World class endoscopy unit right on our doorstep

“We are building the health service because our communities deserve exceptional health care. You should not be disadvantaged just because you don’t live in a capital city.” - Peter Waugh, Clinical Nurse Consultant - Gastroenterology Procedural Suites, Nambour General Hospital

From a pineapple farm to a state-of-the-art endoscopy suite, clinical nurse consultant Peter Waugh has certainly transitioned well into his nursing career.

A nurse for almost 30 years, Peter has been working in a clinical nurse role in endoscopy for the past 14 years and is currently the acting clinical nurse consultant in the endoscopy suite at Nambour General Hospital.

“As part of our gastroenterology and respiratory service, we have a complete endoscopy and bronchoscope service with well-trained consultants and nurses to meet the health care needs of our communities.

“The dedicated endoscopy suite at Nambour Hospital, which opened in 2012, means our patients can now receive their care closer to home, with their families and support networks, instead of having to travel to Brisbane for treatment.”

Gastroenterology focuses on the digestive system and its disorders. Endoscopy means ‘looking inside’ and refers to a medical procedure for looking inside the body without performing major surgery, using an instrument called an endoscope.

The multidisciplinary team in the gastroenterology service at Nambour General Hospital provides quality inpatient services as well as a 24 hour on call emergency response team.

Humble beginnings

Peter’s parents owned a pineapple farm on the Sunshine Coast and Peter grew up helping to sell pineapples from the family home.

“After meeting a lady who worked in a local nursing home, I started volunteering there and really enjoyed the work,” Peter said.

“From there I was offered the opportunity to participate in the pupil enrolled nursing course at the Gympie Hospital, and so my nursing career began.”

Peter trained as an enrolled nurse at Gympie Hospital, obtained his diploma of nursing at the University of Western Sydney, then returned to Queensland, completed his degree in nursing and also the fundamentals of a gastroenterology certificate.

“My endoscopy nursing began in Charing Cross in London and I worked throughout Queensland in endoscopy suites. I then helped start up the brand new endoscopy suite on the Sunshine Coast with the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service.”

As a clinical nurse consultant, Peter finds great satisfaction in his work in the Nambour General Hospital endoscopy suite.
“I enjoy making a difference to other people’s lives; this can range from removing a blockage to enabling a person to swallow again; or helping save somebody’s life; or providing palliative stenting to make somebody’s journey as pain free as possible,” Peter said.

“There is always something new to learn even after 20 years. I feel it is my duty to pass on my knowledge to the younger nurses about best practices and holistic care for our patients.

“The best thing about working for the SCHHS is the people - we all have the same goal to provide an exceptional standard of care for our patients and this is something our team does really well.”

World class endoscopy suite

As part of the opening of the procedural suites at Nambour General Hospital in 2012, a new endoscopy procedural suite was commissioned to deliver a streamlined service for the community.

Prior to opening the procedural suite, the gastroenterology service had been treating from 1200 to 1300 procedures in theatre per year. Since the opening of the endoscopy suite, 4750 procedures were completed in the first year, that’s a 65 per cent increase in productivity.

“Since the suites opened, to 30 September 2015, we have performed over 16,000 procedures, not including bronchoscopies,” Peter said.

“My life has changed!”

Sara Carmody knew something was not right with her throat, but put up with the discomfort and pain for almost 10 years. She did not realise that although it was quite serious, it was also treatable.

Sara had been suffering from an oesophageal stricture. An oesophageal stricture is a narrowing of the oesophagus which causes difficulty swallowing and a feeling that food is not passing into the stomach normally, unintended weight loss and heart burn.

She described the discomfort and effect on her life as unbearable.

“I was unable to swallow and kept choking on food. I couldn’t eat a full meal and my nutrition suffered significantly. My oesophagus was only about 5mm wide, not the 15-16mm a healthy oesophagus should be,” Sara said,

Her G.P. sent her to the Nambour General Hospital for an endoscopy to investigate the cause. Peter was on hand in the endoscopy suite to perform the procedure.

Peter said the team inserted an endoscope into the oesophagus to examine the stricture and conducted a biopsy to determine its cause.

“In Sara’s case, the stricture was treated with oesophageal dilation, relieving Sara’s symptoms,” Peter said.

Sara had to undergo weekly dilations on her oesophagus for about six months to stretch her oesophagus to a healthy 18mm.
Peter said the Nambour General Hospital endoscopy suite provided this local dilation service to the Sunshine Coast community, who would otherwise have to travel to Brisbane for this kind of service.

“We are building the service for the Sunshine Coast because our communities deserve it. You should not be disadvantaged just because you don’t live in a capital city,” Peter said.

“Sara now has a ‘normal life’ and can go out and enjoy a meal like everyone else. Without the treatment she received at the endoscopy suite, she would have struggled for the rest of her life. She now looks healthy and happy. It’s a wonderful outcome.”

Sara praised the staff at the Nambour General Hospital for their exceptional care and for taking time out to answer her questions.

“All the staff were amazing and passionate about their jobs, from the reception staff to the nurses and doctors,” Sara said.

“I’d like to thank the team in the endoscopy suite for everything they did for me – they are a great team. They made my experience, which was quite frightening and worrying, a lot easier for me. They took what was a bad situation and turned it into a positive,” she said.

Sara has recently travelled overseas, something she never would have contemplated before being treated.

“This whole experience has made me appreciate life more,” Sara said.

“I’m grateful for my renewed health and I plan to enjoy every moment. It has completely changed my life!”

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