

# ROYAL

REHABILITATION CENTRE SYDNEY

Rehabilitation after Stroke



ANNUAL REPORT  
2009/2010

*Maximising Abilities – Optimising Lifeskills*

## Our Vision

Royal Rehab's vision is for people who have been seriously injured or who have experienced a chronic and disabling illness to regain and maintain their health and wellbeing within the circle of their family, friends and community.

## Providing Care since 1899

Our beginning was due to the energy and compassion of a remarkable woman of the late nineteenth century, Miss Susan Schardt. Miss Schardt recognised the needs of patients being discharged from hospital and labelled as "incurable", often without family, money, or hope of getting a job.

From small beginnings in 1899, the work of Ms Schardt became increasingly recognised and valued, culminating in a wave of public support that saw Sir Henry Moses M.L.C sell his Ryde property Weemala to become, in 1906 the "NSW Home for the Incurables". From these humble beginnings we now have a vastly expanded range of rehabilitation and disability services and facilities.

In 1924 Moorong opened for the care of cancer patients. Today it houses our Spinal Injury Unit. Coorabel opened in 1967 to provide rehabilitation services, and a remodelled Weemala building was completed in 1979. The Brain Injury Unit opened in 1992.

The Centre's name has also changed over time, to Royal Ryde Homes in 1954, Royal Ryde Rehabilitation Hospital in 1978 and finally the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney in 1990.

## Royal Rehab – An Introduction

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney is a nationally recognised organisation that provides specialist rehabilitation and disability services for people who have acquired a disability as the result of trauma, accident or illness. Royal Rehab engages in extensive education and research to improve the rehabilitation outcomes for its clients.

Royal Rehab is a not-for-profit charitable organisation with an independent Board of Directors. Royal Rehab operates as an affiliated health organisation under the NSW Health Services Act 1997, and as an accredited service with the Department of Human Services NSW Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). Royal Rehab relies on financial support from the general community to provide a range of services required by individuals undergoing rehabilitation.

As a teaching hospital, Royal Rehab has strong partnerships with the University of Sydney's academic units – the Rehabilitation Studies Unit, the Centre for Community Based Health Care, the Centre for Disability Studies; and with our own Rehabilitation Nursing Professional Development Unit and Royal Rehabilitation College.

Royal Rehab provides on-site rehabilitation for those with complex and long term health care needs, traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury, and supports the development of specialist spinal cord rehabilitation services in regional NSW. Royal Rehab also provides a growing number of long term supported accommodation places for people with significant disabilities living in the community.





## Chairman's Report

A most significant milestone was achieved during the year under review, with the finalisation of the sale of a portion of our land. Whilst this is by no means an end in itself, it is a critical step towards realisation of the Board's long-standing vision to build a new, state of the art rehabilitation facility and to further expand our community based services for people with an acquired disability. Whilst the Board understands the local community concerns in regard to the residential development and associated traffic load on the neighbourhood precinct, we are convinced that the end result will be a most valuable community asset for local residents and the people in need in NSW.

We have commenced construction of the new model Weemala Units to honour our commitment to our long term clients as soon as practicable, and expect the residents to move into their new homes early in the next financial year. However, the Board considers it most prudent to review the redevelopment of the new inpatient centre, in light of the notice by NSW Health of the loss of funding for our general rehabilitation beds when the Graythwaite Unit is built at Ryde Hospital in late 2012, and other funding reductions. We have engaged the services of a major consulting firm to assist us in this strategic review.

Since its inception in 1899, Royal Rehab has survived through numerous economic downturns and social changes through strong leadership; and a clear vision and mission to assist people with an acquired disability as a result of a major accident or illness to regain and maintain their health and well being within their circle of family, friends and community; and through the passion, expertise and commitment of its staff. I would like to express my appreciation for the dedication, commitment and counsel of my fellow Directors, who volunteer so much of their time and knowledge to Royal Rehab also. Our founder, Susan Schardt, has left us a wonderful legacy of service to the community and to those in need, and we look forward to fulfilment of the next chapter in our proud history with the construction of our new Centre.

**Clive N Austin**  
Chairman



## Chief Executive Officer's Report

The year under review has produced a number of challenges for Royal Rehab as it grapples with the reality of its status as an affiliated health organisation, and the economic pressures on State government funded services. The maintenance of exemplary clinical and support services for our clients, and the achievement of outcomes that enable our clients with an acquired disability to participate in their communities to the fullest extent possible, remain paramount.

