

# Thames Hospital upgrade going to plan

It's no secret that a lot of activity is going on at Thames Hospital with the long-awaited \$16 million upgrade now well underway and stage one almost complete.

Area manager Jacqui Mitchell knows that with progress comes noise, confusion and disruption so would like to thank the Thames Coromandel community for being so understanding during this time.

"Thanks for all your support; it means a lot during this time.

"We have had a few complaints but generally the public have been very accepting of the changes because they know that it will ultimately improve healthcare in Thames Coromandel," she said.

The upgrade is part of Waikato District

Health Board's Service and Campus Redevelopment (SCR) project at both Thames and Waikato hospitals.

The key stages for Thames include:

1. a new kitchen and dining room
2. a bund wall
3. a new clinical centre
4. a new 54-bed in-patient centre.

The redevelopment is expected to be completed by the end of next year along with a number of significant improvements to the way services are provided at Thames Hospital.

Mrs Mitchell said it's easy to see the construction activity but there is also a lot

of working going on behind the scenes for service redevelopment.

"The S in SCR is about changing the way we provide services. This is focussed around patient outcomes and ensuring our

services are equivalent to future trends in health care and our population."

These services will be implemented in the new buildings that have been designed specifically for what they will be used for.

"A lot of progress has been made over the last year but we still have quite a way to go.

"We're aware of the impact this has on people coming to the hospital but I want to reassure the community that the hospital will continue to deliver the same high standard of services and thank them again for their understanding," Mrs Mitchell said.

## WHEN COMING TO THAMES HOSPITAL PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Allow extra time
- Follow the signs
- Ask for assistance if you need it

## 'Thanks for all your support'

- Jacqui Mitchell

# New, improved, bigger and better

## Patient centres are taking shape

Construction of the new Inpatient and Thames Clinical Centres is well underway with both facilities starting to form shape as the concrete foundations have now been laid.

The Thames Clinical Centre (TCC) will be adjacent to the new main entrance and home to the new Emergency Department, radiology and outpatient clinics.

The Inpatient Centre (IPC) will house 54 beds, each room will have its own ensuite and some will have a view of the new courtyards.

## Café opening soon

Thames Hospital's new kitchen and dining room is almost complete and will open next month.

The kitchen was named Sperry Lane Café in memory of a midwife who owned the Sperry Home Maternity Unit in Thames last century.

Staff are looking forward to working in the new facilities and are hoping to start moving everything across in the first week of December.

The old kitchen and cafeteria will be demolished shortly after the new café is opened.

## Whanau house gets a makeover

The whanau facility has recently been relocated, given a fresh coat of paint and had new decks built around.

Area manager Jacqui Mitchell said the whanau facility is for everyone.

"It's for anyone who comes to Thames Hospital at short notice to support family or whanau and needs somewhere to stay," she said.

A few minor council requirements need to be completed before it will open for use.



ABOVE: The concrete has been laid for the new Thames Clinical Centre and construction is expected to be complete in August 2008.

BELOW: When complete in November 2008, this new Inpatient Centre will occupy all the hospital wards and the HDU.



LEFT: The Sperry Lane Café is scheduled to open in early December.

RIGHT: The new-look whanau facility.



## BRIEFLY

### Women's health service reinstated at Thames

During the past four months 150 gynaecological clinic appointments and 20 surgical procedures have been completed at Thames Hospital.

Monthly clinics recommenced in June. Gynaecology clinics started in August and surgery in October, with plans to see an average number of eight women per day. Women attending clinics have come from the Hauraki/Coromandel area, as well as some from the greater Waikato.

### Transit Lounge

The new Transit Lounge at Waikato Hospital will open on 21 January next year along with the new parking building. The lounge will be a valuable asset for patients and visitors who don't live in Hamilton and need somewhere comfortable to stay if they are being transferred to another hospital or waiting for a ride home.

The Transit Lounge is located above the new main entrance to the hospital and next to the new parking building.

### Delivery Suite

The refurbishment of the delivery suite in Hamilton has begun and is scheduled for completion in November 2008.

Half of the birthing rooms will be closed during the upgrade but the unit will remain operational during this time.

