

Incredible care that feels just like home



Sheree Paterson and Sally Watts

Imagine entering a place where the faces you see are so familiar, the smiles always warm and friendly, and the care constant and exceptional. It's safe and secure, just like coming home.

That's the feeling all women get either as an inpatient or outpatient in the Royal's Gynaecological Oncology unit.

Staffed by nurses with a genuine passion for the work they do and a real desire to make a difference, this unit is one a kind. It's the only comprehensive cancer centre in NSW with a designated gynaecological ward. Patients are seen from diagnosis, right through surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, to outpatient

chemotherapy and palliative care. "The support of the unit is amazing because you get all the care you need in one place", commented a recent patient.

According to Sheree Paterson, Clinical Nurse Educator, the core value of the unit is "individualised care through collaboration". A team of specialist doctors, nurses, dieticians, psychologists and counsellors provide care in consultation with patients and their families. "We listen to the patients ... we don't do things to them, we do things with them", says Sheree. That's collaborative care at its best.

Sally Watts, the centre's Nurse Unit Manager (NUM) says, "it's very unusual to find such specialised nursing care". The oncology unit has excellent staff retention rates. There are some staff that have been in the unit for over 17 years. Good staff retention means that continuity of care can be maintained for the patient and there is always a familiar face to greet them on arrival. "Patients feel safe here, it's their second home. They come back to familiar faces, they know where they're coming to and they know what kind of service they're going to get", says Sally.

Service that's first rate and compassionate, and always remembered by patients. Comments like these are not uncommon in thank you cards, "You've brought back my faith in nursing staff and what a hospital visit should be like" and "You all work as a team, it's very obvious, keep up the exceptional work".

Benefits definitely flow both ways. Sally and Sheree speak of the privilege they feel being part of these women's journeys. At times, it's very emotional. However it's the formal support of the Royal, support among themselves and remarkably, the patients that help them cope from whom they find strength and inspiration.

The end result is a very satisfied NUM, fulfilled nurses and grateful patients. "I see a team of nurses and doctors working so well together and communicating effectively, and patients who are really happy with the nursing care", says Sally. What more could a NUM ask for?