

Annual report highlights demand and diversity

Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) has made the highest number of nursing visits to Melburnians since the organisation began over 120 years ago.

Our recently released 2008 Annual Report shows that the organisation made 1,608,257 visits to clients during the 2007-08 financial year - the largest number of visits conducted in a single year since RDNS was established in 1885.

Other major statistics contained within the 2008 Annual Report show:

- 32,125 clients received care from RDNS during the 2007-08 period
- RDNS staff provided 558,646 hours of care to clients
- Staff travelled 9.2 million kilometres visiting clients during the year
- Public hospitals provided most referrals for RDNS' services – 38.8%

In releasing the report at the RDNS Annual Community Meeting, CEO Dan Romanis emphasised the important role diversity plays throughout the organisation.

"Our clients are the embodiment of variety: we care for people across Melbourne drawn from every conceivable walk of life and possessing a vast spectrum of life experiences," Mr Romanis said. "We care for those who have lived in relative comfort to those who have battled at the margins; for those needing a little help to get

their health back on track to those entering the last phase of their lives."

Mr Romanis also highlighted the diversity of RDNS staff "who bring to their job a rich selection of professional training, experience, skill, know-how and insight."

The report also highlighted the diverse cultural backgrounds of RDNS' clients:

- Clients originated from 147 countries and speak 103 languages
- 32.5% of clients were born in non-English speaking countries

- An 11% increase in the use of on-site interpreters
- A 13% increase in the use of telephone interpreters

"The nature of our work, as highlighted in the Annual Report shows that, more than ever, RDNS is an organisation that encounters diversity at every turn. That is something we continue to celebrate and respond to, as we must," Mr Romanis said.

For copies of the RDNS 2008 Annual Report, contact Marketing and Planning on (03) 9536 5268 or download from www.rdns.com.au



Tales of the Next G™

Just as RDNS endeavours to provide professional nursing care to more Melburnians in their homes, so too Telstra technicians strive to deliver more services to its customers around Australia.

Telstra's Next G™ network is Australia's fastest mobile broadband service. It provides superior coverage in buildings, cars and tunnels covering over two million square kilometres nation wide.

The coverage, performance and reliability of the Next G™ network plays an important part in the way people live, work, play and move around. And it is no different for large organisations like RDNS or Telstra, two very different businesses who achieve amazing things using Telstra's Next G™ network.

Meet RDNS nurse Jessica Booth and Telstra Technician Cameron O'Hara. Jessica and Cameron's chosen professions couldn't be more different, but both use Telstra's Next G™ to harness fast, reliable and secure communications solutions to complete their daily work; whether in the home, office or out on the road.

Jessica and Cameron share their insights into the use of Telstra's Next G™ network.

Q. Let's start with what each of you do.

J: I've been working at Royal District Nursing Service as a community nurse for three years now. My typical work day involves being 'out on the road', providing nursing care to 10-15 clients in their homes.

C: As a Transmission and Data Specialist, I look after the needs of 120 Field Technicians. I manage their communications requirements (laptops

with a Telstra Next G™ service build) to ensure that they are on-line and able to download jobs whilst they are on the road and in the field.

Q. What solution were you using before the Next G™ network?

J: Prior to the introduction of mobile computer technology and Telstra's Next G™ network, client information and visit schedules at RDNS were paper-based, so we were required to print out necessary documents and take them with us out on the road. Also, we would need to call the office regularly throughout the day to check if there were any changes to our printed visit schedules.

C: Telstra has been using mobility for a long time now. However, much of our previous work was also paper-based or short text-based and workload distribution was managed by a large number of group workforce dispatchers throughout the day.

But nowadays, we can use the Next G™ mobile handset or the GPS system to access the job dispatch system if the Next G™ application in the laptop is unavailable. The GPS system in-vehicle is also a Next G™ service.

Q. In what way has the solution improved your business?

J: Having access to up-to-date information regarding the next visit and having real-time access to client data is critical in my role as a RDNS nurse. Being able to use Telstra's Next G™ to find a client's home saves lots of time on the road. And it also means I spend less time going to and from the office. For example, I now log on from home between 7:30am – 8:30am and download my client visit list for the day. I can also log-off from home in the afternoon once I have completed my

administrative tasks and checked any emails.

Q. Do you see more clients?

J: The number of clients we see really depends on the complexity of a client's case. However, using this technology has enabled me to spend more time providing care to my clients.