Any women not in labour will be directed across the corridor to the new Women's Assessment Unit (WAU) when it opens in December.

# Bund wall will protect hospital

It's not hard to miss the concrete wall that has been constructed around the mountain side of Thames Hospital but this bund wall serves an important purpose for the hospital, and everyone inside.

In March last year, Environment Waikato released a report on the possibility of a debris flow that is likely to occur every 2000 years from the Karaka Stream. This flow could wipe out the entire hospital in a matter of seconds.

Area manager Jacqui Mitchell said the report from Environment Waikato required

a lot of changes to the redevelopment of Thames Hospital.

"It caused delays to the project because mitigation measures had to be created.

"A debris flow could include sand, silt, boulders and trees carried by very high flood waters so the wall had to be able to stand up to this," she said.

Construction on the second stage of the wall began last week which has meant some changes to parking at Thames Hospital. See parking advertisement on this page for more information.



BUILT TO LAST: This bund wall is 3 metres high.

## PARKING AT THAMES HOSPITAL

### PARKING AREAS HAVE TEMPORARILY CHANGED



The Karaka Road entrance to the hospital car parks (Fig tree and beside the Boiler House) will be unavailable until further notice.

Parking is available off Bella Street.

These changes have been made to allow for construction of the second stage of the bund wall to begin.

We apologise for the inconvenience and thank you for your cooperation during this time.

Building a better hospital for your community

# Waihi 'wonder woman' leads CHF

With seven children, 16 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren, you would think this Waihi 'wonder woman' would have enough on her plate.

But not Hauraki/Coromandel Community Health Forum (CHF) chair Frances Bicknell – she likes to be busy.

Not only does she chair these quarterly CHF meetings, keeping the best interests of Hauraki/Coromandel residents' health at the fore, but Mrs Bicknell also belongs to, and volunteers for, 10 other community groups.

A Waihi St John member of 40 years, avid St Joseph's Catholic Church and Catholic Women's League member, Victim Support volunteer, Thames Valley National Council of Women chair and Rural Women New Zealand provincial president, Mrs Bicknell is also a Waihi-Waihi Beach Rural Health Support Group member, which looks to attract and retain doctors to the community.

Thus far, the group have facilitated funding for six local doctors at the two Waihi medical centres. But it doesn't stop there for Mrs Bicknell.

A trained nurse, she is also a Waikato Hospital Transit Lounge

Committee member, staying abreast of what will happen to Hauraki and Coromandel patients when they go to Waikato Hospital. She is even a Waihi Night Patrol Group volunteer; meaning once per month – sometimes more – she patrols the township for a couple of hours overnight to keep an eye on the happenings.

"They call us the eyes and ears of the police," she says.

And just to make her tireless work even more remarkable – Mrs Bicknell is an amazing 80 years young.

While she doesn't think she does anything special by dedicating all her time to her community, many would disagree.

"I just do all these things because I have nothing else to do," she said.

"I like to keep myself busy – besides, a full life staves off alzheimers," she laughed.

Although, when she does have a minute or two to herself each day, Mrs Bicknell enjoys gardening, grows many of her own vegetables, and adores spending time with her large family.

So, how did she come to chair the Thames Coromandel CHF?

She was nominated to the role 12

months ago by the Catholic Women's League – and she's enjoying her time spearheading the group, only wishing more people would get involved.

"It's a very valuable forum to meet and discuss all sorts of local health issues," said Mrs Bicknell, who has been a member of the group since its inception.

"I'm very glad the meetings are public now. I think it's important to be transparent where local issues are concerned.

"However, I would encourage more people to come along, as this is an opportunity for people in Hauraki and Coromandel communities to come and express concerns and opinions relating to health.

"How are forum members supposed to know what the issues are if community members aren't there to tell them?" she asked.

Presently, the Thames Coromandel CHF meetings are attended by about 30 people per meeting, who travel from throughout the region.

But, Mrs Bicknell is calling for an even better turnout from her community.

And, if she can find the time – surely others can too.



CHF CHAIR: Coromandel/Hauraki Community Health Forum chair Frances Bicknell of Waihi, would like to see better attendance at meetings.



Jacqui MITCHELL

## Hospital staffing doubled for 'silly season'

In anticipation of a hectic Coromandel summer, Thames Hospital staff are prepared.

