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Northern Beaches Hospital CEO Andrew Newton urges people to seek treatment locally

Northern Beaches Hospital CEO Andrew Newton says his message to people on the peninsula is that the hospital is “open for business”, as he urges patients not to drive past but to get treatment locally.

Julie Cross, Exclusive, Manly Daily

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© Northern Beaches Hospital Andrew Newton CEO.
Image" Matthew Vasilescu

A significant number of people are driving past Northern Beaches Hospital to get treatment elsewhere, according to the CEO.

Andrew Newton, who has been in the top role for a year, said data analysis has revealed the hospital could “capture between 30 per cent or 50 per cent more activity than we’re doing now”.

“There’s still quite a lot of people who live in the northern beaches area, who are going to other hospitals to have procedures or medical treatment that can be undertaken here at Northern Beaches Hospital,” Mr Newton said.

He said he was keen to work with specialists and GPs to make sure everybody’s aware of the suite of services at the hospital which continues to grow and evolve, so “people do not need to travel past Northern Beaches Hospital to get the service they need”.



📷 Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest. (AAP IMAGE)

“My message to the people of the northern beaches is to remind them Northern Beaches Hospital is open for business,” he said.

“Please come. Check out our services and use us as your place of choice when you need to have surgery or some other treatment.

“And if you’ve got any questions get in contact with us and ask.

“We’re currently producing a directory of services so people know we’ll be able to know what we provide publicly and what we provide privately, and it’ll help people make an informed choice of which hospital to go to.”



📷 Nurse Alison Carlin in the interventional cardiology unit at Northern Beaches Hospital. Image Matthew Vasilescu

Making a clear list of services for both public and private patients was one of the recommendations put forward by a parliamentary inquiry into the operation of the hospital and one which the government supported.

Mr Newton said in particular he wanted to encourage people to choose Northern Beaches Hospital for paediatric surgery, orthopaedics, cardiac services and cancer services.

There are also plans to introduce new procedures not previously available in the next six to 12 months.



📷 Northern Beaches Hospital Andrew Newton CEO.
Image: Matthew Vasilescu

Mr Newton said confidence was growing in the hospital and the last three months had been the busiest in terms of elective surgery and the emergency department since the hospital opened at the end of October 2018.

He said staff had coped well and that it was being seen “as the new normal”.

“We’ve had some really sick patients come in through the emergency department who have gone to intensive care, back to the ward, and then left this hospital in a much fitter state than they came in,” Mr Newton said.

“I think people are feeling confident that this place is the place to be.”



📷 Nurse Cathy Morris in the hot zone of the hospital's COVID clinic performing a test on a patient. Image: Matthew Vasilescu

Following a difficult first year after opening and weathering a parliamentary inquiry, Mr Newton said “winning over the hearts and minds of the public was a work in progress”.

However, he said COVID-19 had been a turning point.

“We saw some outstanding clinical leadership,” he said.

“We were wanting to ensure that we were in the best possible place to respond to what was reported to be, an upcoming Armageddon.”

He said the hospital was prepared “to take on whatever came to us”.

“I think what that’s done is cemented really strong relationships across the hospital,” he said.

Mr Newton said staff also noticed a huge swell of support from the community during the pandemic and were overwhelmed with the donations of food, gift packs and chocolates from the community.



 The hospital was well prepared for the pandemic.
(AAP Image / Julian Andrews).

He said the hospital was also gaining a reputation for being a great training ground for junior medical staff.

Recently, more than 1000 people applied for 70 junior roles.

“We’ve had a couple of rounds of junior doctors go through and new graduate registered nurses,” he said.

“They get an excellent time here. The quality of the training and the quality of the supervision is just phenomenal.

“And that then gets out into the professional communities, and it’s word of mouth and people want to come here and start their career here.”

Mr Newton said the number of agency staff was now down to around three per cent, which was typical of similar hospitals.

He said it had been hovering at around 40 per cent during the first year of opening.

Mr Newton said he was keen to help foster northern beaches students wanting to go into medicine, so they don’t have to leave the geographical area to train and work.

He said the hospital was hoping to announce a link with a university before the end of the year, which would enhance its status as a place to train.

Mr Newton, who celebrated his first year in the role recently, said Northern Beaches Hospital was a great place to work.

He said he owed the staff a great deal of gratitude.

“The building’s only part of it, it’s the people within the building that really delivers the care and the empathy,” he said.

“And I think one of the things we feel strongly about is the patient experience.”

