



Nurse Simone Hyland was instrumental in setting up Northern Beaches Hospital's COVID-19 clinic.

# On the frontline

From the frontline of Northern Beaches Hospital's COVID-19 clinic, *Peninsula Living* speaks to local nurse Simone Hyland on how our healthcare workers have faced the pandemic head on.

By Stephanie Aikins

Not all heroes wear capes it's true, some wear personal protective equipment.

And while they may not have superhero powers, our healthcare workers have shown a super-human capacity to put personal fears aside and work around the clock to serve our community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simone Hyland, Emergency Department Nurse Unit Manager at Northern Beaches Hospital is one such hero.

With 25 years' experience nursing under her belt, she was instrumental in setting up the hospital's COVID-19 testing clinic.

A brave feat in a region that was a coronavirus hotspot during the peak of the outbreak.

She says May alone saw the clinic swab 3,000 locals for the virus, with nurses now testing up to 200 people per day.

"Most of us live in this community, so it really gives you a sense of pride that you are helping your community and increasing the number of testing so, therefore, decreasing the spread," she tells *Peninsula Living*.

"We wanted the clinic to be quick in and quick out, minimising the wait times and exposure for the public, who were naturally concerned and anxious.

"The triumph is that it runs like a well-oiled machine now.

"We've [the staff] quite enjoyed being involved in that part of the pandemic response; in that we get to help patients in a different way.

"Not just in a physical way or a pain-relieving way, in a communication and in a support type of way."

She says between ensuring patient safety and keeping up to

date with the constantly changing health guidelines, getting the clinic to this stage wasn't without its challenges.

"We had to turn the whole department around in 24 hours just to adapt to the current changes and to ensure we had the peak, maximum safety for staff and patients," she explains.

"Working in ED, you're pretty flexible anyway but that was just ramped up [during the pandemic]. We were coping with changes basically hourly instead of a slower pace, where it might be weekly.

"There was also a lot more reassurance having to be given. Patients were coming in, already fearful of being unwell, but then also, understandably, fearful of what they might catch.

"We were conscious of alleviating that anxiety by reassuring them that we were doing everything to keep them safe."

When asked if her own health and safety was ever a concern, Simone shakes her head.

"The whole hospital had great processes, so I actually felt really protected and I can honestly say, hand on heart, I never felt worried once for my own health."

As cases of the virus continue to fall and lockdown restrictions ease, Simone, who hasn't been able to see her own mother since March, encourages locals to keep distancing from others and focusing on personal hygiene.

"Don't be complacent, keep washing your hands and keep making really wise decisions when it comes to social distancing and how you're socialising," she says.

"We just need to really slowly ease back into how things were to avoid a second wave." **PL**