The end of year, the hospital's emergency department is all hands on deck, increasing its staff numbers to cope with the 'silly season' and all the implications this brings to coastal towns.

With Thames Coromandel's 45,000-strong population typically tripling to about 150,000 during this time, area manager Jacqui Mitchell has some sound words of advice for local residents.

"Be prepared – when there is an influx of extra people at that level, it is inevitable this will put pressure on the hospital's resources," said Mrs Mitchell.

"I would advise local residents to make sure they have seen their GP with any medical concerns prior to this time, ensuring they have all their prescriptions filled and in stock so they can ease pressure for medical staff and other residents during this period."

Mrs Mitchell said in an average week, Thames Hospital ED staff will see about 40 patients per day.

This doubles to 70-80 people with holidaymakers visiting the area.

"Remember: if it's not an emergency, don't come to the emergency department. See your GP instead," she said.



NEW RECRUITS: Senior house officers William Stirling of Scotland and Nologyo Hardy of South Africa are two of Thames Hospital's newest staff members, enjoying the benefits of the 'welcome mat' initiative.

# Welcome mat scheme working a treat

In the past six months Thames Hospital has more than doubled its medical staffing numbers.

The six new doctors are a combination of both part and full-time medical staff, and some have been recruited from overseas, including countries such as Scotland and South Africa.

While medical staff numbers were at three full-time members six months ago, the new additions now take the

team up to nine. With a rural medical staff shortage, Thames management has been

existing hospital staff encouraging newcomers, offering them trips, holiday accommoda-

'So far I have enjoyed kayaking, cycling, golf... and the clinical experience has been good as well'

- Dr William Stirling

proactive at rectifying the situation for its residents, with the implementation of the 'welcome mat' scheme. The initiative sees

tion, sporting and social involvement.

"Our new staff appreciate this fresh approach to recruitment," said area manager Jacqui

Mitchell. "We want to ensure they feel welcomed, and are encouraged to experience and enjoy all the beautiful attractions Coromandel has to offer."

The 'welcome mat' has certainly helped senior house officer Dr William Stirling of Scotland feel welcome in Thames.

"So far I have enjoyed kayaking, cycling, golf... and the clinical experience has been good as well," he quipped.

# Midwifery cover: no problem

Thames Coromandel/Hauraki midwives are working together to ensure seamless care for pregnant women in their local communities during the summer months.

When Whitianga midwife Vanda Perry notified Waikato District Health Board of her departure last month, a teleconference was organised with midwives working throughout the region.

The group of about 10 women resolved to work together to provide cover for Mrs Perry's clients during this time (November – February 2008).

Following this period, well-respected and experienced Cambridge midwife Ruth Kowalewicz is relocating to Whitianga and will continue her practice in the town.

"We are thrilled to have Ruth relocate to Whitianga, where she will slowly be introduced to the community before actually making the move, as she is holding antenatal clinics there this month and in December," said Rural and

Community Services manager Jill Dibble.

But, it's the midwives who have put their hands up for more work during a time when most are winding down their practices that Mrs Dibble and Waikato Hospital clinical midwife director Corli Roodt, really want to acknowledge.

"These midwives are to be congratulated for their overwhelming support of each other and their willingness to contribute to care for women left without a 'lead maternity carer'," said Mrs Roodt.

"It is acknowledged that midwives are willing to take on a heavier caseload during the Christmas period when most other midwives are enjoying some time off."

Following the teleconference, a letter was written to local general practitioners, informing them of the situation.

This letter also included a list of the midwives, their contact details and availability, and names of women requiring care during the



HANDS IN: Midwives happily take on extra work to ensure care for women.

period. "Women also have access to Thames Hospital's maternity unit, providing an option for primary birthing in their local area," said Mrs Dibble.

She said rural facilities need to be supported by the community to ensure their ongoing viability.

Following local midwives' enthusiasm to adapt to the situation,

Mrs Roodt said she was confident there was a medium to long-term future for sustainable midwifery services, with midwives planning to work and continue their current practices in the Thames Coromandel/Hauraki.

"This will provide women with a choice of midwifery provider in the future, which is excellent," she said.