

### Interview with Dubbo Hospital's Aboriginal Health Practitioners

A large proportion of patients who present to Dubbo Hospital are Aboriginal, and many do not live locally. Being in unfamiliar surroundings and away from family members can be scary, so it's important they have support during their hospital stay. That's where Dubbo Hospital's Aboriginal Health Practitioners, Stephanie Halliger and Ricky See step in! Their role is to meet with patients and families to make sure they understand their treatment and can access the support services they need while they're here. We asked Stephanie and Ricky what the hospital redevelopment will mean for them and the patients and families they support.

#### How will the redevelopment benefit your role?

**Stephanie:** When the Macquarie Building opens we will have a Front of House presence - making us more visible to visitors and patients. When you walk through the front doors, there are some beautiful Aboriginal artworks alongside the Aboriginal language (Wiradjuri) signage, which will help show Aboriginal people where we are and that we understand. It is a nice visual representation for our Aboriginal community. Currently, we are located at the back part of the hospital and people can't find us, although a lot of the time we are out in the ward finding them.

#### What are the current challenges you face in your role?

**Stephanie:** Our Aboriginal patients worry about perceived judgement and lack understanding about the triage process and waiting times. Being away from family and country can be very challenging for many patients.



Left to Right: Ricky See and Stephanie Halliger, Aboriginal Health Practitioners are looking forward to their new space in the hospital.

**Ricky:** For many of our patients it is hard for them to get to Dubbo and sometimes they would rather not get treated than present at Dubbo Hospital.

#### How will the culturally appropriate spaces in the new Front of House improve your work?

**Stephanie:** It gives us a better presence in the hospital, it shows that we are included as an integral part of the multidisciplinary team and the hospital is serious about our positions and their commitment to improving Aboriginal health outcomes.

If we can provide more education to patients, we can improve the outcomes - it makes a difference. We can inform the doctors about Aboriginal culture, break down barriers and avoid patients discharging against medical advice.

**Ricky:** The new spaces show that we are all here for one goal, to get our patients better and to get them home.

### How have you been involved in design of the new spaces?

**Stephanie:** We have been involved in selecting interior finishes and layout of the new spaces. We have also been involved in the artwork and how we represent people. We are so glad to have the assistance of the redevelopment team – they have been amazing! Everyone has reached out to us to determine which community elders to consult.

**Ricky:** We have also been involved in the Aboriginal language signage, which the community has been very involved with. The language is in Wiradjuri and the acknowledgement of the language is important as it shows we care for the local community and people.

**Stephanie:** The community support for our new spaces has been amazing. Even if an Aboriginal person from another nation comes to Dubbo, the Wiradjuri language provides familiarisation and commitment for the local people.

### What are you most proud of in the space?

**Ricky:** We are assisting people in the hospital, whatever their needs may be.

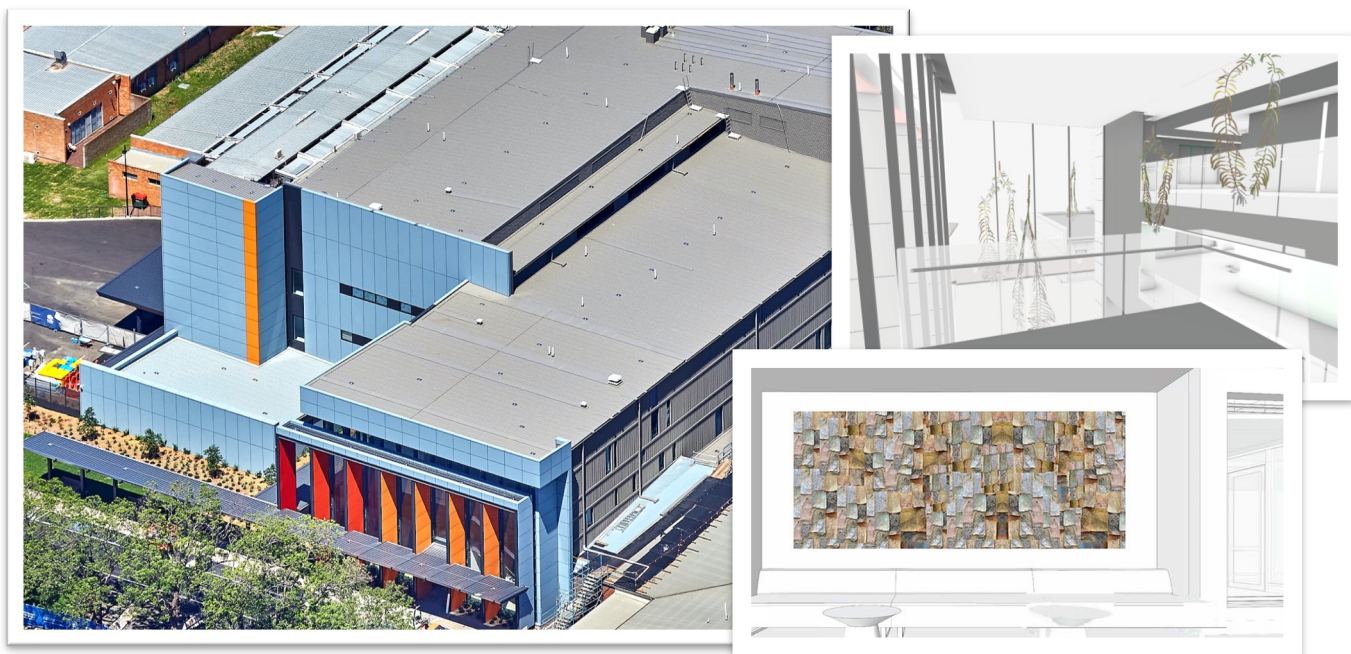
**Stephanie:** I am most proud of the Dubbo community accepting me. The community instil a trust in me and I have been able to follow through on the expectations of many family groups. I am proud I can provide insight into our culture to doctors and the doctors have a genuine intent in learning about our culture.

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*The culturally appropriate area in the new Front of House includes a family gathering space, access to an external courtyard close by and a place for the Aboriginal Health Practitioners to sit and chat to patients, carers and families.*

*The hospital's new Front of House in the Macquarie Building is opening soon.*

*The \$150M Dubbo Hospital Redevelopment Stages 3 and 4 is scheduled for full completion in mid-2021.*



*The new Front of House at Dubbo Hospital will feature wallpaper artwork (artist's impression bottom right) by renowned Australian artist Jade Oakley in collaboration with Local Kamilaroi-Wiradjuri Elder, Diane McNaboe. The wallpaper is inspired by traditional possum skin cloaks that Aboriginal people wore. Jade Oakley has also created a kinetic suspended artwork (artist's impression top right) for the foyer, reflecting the huge area that Dubbo Hospital cares for and inspired by native bird feathers used in head dresses and dance belts of the Wiradjuri people.*