

A royal celebration

The year 2010 marks a milestone for RDNS as we celebrate our 125th year of service to the Melbourne community. Official celebrations commenced when the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Ms Quentin Bryce AC formally opened proceedings on February 17th, the very day RDNS formed in 1885.

The Governor-General and Mr Bryce were guests of honour at a special event at Eureka Tower, overlooking the city that RDNS has cared for since 1885. At that time, shanty towns and dire poverty had seen Melbourne strain in the wake of the gold rush, leaving the poor and sick with little medical care.

A concerned group of citizens established the Melbourne District Nursing Society, as RDNS was originally known. Starting with one nurse, their vision was to provide nursing care to people in their homes and restore hope and health wherever they could. Earliest records indicate two nurses provided care to 363 needy citizens in 1889.

Prior to joining guests at Eureka Tower, the Governor-General and Mr Bryce accompanied RDNS nurse Claire Wallace on a client visit in Aberfeldie. There, they met with Mr Ralph and enjoyed hearing about his memorable life experiences, as well as learning how RDNS has helped care for him in more recent, challenging times.

Later, as she addressed the 150 guests atop Eureka Tower, the Governor-General commented: "As I wish you a happy 125th birthday, I offer my sincere thanks to your staff, who dedicate themselves to this organisation and to the community: to service, to humanity.

"For the outstanding contribution you make to our community every single day I have the highest regard: for your skills and your dedication and commitment to the finest values and principles of human service," she said.

Guests were also delighted by first-hand accounts of life 'on the road' provided by RDNS nurse Catherine Quinless, who enthralled all with her witty, yet insightful and heartfelt observations of district nursing.

CEO Dan Romanis told the gathering that the organisation has grown to be a major pillar underpinning the health system, helping people remain in their homes for longer and giving them increased independence, choice and control in their healthcare.

"What started out as a mercy mission to the sick and poor in 1885 has evolved into a large and dynamic healthcare organisation that continues to deliver health, hope and healing to almost 9,500 people every day of the year," he said. "RDNS has affected the lives of literally millions of people over the last 125 years.

"That is what we are celebrating: the incredible nurses and staff of RDNS who remain steadfast in their commitment, professionalism and dedication to local people and their local communities," Mr Romanis said.



The Governor-General and RDNS nurse Catherine Quinless cut the birthday cake.

Thanks, Minister

In January, Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot and Victorian Member for Melbourne Ports, Michael Danby experienced RDNS' work first-hand, when they visited our Caulfield site for a meeting with Chairman Paul Montgomery, CEO Dan Romanis and local staff.

The visit was prompted by the Minister's acknowledgment of RDNS' success at the 2009 Minister's Awards for Excellence in Aged Care, where we received the major award for Excellence in Training and Staff Development.

RDNS also received a 'Highly Commended' in the Innovation in Information Technology and the Leadership and Achievement categories.

During the visit, Minister Elliot and Mr Danby met with staff at the Caulfield site to formally congratulate them on their success and gain insight into RDNS' work and the technology that assists delivery of care. After the meeting, Ms Elliot and Mr Danby accompanied RDNS nurses on a client visit, where they saw up-close the positive impact of home nursing.

"People tell me that as they age they want to remain in their own homes and communities, close to their families and friends," said Minister Elliot.

"We recognise this and are providing practical assistance through community care services to help older people retain their independence," she said.

Commenting on the visit and RDNS' success at the awards, Mr Danby said:

"The awards recognise aged care services that provide exemplary care to older Australians and it is encouraging to see the success of RDNS who provide care to so many older people in our area. I congratulate the staff and management for their success. They are a win for RDNS clients and for our community," he said.



Local member, Michael Danby and Federal Minister Justine Elliot take a close look.

Venturing into new territory

RDNS is delighted to welcome Dr Georgia Hinton to the role of Executive General Manager - New Ventures. The position is one of three new Executive General Manager positions recently established to support RDNS' growth and diversification strategy.

Dr Hinton has a PhD in Genetics, Molecular Biology and her most recent employment has been with Boston Consulting Group. She is responsible for delivering new business growth through mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, partnerships and geographic expansion.



Welcome Dr Georgia Hinton

Healing old wounds

Around 270,000 Australians are living with chronic wounds. Throughout the country, nursing homes alone have 60,000 residents with a chronic wound. Chronic wounds cause significant pain, loss of functional ability and cost the country \$2.6 billion annually. More than a quarter of a million people endure a reduced quality of life as a result.

To address this chronic problem, the Wound Management Innovation Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has been established, with Royal District Nursing Service as a research partner.

