

## **Royal District Nursing Service**

### **Who we are**

- Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) is Australia's largest provider of home nursing services.
- RDNS was founded in 1885 as a charitable organisation to meet the health needs of Melbourne's sick and poor. Today, it still operates as an independent, not-for-profit charity.
- RDNS has grown from a single nurse to become the country's largest employer of district nurses (approximately 1000).
- Federal and State Government through the HACC (Home and Community Care) funding arrangement accounts for about 80% of RDNS' revenue. Client fees and fundraising make up remaining revenue.
- RDNS is one of Melbourne's major providers of aged care, with the frail and aged making up around 80% of clients.
- Pensioners are charged a maximum fee of \$3.10 per visit, capped at \$36.00 per month. A sliding scale applies to other clients.

### **What we do**

- RDNS nurses provide nursing care to people in their own homes, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
- Nurses (as well as community care aides and a small number of physiotherapists and social workers) operate from twenty sites across Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula.
- The majority of RDNS care is carried out in clients' homes. Benefits for clients include:
  - Returning from a hospital stay more quickly; remaining close to family/loved ones; receiving care in familiar and secure surroundings which improves recovery, health and outlook; and being able to remain at home instead of moving to a care facility.

### **Our services**

- Services include general and specialist nursing, including advice and support to family and carers and some allied healthcare.
- Specific services include: aged care, continence management, cystic fibrosis care, diabetes care, haemophilia management, HIV/AIDS care and support, personal care (hygiene), palliative care, stomal therapy, wound care as well as a hospital liaison service for those recently discharged from hospital. Some social work and physiotherapy as well as RDNS' Homeless Persons Program is also provided.

### **Facts and figures**

- Staff of 1,300 – around 1,000 are registered nurses
- There are between 7,000 and 8,000 people in RDNS' care at any one time
- Each year RDNS cares for approximately 33,000 clients
- Staff provide about 1.5 million client visits and provide 550,000 hours of care
- RDNS' nurses travel approximately 8,000,000 kms per year.

## The History of RDNS – A Snapshot

In 1885, philanthropic donations established the Melbourne District Nursing Society to 'nurse the sick poor in their own homes'.

One nurse, a graduate of the Florence Nightingale Course for District Nurses, was employed to work in Fitzroy and Collingwood, visiting clients on foot. Ever growing demand for home nursing propelled a culture of innovation and change at RDNS. Some milestones in RDNS' growth and development are:

- **1892** - A midwifery service was established in Carlton as well as education courses linking hygiene and disease, a debated concept at that time.
- **1906** - Nurses made 28,383 visits, including bicycle trips to the 'outer' suburbs of Elsternwick, Hawthorn and Northcote.
- **1919** - Client numbers leapt from 1,104 to 3,992 due to the influenza epidemic, necessitating the purchase of the nurses' first car.
- **1934** - Controversially, the Society established Melbourne's first family planning clinic.
- **1952** - The focus of the Society changed from the sick poor to encompass all people in metropolitan Melbourne, regardless of age or economic status.
- **1964** - Decentralisation of nursing operations represented a major organisational change for RDNS, which now operates from 20 sites across metropolitan Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula.
- **1966** - name changed to Royal District Nursing Service

In the 1970s and 80s, RDNS continued introducing specialist services to meet demand, including:

- Home nursing for HIV/AIDS, cystic fibrosis and other chronic conditions
- 24 hour care, 365 days a year
- The ability to perform complex technical care such as intravenous antibiotic treatment allowed many patients to return home from hospital earlier than before
- Mobile nursing care for Melbourne's homeless (Homeless Persons Program).

In recent years, RDNS has increased the pace of innovation and progress to assist its nurses to continuously improve their service to clients, including:

- Almost 10 years of research and development which resulted in an enormous investment in the latest mobile computing technology, improving accuracy of clients' records and freeing nurses from administrative tasks to concentrate on nursing.
- The establishment of the Royal District Nursing Service Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health to provide research, education and training to RDNS staff, as well as to external healthcare professionals.
- The continued improvement of clinical practice via evidence-based research and clinical leadership groups.

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