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For immediate release

Demand for district nurses at all time high

Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) has made more nursing visits to Melburnians in their homes than at any other time since the organisation began.

According to RDNS' newly released 2007 Annual Report, the organisation made 1,572,558 visits to clients during the 2006-07 financial year.

This is an increase of over 5% on the previous year and the largest number of visits conducted in a single year since RDNS was established in 1885.

Since 2004, the number of visits made by RDNS has increased by 19%.

Over 32,500 clients benefited from home-based nursing throughout the 06-07 period, with 538,445 hours of care provided by RDNS' 1,262 staff.

CEO Dan Romanis said that the increase is confirmation that people are now more reliant on community healthcare, such as home nursing, than ever before.

"These figures are consistent with what we have been seeing for a number of years," he said. "We have known for a long time that the implications of an ageing population in terms of healthcare cannot be understated and these figures simply confirm the changing healthcare needs of our society," he said.

"RDNS has always played a vital role in the community but it's pretty clear when we are delivering well over 1.5 million visits to tens of thousands of people each year that the need for our service is becoming even more acute," Mr Romanis said.

"As we enter into a new year in which the delivery of effective healthcare will once again be a major challenge for governments and healthcare providers, there can be no doubt that demand will continue to rise for our services and others like ours."

In releasing the report, Mr Romanis pointed to shorter hospital stays, increases in day surgery procedures, improvements in technology and greater complexity of medical conditions as reasons for the increase in care.

"But perhaps the most important point to acknowledge is that people want to receive healthcare at home as much as possible. At home, people are happier, healthier, more in control and more independent. This is what RDNS helps them achieve," he said.

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