The CRC has been granted \$28 million from the Federal Government for research into wound management over the next eight years and brings together a critical mass of national and international experts focused on finding solutions to challenges associated with chronic wound care, management and delivery.

RDNS' Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health will play a role in research activities and work alongside key nursing services in other states including Blue Care in Queensland, Western Australia's Silver Chain, Royal District Nursing Service of South Australia and Queensland University of Technology.

The CRC's main areas of research will focus on investigation of the mechanisms of wound healing; development of novel wound therapies and dressings and products to diagnose and predict healing outcomes; and clinical processes and prevention strategies.

Major potential benefits include access to new knowledge of wound healing dynamics; the latest developments in therapeutics and evidence-guided clinical care; opportunities to strengthen community-based research via collaborations with leading wound researchers; the development of important data to inform policy, practice and advocacy to government; and access to a robust evidence-base to guide prioritisation and resource allocation.

Other participants in the project include Smith and Nephew, the Victorian, West Australian, South Australian and Queensland Departments of Health and the CSIRO.



Care for chronic wounds accounts for \$2.6 billion in spending each year.

Show me the Monet!

People are being encouraged to express their artistic side by entering RDNS' first-ever community art competition. The competition aims to capture positive impressions of district nursing and help commemorate RDNS' 125th year of service.

Titled "District nursing – an artist's impression", people are invited to submit an illustrative piece that captures positive perceptions, experiences, observations or feelings about district nursing; its work and its people, including nurses, clients and others.

The competition is open to all illustrative mediums including, but not limited to, paint, pencil, pen, ink, watercolour, charcoal, pastels, gouache, graphite and collage.

All entries will feature in an exhibition at Brightspace in St Kilda from 12-22 May. Art experts will judge all pieces and award a series of prizes, including \$3,000 cash for first prize.

"This is an exciting year for RDNS and we want to actively include in our celebrations the communities that we have been caring for since 1885," says CEO Dan Romanis. "We felt that an art competition would offer people a chance to capture unique aspects of their experience with RDNS in a visual and evocative way.

"Every day at RDNS literally thousands of individual stories are playing out. This competition is all about capturing some of those stories, celebrating them and sharing them in a public forum," he says.

"It is not often that there is an opportunity to do something like this and we felt that this anniversary year was a perfect chance to do something a bit different to celebrate a major milestone. We hope that the competition appeals to everyone from the occasional hobbyist to the seasoned artist," Mr Romanis says.

Entrants to the competition must officially register by 30 April 2010.

For an entry form and terms & conditions please visit www.rdns.com.au or call (03) 9536 5222 for more information.



Survey shows customer satisfaction

A recent client satisfaction survey has delivered good news for RDNS. Conducted every two years, client satisfaction surveys help us better understand clients' and carers' level of satisfaction with RDNS' service, thus enabling us to identify areas where we can improve.

Over 1,600 clients who were in RDNS' care were randomly selected and asked a range of opinions about RDNS and our service delivery. A response rate of almost 50% was achieved, with an overall rating of 89.6 for RDNS which is 3.8 points higher than the industry benchmark score.

All results were also compared to the national industry benchmark giving an indication of how RDNS compares to other similar organisations relating to its overall level of client satisfaction.

RDNS received above industry benchmark scores in the following categories:

- How well RDNS nurses explain treatment and care
- Friendliness of nurses who provide care
- The technical skill of RDNS nurses
- Nurses' level of concern for clients' comfort during care
- Nurses' respect for clients and carers
- Likelihood of clients recommending the RDNS service

These are positive results; however we also recognise the feedback from respondents' that shows we need to pay attention to the extent to which staff discuss healthcare goals with clients and carers and the handling of concerns and complaints.

We continue to enjoy a positive and productive relationship with our clients. The feedback gained from this survey provides us with further information to help us realise our vision of being the provider of choice for home and community nursing and healthcare services.

Home and Life

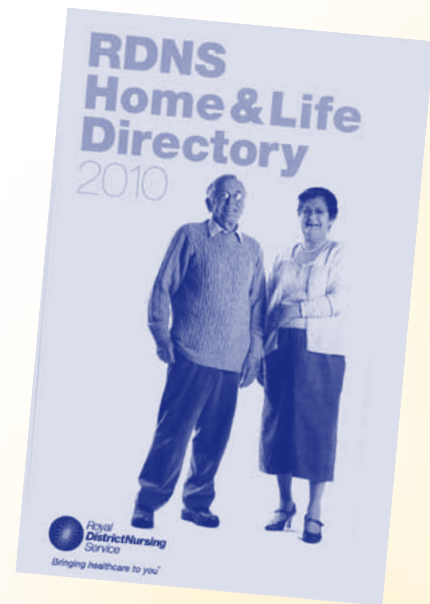
In January, we were excited to launch our first-ever Home and Life Directory. Available to all current and prospective RDNS clients, the RDNS Home and Life Directory is a free resource for those wanting to lead a healthy and independent life at home.