But 2009-10 has been a year of considerable financial constraint as we look at ways to reduce our operating expenses, in response to revised funding arrangements.

None the less, our Community Accommodation and Support services have continued to make steady growth, and our Disability Services Directorate was the second of only a few community services organisations to achieve the new Attendant Care Industry accreditation in 2009-10.

Royal Rehab also admitted its first clients into its new Neurobehavioural Rehabilitation Service, which, in partnership with the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust, employs the proven and successful BIRT model to assist people with acquired brain injury and significant challenging behaviours, to modify behaviours so that they might engage back into the community, with support. We are most excited by this opportunity and are looking forward to working in the new joint venture to expand this service.

Construction of the new 32 unit Weemala complex has finally commenced, and is expected to be completed in mid 2011. This will provide a much more comfortable and individualised home for our long term Weemala clients, to replace the very old complex they currently reside in.

The new inpatient centre is, however, much more problematic, with the reduction in recurrent funding as a result of a move to "activity based" funding, and the imminent loss of 30 beds to Ryde Hospital, to be accommodation in the new Graythwaite Unit to be built with NSW Health's funds.

It is a condition of our existing planning approval, and of course a commitment and a vision held deeply by Royal Rehab, but we must ensure that we have long-term and appropriate funding for publicly funded inpatient rehabilitation services to justify the expense of a new Centre.

There are, however, a number of options which are being explored at present, but meanwhile Royal Rehab will continue to promote the welfare and wellbeing of all of our clients.

I would like to thank the members of the Board for their strong support and commitment, and all of my wonderful staff across all of our services who do so much to assist all of our clients achieve their goals.

**Stephen Lowndes**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Royal Rehab was the key to stroke victim's survival

When Don Maciver had a stroke in 1999, he remained in an induced coma at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for nearly three months.

The doctors and nurses had given up on the Ryde resident, and asked his wife, Lyn, about organ donation, suggesting several times that it was time to turn off the life support system because he was "unrehabilitatable".

She spent months by his bedside, playing music and talking and Mr Maciver had begun to respond, squeezing the hand of his wife and showing other small signs of improvement.

Mrs Maciver didn't give up hope that someone could help and after some research she discovered the Royal Rehabilitation Centre in Ryde.

Mrs Maciver said without Royal Rehab, her husband, a former Australian championship rower and healthy man, would not have pulled through. Mr Maciver can now walk, has sailed solo, paints, reads and is a member of social clubs, and most importantly, has lived to hold his grandchildren in his arms.

Both Mr and Mrs Maciver said they were distressed to find out recently that Royal Rehab was having their funding cut and was at risk of losing specialised staff and vital services.

"What happened once we got to Royal Rehab is that we finally felt safe,- Mrs Maciver said. "They look after the person and they look after that person's family.

"They were open to alternatives and let me bring in a massage therapist and an acupuncturist.

"The Royal Rehab staff are highly specialised, caring people trained in speech pathology and physiotherapy, they were all unbelievably professional and there is nothing else like it here."

**Melissa Davey**  
Northern District Times



Don Maciver at home in Ryde with his wife Lyn.

## GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE NEW WEEMALA

In spite of the inclement weather, residents of Weemala and their families attended in force to celebrate the commencement of construction of the new Weemala.

Long time Weemala resident Ron Cowland was honoured with turning the first soil in the ground breaking ceremony. Ron has lived at Weemala for 57 years. He came to Weemala in 1953 as a young man of 26 when his father, a widower, in poor health could no longer care for him. When Ron arrived the men all lived downstairs and the women above. In 1906 when Weemala was officially opened, it was called the "NSW Home for Incurables".

Much has happened for Ron Cowland in 57 years, but for Ron what he remembers most are the people, the staff, the friends with whom he shared the good times.

The CEO of Royal Rehab Stephen Lowndes said that the design of the new Weemala was exceptional, and would set the standard for the rest of the Centre's development.

"The new Weemala facility will provide a modern and much more home-like environment for our long term residents, and will allow for far easier access and participation in the local community, as well as a much more pleasant living environment."

