

Connecting communities for 20 years

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Sydney Local Health District's Community Visitors Scheme, through which volunteers brighten the lives of people living in residential aged care facilities.

Sydney Local Health District will hold a special celebration this month to mark the occasion. The NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, will attend to thank all volunteers for their years of service.

Paula Zelynski, who was one the first volunteers to join the scheme when it began, said it was especially important for those elderly residents who may be isolated or lonely, for social or cultural reasons, or due to disability.

"Some don't even have family or friends to visit," Ms Zelynski said. "I couldn't bear to see them like that."

Born in China with Russian heritage, Ms Zelinski can communicate with residents in a way they may not have been able to in years.

Valerie Chu, the coordinator of the scheme, said the difference that these volunteers had made was enormous.

"These people have offered friendship and company to those who have



One of the first...Paula Zelynski visiting Vera Wang at Presbyterian Aged Care, Ashfield.

needed it most," Ms Chu said. "Our whole community owes them a great debt of gratitude."

Ann Ona Kapocius, originally from Lithuania, was also among the first volunteers to participate in the scheme and has visited more than 100 residents over the years.

Ms Ona Kapocius remembers every resident and considers every visit extremely worthwhile.

"I have learned so much from them," Ms Ona Kapocius said. "The talks about life make all my small problems disappear."

The Community Visitors Scheme 20 year anniversary celebration will begin at 2pm on Wednesday, 12 March at the Kerry Packer Education Centre, RPA.

Day of celebration

This year Sydney Local Health District will mark Close the Gap Day by recognising the efforts and initiatives established to improve the health of our Aboriginal community members with an event at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

The event will begin at 11am on Thursday, March 20 with formal proceedings in the R.L Harris Room, KPEC Building, followed by activities on the KGV lawn. The day will include guest speakers, cultural performances, great food and a sharing of

information on how to access local health services.

The district will also hold a special event to celebrate Harmony Day at Concord Hospital with multicultural performances, food and cooking demonstrations. Local school students will participate in a parade of national costumes and performances while staff will promote multilingual health and medication resources. This event will begin at midday on Friday, 21 March on the Green, Concord Hospital.

Aboriginal Health

One of the main aims of the Aboriginal Health Service is to inform and educate other district services and the Aboriginal communities of the programs and health initiatives that are available to them.

We aim to make Aboriginal Health everyone's business and to engage Aboriginal communities to achieve the best outcomes to Close the Gap in health inequity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Balmain Hospital will also host a National Sorry Day event on May 26 with cultural performers and music, welcome to country, guest speakers and morning tea.

The BreastScreen mobile van will be located at 150 Pitt Street, Redfern, for two weeks from 3 March with a special drop-in service for Aboriginal women to receive free screening mammograms.

The AHS has many other current health initiatives and upcoming events in 2014 and we look forward to providing updates in future issues of HealthMatters.

Education and Workforce Development

Until recently the Centre for Education and Workforce Development had been a shared service between Sydney and South Western Sydney Local Health Districts, but is now dedicated to providing education and training services to SLHD. This has been a great opportunity for a review of our services has also resulted in an education model as a framework for the services that we provide.

The model includes seven portfolios that align with the strategic direction of SLHD, all of the courses and programs that we deliver have been grouped into individual portfolios. This model has been used for the framework of our Course Calendar, which was released in January, and can be found in our course handbooks from the end of March.

We are also working on a new interactive website to make it easier for all staff of SLHD to engage with us.

An education launch will be held in each facility across the district at the end of March including a barbecue lunch and demonstration of our new website.