Topics covered in the Directory include RDNS services, falls prevention, diabetes management, eating well, protecting the home, powers of attorney, general health tips and much more.

A feature of the Directory is the complimentary Home and Life Card which may entitle RDNS clients and their carers to a discount or bonus when they purchase items promoted in the Directory.

The Directory has been developed with the assistance of many across the organisation, especially the RDNS Helen Macpherson Institute of Community Health.

To find out more about the Home and Life Directory, contact the RDNS Fundraising team on (03) 9536 5226.



Mobile computers to get facelift

With over 1,000 mobile computers currently in use by staff, RDNS has embarked on a major refreshment program of our mobile computer fleet. The project represents a major step to ensure that our mobile computer technology remains at the leading edge.

Collectively, RDNS nurses make around 1.7 million visits to clients per year, with each nurse relying on their mobile computer to make appointments and record clinical and client data. The computer also gives staff greater access to critical information, such as email, policies and procedures, and other medical information such as the MIMS database.

Ian Cash, General Manager of Information Services, says that RDNS must remain at the forefront of technological advances in order to provide nurses with the best possible tools to do their job.

"Many of our nurses begin their day from home and finish their working day at home. They spend their day on the road providing care for up to 15 clients.

Their mobile computer is the critical link between them and client/clinical information," he says.

"It is our commitment to ensure that, as new technology comes into the market place, we equip our nurses with the tools that will enable them to do their job even better. The bottom line is that improved technology contributes to our clients receiving the best possible care we can provide – and that is RDNS' number one goal," Mr Cash says.

The upgrade represents the fifth generation of mobile computer technology at RDNS, who first introduced mobile computers for nursing staff in the late 1990s, starting with the Apple Newton.

With the tender process now complete, the mobile computer refreshment program will see the integration of Hewlett Packard computer devices deployed at RDNS sites from late April. Fujitsu Australia Limited has been selected to provide ongoing integration services.

The full roll-out of the new computer fleet is anticipated to be completed by the end of September 2010.

National pride

We were once again delighted to be part of RACV's Australia Day picnic celebrations at Melbourne's Kings Domain.

The annual community event is a wonderful way for Melburnians to demonstrate their patriotism and enjoy the colour and excitement the picnic brings to our city each year.

The day managed to uphold perfect weather conditions for Melburnians to enjoy all the activities available, with many picnic goers taking advantage of the free blood pressure checks on offer at the RDNS booth.

By day's end, RDNS nurses performed over 800 blood pressure checks and provided free advice and expertise to many hundreds of people.

RDNS was proud to celebrate the spirit of the day with the RACV and the community we care for.



Nurses add health option

At the start of March, RDNS commenced service delivery in parts of rural Victoria and New South Wales.

Victorian residents within the municipalities of Greater Bendigo, Mt Alexander, Macedon Ranges, Ballarat, Moorabool, Greater Geelong, Queenscliff, Wodonga and Wangaratta now have access to RDNS services.

In New South Wales, RDNS will now service Albury, Baulkham Hills, Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, Mossman, North Sydney, Pittwater, Ryde, Warringah, Willoughby, Illawarra, Kiama, Shell Harbour, Shoalhaven and Wollongong.

Available services in these new areas include general nursing, aged care, wound care, palliative care, stomal care, diabetes care, continence management.

In particular, RDNS is able to provide nursing and personal care to veterans who qualify under the DVA Community Nursing Program.

We are also very pleased to be able to provide domestic assistance, personal care and in-home respite in a significant number of municipalities in NSW as part of the Home Care NSW program, effective from 10 April.

CEO Dan Romanis says that RDNS brings a long history of knowledge, research and expertise and that nurses are looking forward to contributing to new local healthcare environments.

"We are very excited to be able to add another option to the healthcare setting in these areas and that we have an opportunity to work with other local healthcare professionals to help contribute to people's quality of life," Mr Romanis said.

"RDNS is about delivering first-class care to people in the place that they feel most comfortable, familiar and secure which, in the case of most people, is their home.

"We are greatly looking forward to providing services that will assist people to stay at home longer, remain close to family and friends and reduce the number of visits they need to make to hospital.

"Healthcare today is about providing different options as well as local health professionals, such as nurses, doctors, hospitals and others working together to provide the most effective care to people," Mr Romanis said.