C: By using Telstra's Next G™ we can gather new information quickly and work more independently. And because of its mobile nature, we can work from a customer's office and demonstrate the technology we use. We have access to Telstra's Intranet to stay up-to-date, as well as to our email and the job dispatch system. It is a business tool for us so there is no external use which ensures the system is highly available.

In terms of seeing more customers; like Jessica, it really depends on the complexity of the work required. For example, the completion of a job at a customer's site may require a visit to the local exchange or a downloaded software configuration for the service to be completely commissioned.

Q. Has the technology helped you improve the service you provide to your clients/customers?

J: Definitely! Having access to client information through Telstra's Next G™ has significantly improved our ability to do our work.

C: Absolutely - we can gather new information quickly, we can work with the customer more independently on site and we can solve problems for customers more effectively.

Continued overleaf.

Q. Where do you see this technology heading into the future?

J: I can see the technology being incorporated more and more into the way we work at RDNS. That is, influencing the way we educate our clients and potentially improving video-conferencing over the laptop to manage complex cases.

C: Higher speeds over Telstra's Next G™ network means that we will be delivering rich, multimedia services for our customers and a richer experience for speed-hungry, data-driven applications.

To find out more about Telstra's Next G™ network visit <http://www.telstra.com.au/nextg>



Telstra's Next G™ technology is helping RDNS nurses like Jessica provide better client care.

RDNS crosses Bass Strait

RDNS has been successful in tendering for the Tasmanian Access Point service. The Access Point is part of a national initiative, aimed at providing a central contact point for people wishing to access community care services.

As a result of winning the Tasmanian tender, RDNS will provide intake, screening and some assessment functions, as well as providing general information, to clients, carers and service providers who wish to support people accessing community care services. We will begin providing this service within the first quarter of 2009.

The service will be based in Hobart with support for busy periods provided by staff located at our Customer Service Centre in Hartwell. Within months, a new RDNS office will be established

in Hobart, and a core group of staff including a Team Leader, nurses and Customer Service Operators appointed. Additional staff will be employed at our Customer Service Centre in Melbourne to support the service.

This marks a major milestone for RDNS, as it means that - for the first time in our 124 year history - we have expanded our services outside of Victoria. This aligns with our strategic objective to 'grow and diversify the revenue base within existing and new market segments' and positions us very well for further growth in the future.

It also supports the Federal Government's and the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment to strengthen and improve community care services by adopting

a nationally consistent approach in key areas such as entry into the community care system, assessing eligibility and need for services, better coordinated planning, quality assurance, financial reporting and data management.

Our success in winning this project provides us with opportunities to participate in more Access Point Services - in Victoria and other states - as the service expands over the coming years. This is an exciting development for RDNS. We look forward to working in partnership with the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, as together we provide professional and quality services to the people of Tasmania.

Courage under fire

When RDNS Springvale nurse John Bustos recently got into his car to begin his working day, he thought it would be another regular day of seeing clients. Little did he know his arrival into Rowlands Avenue, Noble Park was about to save someone's life.

John observed thick, black smoke billowing from a house a few doors down from the home of his client. Unsure of whether it was a controlled fire or something more serious, John approached the house with caution. "At first I thought it was a barbecue or maybe a controlled burn, but I went to check it out just to be sure," John explains. Upon his approach, John heard a desperate voice calling out for help. The voice was that of 74 year-old Noble Park resident Douglas Jansz, who was trapped behind the deadlocked front door.

John called to Mr. Jansz to crawl his way to the rear of the house so that John could kick down the back door and free the elderly gentleman from

the blaze. After successfully breaking through the door, John battled smoke and flames to drag Mr. Jansz to safety. The elderly pensioner collapsed from smoke inhalation, but a shaken John provided care until emergency services arrived at the scene.

Local emergency services described John as a courageous, quick thinker who saved the life of an elderly

pensioner who was minutes from death. For John, who has been with RDNS for less than a year, it was a case of combining his nursing skills with the natural urge to help out a fellow citizen in danger: "In moments like those, you do what you need to do," John explains modestly. Our praise and congratulations go to John for his supreme act of courage and care.



RDNS' John Bustos showed quick thinking and plenty of courage.

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Cultural competency

At RDNS, responding to the needs of our culturally diverse population is an important consideration in all that we do. Clients at RDNS originate from 147 countries, speak 103 different languages and the last year saw another increase in the use of on-site and telephone interpreter services.