"This is the beginning of the most important phase of our work - specialist rehabilitation services provided with the best research, and the best equipment and the best setting that clients experiencing life-changing acquired disabilities deserve." said Lowndes

Since 1993, many residents have moved into the "Weemala Supported Accommodation Program" with the opening of two community houses. In the years since, more than 25 houses have been established throughout Sydney for residents to live in the community.



Ron Cowland turns the first soil.



## The Year in Review

Perhaps the most significant event in 2009/10 was the successful sale of a portion of our land to Frasers Property Australia. This sale was the culmination of a long process and one which, unfortunately, attracted a fair degree of local government and resident opposition, opposed to the eventual residential development of the land sold and the anticipated change to local traffic movements. Our thanks are extended to Councillors Jeff Salvestro-Martin, Vic Tagg, Gabrielle O'Donnell, Justin Li, Terry Perram, Michael Butterworth and Nicole Campbell who put the larger picture to the fore and supported the passage of this sale agreement. Much of the local resident concern seems to have abated as the nature of the residential development and the benefits of the associated community facilities have become clearer.

What the sale has permitted though, and as intended, is the commencement of our new Weemala Community Accommodation centre, as the first phase of Royal Rehab's overall redevelopment project. Two units with a total of 32 rooms will provide modern, comfortable and home-like accommodation for our long term Weemala residents, with much better access to community activities and the local environment. The ground breaking ceremony was attended by John Alexander the new Federal Member for Bennelong and Councillor Vic Tagg, who saw Ron Cowland turn the first sod. Ron has been a resident of Weemala since 1953. Construction is expected to be completed by mid 2011.

Construction work on the community parkland will commence towards the end of 2010, and will be completed by mid 2011, providing a great amenity to local residents and to the clients of Royal Rehab undertaking extensive rehabilitation.

The year under review also saw the establishment of a new neuro-behavioural rehabilitation service for people with acquired brain injury and challenging behaviours, in partnership with the Australian division of the UK's Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust, Reability Australia. This is an exciting new venture for Royal Rehab which we anticipate will greatly assist many with ABI to participate more fully in community living.

Against these positives, 2009/10 saw a further significant reduction in funding from NSW Health as it implements its 'activity-based' funding model which mitigates against complex and specialist rehabilitation services. These funding cuts resulted in a number of staff retrenchments during the year and threaten Royal Rehab's capacity to continue to provide valuable services, such as its Driving Assessment and Rehabilitation service, and to support critical research into rehabilitation medicine and community based health to the level that it has previously.

A number of successful fund raising events were held including our annual Charity Challenge Golf Day, the Wayne Bennett Lunch, our annual Ducati Day and very recently, a celebration of Racing NSW's 200 Year anniversary, of which Royal Rehab was the beneficiary. The tremendous support of our Foundation Members Brydens Lawyers and ISS Cleaning Services is gratefully acknowledged, as is the support of Guardcorp.

The support of our State and Federal politicians has been most appreciated also, with numerous visits from our local NSW Liberal Member for Ryde, Victor Dominello and Federal Member for Bennelong John Alexander, and hosted visits from Jillian Skinner, Mike Baird and Barry O'Farrell occurring through the past year.

Royal Rehab also continued to host a number of international visits from rehab specialists and overseas public health officials during 2009/10, and we look forward to great success with the Royal Rehabilitation College's newly accredited Diploma of Rehabilitation during the coming year, to improving the skills base within the rehabilitation and disability sectors throughout Australia and overseas.



## The Royal Rehabilitation Foundation

The Royal Rehabilitation Foundation was established with the primary aim of attracting corporate and individual support for the Royal Rehabilitation Centre to engage in necessary research. Through its University affiliations and its on-site research partners, the Foundation will support on-going research into areas such as acquired brain and traumatic spinal cord injury.

The identification, evaluation and implementation of evidence based practice is a fundamental philosophy of Royal Rehab, to ensure the best possible outcomes for our clients.

The Royal Rehabilitation Foundation also assists in the purchase and assessment of leading edge equipment and assistive technology applications to improve the quality of life and independence of people with a disability.

### Foundation Membership

Brydens Compensation Lawyers have registered as a major supporter of Royal Rehab, through their membership of the Foundation. Brydens is one of the largest law firms in Australia, and the Chief Executive Officer Robert Bryden has worked with compensation and personal injury clients for many years.

