



Healthcare Helpers Newsletter



Jade Dolling (Northern NSW LHD)
Community Program Coordinator

5 min read

Winter-summer 2025

We've had a busy 2025 with recruitment drives, new roles being launched, 40+ new volunteers onboarding and the launch of our Healthcare Helpers program at the Casino District and Memorial Hospital and our Multi-Purpose Services.

Chief Executive welcome

I am delighted to see the Healthcare Helpers program go from strength to strength this year. It is an important program, and I see daily the impacts our volunteers have across our LHD. I would like to recognise the exceptional efforts and contribution of our dedicated volunteers; every one of your shifts allows our patients to have conversations and connections, and in turn our staff feel more supported.

I'm looking forward to welcoming the new cohort of volunteers at Tweed Valley Hospital, as well as the launch of Casino and MPS volunteer programs in the coming months.



Healthcare Helpers bring heart to our hospitals

Taken from Northern Exposure, May 2025 edition

This National Volunteer Week, from 19 to 25 May, Northern NSW Local Health District is celebrating the dedicated Healthcare Helper volunteers who support patients, visitors and staff across our facilities.

From Grafton to the Tweed, Healthcare Helpers bring comfort and connection into the District's health services, Community Engagement Manager Ged May said.

"Whether they're greeting visitors, giving directions or simply sitting with someone who needs a chat, our volunteers help make hospitals feel more human," Ged said.

"They play a vital role in helping patients and visitors feel welcome and supported. We simply couldn't do what we do without them.

"We're deeply grateful for the time, energy and compassion they bring."

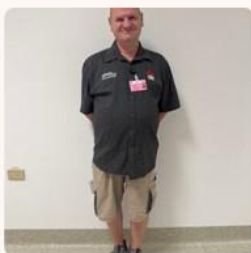
Across the District, Healthcare Helpers assist in such areas as outpatient clinics, waiting rooms, and general medical and surgical wards.

Terry Pope became a Healthcare Helper at Grafton Base Hospital after recovering from an aggressive form of myeloma.

"I realised that I was saved for a reason, as I understood that my journey provided me with a trusted and empathetic 'ear' when relating with folk who were on their own journeys," Terry said.

"It's a humbling privilege to share time visiting patients, providing a trusting and confidential space in which they can share their stories."

[Read the full article](#)



Volunteer survey results

Last month, we asked for your thoughts on being a Healthcare Helper.

Overall, your feedback was very positive.

It's clear we have a highly engaged and satisfied volunteer base, and each of you has amazing, personal stories to share of deep connections with patients.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback.

We have noted your matters of concern, and will be addressing these with our leadership team, including our communication approach on rostering.

89%

response rate

88%

would recommend our volunteer program

75%

feel confident in carrying out your tasks

87%

satisfied with mandatory training

4.38 stars

for the Healthcare Helper program

90%

satisfied with support from Local Coordinator

An incredible act - Jocelyn O'Grady

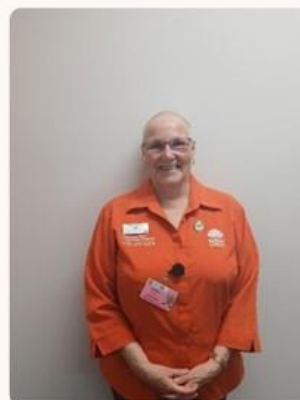
Submitted by Brenda Kuba, Tweed Local Volunteer Coordinator.

Jocelyn O'Grady is one of our wonderful Healthcare Helpers at Tweed Valley Hospital, where she's been volunteering in Cancer Care as a patient companion since January.

Jocelyn's sister Chris was diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer in April and has lost her hair. This has been very upsetting and traumatising for Chris.

Jocelyn wanted to support her sister and thought the best way to do this, and to give her an understanding and appreciation of this part of Chris's journey, was to shave her own hair.

What Jocelyn has done is an incredibly generous and powerful act of support for someone fighting cancer and is such a beautiful way to show you're walking with them through their journey. With Jocelyn being such a compassionate volunteer, we are grateful to have her as a Healthcare Helper.



New volunteer roles coming to Tweed Valley Hospital

We are excited about the new volunteer roles that will open up at Tweed Valley Hospital in 2026. These include:

- Patient Companion - 23 Hour Ward
- Patient Companion - Outpatients Greet and Guide.

Contact Local Volunteer Coordinator Brenda Kuba on brenda.kuba@health.nsw.gov.au if you would like more info on these roles.



Respecting the Difference training dates

All volunteers should have received a schedule of available dates from now until the end of the year, for the *Respecting the Difference* training.

Please make sure you book with Barry Boland directly on barry.boland@health.nsw.gov.au

If you have not received information regarding this workshop, please contact your Local Volunteer Coordinator for more information, as dates are site-specific.

This is mandatory training that **must be completed within 12 months of starting as a volunteer** with NNSWLHD.



How to handle unhappy visitors

We know that as a volunteer you can be at the forefront of people's complaints.

Sometimes it can be hard to navigate this. Listed below are some tips to help you navigate these situations:

1. Acknowledge the issue. A lot of the time, people just want to be heard. Noticing they are upset can calm a situation. Offer a response like, "I can see you're feeling upset. Is there anything I can do to help."
2. Offer your support and knowledge. For example, if they are upset about a parking issue, let them know where they might find alternative parking solutions nearby.
3. Offer a feedback form. Your Local Volunteer Coordinator will be able to provide you with this resource.
4. If you ever feel unsafe, do not hesitate to either activate your duress or contact security or your Local Volunteer Coordinator immediately.
5. If an incident has occurred, always let your Local Volunteer Coordinator know as soon as possible. They can provide you with support options, such as accessing our Employee Assistance Program which is a free counselling and support service, where you can confidentially discuss workplace conflict and any issues you may be having.



RECIPE OF THE SEASON

Nigella Lawson's Chocolate Orange Cake

This rich, moist, and fragrant bake is a chocolate version of Nigella Lawson's famous clementine cake.

Using a whole orange and almond flour, this is as simple as it is delicious!

If you have a favourite recipe you'd like to submit for the next newsletter, please send it to NNSWLHD-Volunteer@health.nsw.gov.au



[Read the recipe >](#)

Heart Foundation Walking Groups

Northern NSW LHD is involved in the Heart Foundation Walking groups.

Become a walk leader or join in an established walking group.

There are active walking groups in:

- Lismore
- Goonellabah
- Alstonville
- Suffolk Park
- Tweed Heads
- Banora Point
- Kingscliff and many other locations.

If there isn't a walking group in your area, please contact Stephen Gammack to become a walk leader:
stephen.gammack@health.nsw.gov.au or call 0422 538409.

Find out more on the [National Health Foundation website](#).



Telling your great stories

Thank you for being an integral part of our NNSWLHD community.

We would love to hear about you and your story, as you are an important part of our program!

Either email us directly on NNSWLHD-Volunteer@health.nsw.gov.au or [fill out this form](#) so we can feature your story in this newsletter and on our social media too.