The National Health and Medical Research Council states that 'cultural competence' is more than awareness of cultural differences; it focuses on the capacity of a health organisation to improve health and wellbeing by integrating culture into the delivery of health services. In a recent publication, the National Council on Health and Research presented specifications for a 'culturally competent' organisation. When assessed against these specifications RDNS rates very well.

A culturally competent organisation recognises that its client base is diverse. RDNS has very detailed data collection and reporting systems and processes. We are able to review a range of data ethnicity variables to address issues of equity and access.

A culturally competent organisation acknowledges that cultural competency and diversity management are integral to core business. At RDNS this is evidenced in the corporate and operational structures within the organisation. We have had a Cultural Planning Framework for the whole organisation since 2000.

A culturally competent organisation recognises the benefits of diversity and dialogue across cultures and aims for a workforce that reflects the cultural make-up of the population it serves. RDNS employs a culturally diverse staff population with a range of skills and knowledge.

For example, 50% of staff employed at RDNS Springvale were born overseas. Staff have used the following languages in the course of their work: Cebuano, Tagalog, Spanish, Afrikaans, Hakka, Dutch, German, Sign, Maori, French, Creole, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, Vietnamese and Khmer.

A culturally competent organisation recognises that cultural competence is about changing itself. There have been many changes across RDNS to address issues of access and equity. One significant change has been the introduction of the RDNS Language Line – an automated telephone interpreter system for clients and carers. This change was introduced in 2006 at our Customer Service Centre and has delivered significant improvements for accessing RDNS.

A culturally competent organisation forms partnerships with community groups, other health organisations, ethno-specific agencies and other sectors to make its policies and processes more culturally competent. RDNS is proud of its longstanding involvement with organisations such as the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria; Action on Disabilities within Ethnic Communities (ADEC); Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health;

Centre for Cultural Diversity and Ageing and a range of peak ethnic and multicultural organisations. RDNS continues to work in partnership with these and other peak health promotion organisations on a range of aged care and health policies and projects.

A culturally competent organisation moves away from a 'quick fix' approach and allows time and resources for sustained change.

RDNS has committed substantial resources to address the issues of access and equity. We employ a full-time Cultural Liaison Coordinator and Multicultural Resource Nurses are located at each of RDNS' sites. There are dedicated budgets for language services such as interpreting and translations and recently, RDNS' translations standards tick device was registered as an Australian trademark. It acts as a quality mechanism for the development of all RDNS produced translations.

A culturally competent organisation facilitates community involvement in service and product development and delivery. RDNS has a very active Consumer Advisory Committee. Our consumer participation framework contains strategies for engaging with all consumers, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Continued overleaf.

A culturally competent organisation puts in place on-going professional development for staff.

The RDNS Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health offers cultural diversity training as stand-alone sessions but also addresses the issue in all workshops and sessions as part of its annual training calendar.

A culturally competent organisation draws upon and where necessary creates an evidence base drawn from culturally competent research.

There is limited research on cultural diversity and health. It can be difficult for people with little or no English to participate in research trials. Even though there has been some significant research on cultural diversity and dementia, there is an opportunity for more research on cultural diversity

and a variety of related issues. RDNS is committed to providing evidence-based practice and, as a result, draws upon existing research to guide us. However, where it is not available, we are left with the narratives and stories of each individual client. To provide person-centred care we need both the evidence and the narratives.

Against these criteria, it is reasonable to judge RDNS as a culturally competent organisation. Our challenge is to remain focused in this critical area and ensure that we continue to provide culturally responsive services and explore new quality systems, methods and practices to help us meet the needs of all communities, both now and in the future.



RDNS' clients originate from 147 countries.

New senior appointments

We are pleased to announce the permanent appointments of Mark Smith to the position of General Manager - External Relations and Lisa Donohue as General Manager - RDNS Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health.

Both Mark and Lisa have successfully fulfilled these interim positions over the past 12 months and we are delighted to welcome their skills to the Executive Team in a permanent capacity.

Mark's role will see him assist CEO Dan Romanis by monitoring healthcare market developments in government policy; identifying and pursuing opportunities to influence state and national directions in community care;

and improving stakeholder relations which raise RDNS' profile across Victoria's healthcare sector. He will also play an integral role in helping RDNS establish new partnerships and maintain formed alliances.

Lisa has an extensive research and education background and has worked in a variety of clinical positions covering nursing leadership, management and academia. In her role as General Manager, Lisa will lead the development of RDNS' training and education function and enhance RDNS' capacity to undertake and contribute valuable research findings to the Victorian community health sector.



Lisa Donohue



Mark Smith