae had been doing.

Danae said the appointment of Sandy was important in helping to extend their support.

"We've been working in well together and Sandy has settled in comfortably with her role," she said.

"Sandy's inclusion has meant that for the first time, we've been able to provide comprehensive support to First Nations people at every Grampians Health campus," Chief People Officer Claire Woods said.

"The work that our Aboriginal Liaison Health Officers do is crucial to our First Nations people's continuity of care."

Danae and Sandy visit Stawell on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:00AM - 2:30PM. They can be contacted on **0403 556 517** or **0475 420 398**.



Danae McDonald and Sandy Stinten in the Community Space at Wimmera Base Hospital.

The most fashionable night of the year is back!

Grab your fur coats and finest jewellery, and get ready for this year's hottest event - Stawell Hospital Auxiliary's Fashion Parade, an evening of style and community spirit!

Enjoy a night showcasing fabulous fashion, great company, and plenty of laughs.

For just a \$20 entry fee, you can enjoy a night of the hottest fashion. Entry includes a delicious supper, with all proceeds helping Grampians Health Stawell to provide high-quality care, upgrade essential medical equipment and improve facilities for our community.

When: Friday 10 October, 7:00pm

Where: Powerhouse, 42 Sloane Street, Stawell

Come along, bring your friends, and help make a difference while enjoying a fun night out!



Secure your tickets here.

Staff dominate RFDS scholarship awards

Two of our staff members have recently won highly coveted scholarships from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

Horsham Enrolled Nurse Tammy McDonald and Ballarat Program Assistant Chloe James both won the scholarships to support their nursing studies. Adding to their achievement is the fact that only four scholarships were awarded to nurse trainees in Victoria for 2025.

The RFDS Give Them Wings scholarships provide one-off financial assistance and offer students the opportunity to spend a week with the Flying Doctor or take a work experience trip by air.

The scholarship program encourages students to seek employment in regional or rural towns upon graduation, putting their vital skills to work in communities that need it the most.

An Enrolled Nurse at our Horsham campus, Tammy has already gained success in her role having been recently awarded Federation University TAFE's Trainee of the Year and followed that up with the ANMF Student of the Year.

Tammy is now studying her Bachelor of Nursing and has already received distinctions during her studies.

"I'm really enjoying nursing and when I finish my Graduate Year, I want to further my studies to either work in Theatre as a peri-operative nurse or to qualify as a midwife," Tammy said.

Chloe James currently works as a program assistant with the Allied Health team at our Ballarat campus and is studying her Bachelor of Nursing.

Chloe said her true passions are in health research and rural and remote nursing.

"I never expected to see so much impressive work done in smaller hospitals but the research happening at Grampians Health is incredible. That is definitely the driving factor and I'd like to be a part of that work.

"Rural and remote nursing is my goal. I've visited a lot of remote settings in recent years and I find the common theme among those communities is they don't have doctors or clinicians.

"Nurses that work in those communities get to be a 'jack of all trades'. They go out to emergencies and they help people the way a paramedic would," Chloe said.

Tammy and Chloe were among 160 applicants to apply for the scholarships in the 14th year of the Give Them Wings program.

Of the 10 scholarships awarded, four were for Bachelor of Nursing studies, five are studying medicine and one is studying a Bachelor of Paramedicine.



Dr Senator Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP and RFDS Victoria CEO Dr Michael Ben-Meir present the awards to Tammy (pictured left) and Chloe (pictured right).

A special gift for our youngest visitors



A generous local community member has kindly donated a range of brand-new toys to our ward, helping to bring smiles to some of our youngest patients and visitors.

The toys have been placed in Ruby's Box – whether a child is here for care or simply accompanying a loved one, Ruby's Box offers a welcome distraction and a little dose of joy during their visit.

We're incredibly grateful for this thoughtful donation and the ongoing support of our local community. It's small acts of kindness like this that help make our hospital a warmer, more welcoming place for all.

Mary dances her way into her 90's



Residents and staff at MacPherson Smith Residential Care came together to celebrate a very special milestone in July – the 90th birthday of Mary Jones!

The afternoon was filled with joy as everyone enjoyed cake, music, and even a bit of dancing. Mary was all smiles as her fellow residents and the care team helped make the day truly memorable.

Mary is a much-loved member of the MacPherson Smith community, known for her gentle nature and warm presence. It was a privilege to share in her celebration and honour such a wonderful milestone.



Aged Care Employee Day at Macpherson Smith

Team members at Macpherson Smith Residential Care were treated to a special afternoon tea to celebrate Aged Care Employee Day on Thursday 7 August.

Our care community staff play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for residents, making them feel valued, respected and supported.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our residents, and for the compassionate and personalised care you provide daily.

Do you have any suggestions for us?

If you have a suggestion or an issue you want to raise, please contact us at feedback@gh.org.au.

We are committed to working with the communities in which we live and we value your feedback.

Like to join our mailing list?

If you'd like to join our Stawell community mailing list please send your name, email and postal address through to communications@gh.org.au.

Please also contact us if changes are required to your contact details.

New national initiative to improve cancer care for rural and remote Australians



Sue Bartlett, Oncology Nurse Practitioner, Catherine Hanns, Social Worker, and Carmel O'Kane, Cancer Nurse Practitioner and Manager of the Wimmera Cancer Centre.

People living in rural and remote Australia experience poorer cancer outcomes compared to those in metropolitan areas, yet no dedicated optimal care pathway exists for this priority population.

The ECORRA OCP (Equitable Cancer Outcomes across Rural and Remote Australia – Optimal Care Pathways) project, led by Professor Anna Ugalde, is a collaboration between the Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research within the Institute for Health Transformation at Deakin University and Cancer Council Australia, with support from Grampians Health and cancer clinicians across the country.

It directly addresses recommendations from the 2023 Australian Cancer Plan, which identifies people in rural and remote areas as one of 10 priority populations requiring dedicated support.

The goal is to develop a tailored Optimal Care Pathway (OCP) that addresses the specific needs and challenges faced by rural cancer patients. OCPs are nationally recognised guides to best practice cancer care across each stage of a patient's journey.

A dedicated rural-focused version will support more equitable care by tackling barriers such as limited access to specialists, long travel times, and financial stress.

Launched in September 2024, the 18-month project is currently in the working group stage, bringing together experienced cancer care professionals from across Australia to co-design the new rural OCP.

"Equitable cancer care in rural and remote areas is vital," said Carmel O'Kane, Cancer Nurse Practitioner and Manager of the Wimmera Cancer Centre, who is serving as Deputy Chair of the project's national working group.

Oncology Nurse Practitioner Sue Bartlett and Social Worker Catherine Hanns have also joined the national working group, bringing with them years of experience working with cancer patients across regional Victoria.

"Many of our patients face huge barriers including distance, cost, social isolation, and lack of transport and this impacts their ability to access timely, appropriate treatment," said Catherine.

"This project provides an opportunity to advocate for rural patients and ensure their needs are built into a national healthcare framework," said Sue

Once completed, the ECORRA OCP will provide a valuable national resource to guide clinicians, on how to improve access to services, and provide treatment closer to home delivering more equitable cancer care for rural and remote Australians.

Service Milestones

We are proud to recognise the dedication and commitment of our staff, whose hard work makes a real difference in the lives of our patients, residents, and community.

Each year, we celebrate team members who have reached significant service milestones, acknowledging their years of contribution to healthcare in our region.

This Spring, we congratulate staff who reached milestones in September, October and November for their outstanding dedication.

We extend our gratitude to every member of our team for their unwavering commitment to providing excellent care.

Whether celebrating a milestone or contributing behind the scenes each day, it is your passion, professionalism, and dedication that form the foundation of the care we provide to our community.



Lorraine Tiley, Environmental Services Officer



Rhonda Rice, Clinical Coder - Radiology



10 Years

Sharon Moloney,
*Associate Nurse Unit Manager
Simpson Wing*

Jora Anne Pascual,
*Associate Nurse Unit Manager
Macpherson Smith*



15 Years

Kerry Davies,
Support Services

Amelia Wilde,
*Associate Nurse Unit Manager
Simpson Wing*



20 Years

Rhonda Rice,
Clinical Coder - Radiology



25 Years

Kerryn Harrington,
*Stawell Medical Centre Account
Clerk*



30 Years

Lorraine Tiley,
*Environmental Services
Assistant*



35 Years

Deborah Rathgeber,
*Administration Officer
Community Programs*

Helping Communities Thrive

Grampians Health strives to deliver quality care for all our communities through safe, accessible and connected health services.

Urgent Care

5358 8500

Fully bulk billed medical service 24 Hours, 7 days a week.

If your condition is serious, or you are experiencing chest pains, you need to call 000 (Triple Zero) for an ambulance.

Acute Care

5358 8517

Provides 24 hour care, with care managed by our experienced nursing staff and visiting medical officers.

Stawell Medical Centre

5358 1410

Open Monday to Friday,
9.00am to 5.30pm

Residential Care

5358 8502

At Macpherson Smith
Residential Care residents are provided with 24 hour nursing care and comprehensive Allied Health services.

X-ray & Radiology

5358 8680

- CT
- Ultrasound
- General Radiology
- Interventional
- Radiography

Oncology

5358 8556

Treatment available Tuesday to Thursday. Oncologists are available at the centre each week for appointments.

Surgical Services

5358 8524

Open Monday to Friday,
7.00am to 3.30pm

- General surgery
- Gastroenterology
- Orthopedic
- Ophthalmology
- Urology
- Gynaecology
- Ear, nose and throat

Community Services

- Hospital Admission Risk Program: 5358 8604
- District Nursing: 5358 8546
- Memory Support Nurse: 5358 8551
- Post Acute Care: 5358 8618
- Transition Care Program: 5358 8535
- Social Support Group: 5358 8523

Allied Health and Community Rehabilitation

5358 8531

Services can be provided in the hospital, at home, or at one of our facilities. Services include:

- Physiotherapy
- Exercise Physiology
- Dietetics
- Occupational Therapy
- Social Work
- Speech Pathology
- Podiatry
- Diabetes Education
- Allied Health Assistants



If you have a suggestion or an issue you want to raise, please contact us at feedback@gh.org.au

We are committed to working with the communities in which we live and we value your feedback.

For the full range of services and more detail on accessing the services please visit www.srh.org.au