“As a western Sydney law firm we’re committed to putting back into the community in which we operate. Since 1972, Brydens has been helping and fighting for the rights of our clients. Our membership of the Foundation will help people who have suffered stroke, brain injury, burns, amputation and spinal injury,” said Robert Bryden CEO.

ISS have registered with the Foundation as a “Working Together” Member. ISS is the largest provider of cleaning services globally and in Australia. The Working Together program, supported by ISS, will offer individually tailored, multidisciplinary programs designed to maximise function and independence.

### Construction Industry Partnership

Supported by the Foundation, a Construction Industry Partnership has been formed to identify safety related issues that will be the subject of new research initiatives, for the development and implementation of new work place safety practises. The aim is to create a safer construction workplace across Australia, reducing the incident of preventable workplace injury.

### Research

The Royal Rehabilitation Foundation provides support for the ongoing education and development and support for staff undertaking research that is related to their area of practice at Royal Rehab.

The following is a summary of some of the studies given full approval and funded through the Royal Rehab Foundation.

- Improving Self-Awareness in People with Brain Injury Using Video-Feedback
- The lived experiences & needs of people with spinal cord injury who can walk
- Comprehensive rehabilitation case management: building lifetime wellbeing from hospital to home
- Working together in brain injury rehabilitation
- An exploration of factors that influence the effectiveness of a metropolitan home-based rehabilitation service

The Royal Rehab Human Research Ethics Committee is responsible for providing ethical review and monitoring for the ongoing conduct of research regarding compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research for the life of the projects.



**NEW FITNESS TRAINING EQUIPMENT FOR THE GYM:** a rowing machine, an upright stationary cycle and a cross-trainer, all cordless with self generating power and with facilities to monitor heart rate. A mini trampoline with handrail that can be used for clients who are practicing running but require support, was also purchased, together with six new transmitter belts to be used with wireless heart rate monitors while clients are exercising. This equipment was provided through the generous donation of May and Anthony Barry, family of an ex-client in the Brain Injury Unit.



Assessment and research is on-going.



## Fundraising

### Events

Three major fundraising events, each relating to Australia's unsung "culture"-sport, not only stimulated an awareness of the services provided by the Royal Rehabilitation Centre but also generated financial support to assist with the purchase of modern equipment.

The Royal Rehab annual Golf Day was held at Long Reef on a day blessed with brilliant sunshine and barely a whisper of wind. A full field of 112 not only enjoyed the festivities of a day on the links but also were enlightened and challenged by the spirit and courage of burns client, Frank Spiteri.

Rugby League coach, the iconic Wayne Bennett, was the special guest speaker at a fundraising function held at Doltone House, Pyrmont. A full house applauded the inspirational and motivational message from the Premiership Coach. Australia's test wicket-keeper Brad Haddin and former Kangaroo Laurie Daly made cameo appearances on stage. Ray Hadley OAM, of radio 2GB and more recently television fame, did a wonderful job as the auctioneer. The event was sponsored by Guardcorp Security.

Racing NSW celebrated 200 years of staging "the sport of kings" and chose Royal Rehab as the recipient charity. Over 380 guests attended the celebration at Royal Randwick and were delighted to see the former doyen of race broadcasting Ian Craig interview the "royal jockey" - Edgar Britt who recently turned 97. Richard Callendar was the auctioneer and was widely acclaimed for his "performance."

Events, once an accessory to fundraising have now become a necessity in terms of attracting revenue and enhancing awareness of the organisation.

### Donations

Donations from Foundations, Trusts and the corporate world continue to support the work of the Foundation.

A significant research grant from the R T Hall Estate will fully fund a two-year research project into cardiovascular lipid disease.

Inghams Chickens through Narellan Rotary again pledged their support to the Royal Rehab Foundation, recognising the significant outcomes achieved by the Brian Injury Unit.

The Cecilia Kilkeary Foundation generously supports the Royal Rehab Stroke Recovery unit.

Brydens Law Firm and ISS Facilities Services became inaugural members of the Royal Rehab Foundation.

Eight Councils through the Community Development Expenditure Scheme supported Royal Rehab's Driving Assessment Centre that enables clients who have lost their motor vehicle licence due to injury, reapply for their licence after a comprehensive assessment program.

Support for the Foundation comes from a variety of sources; the Australian Chinese Foundation, the Primary Club, Department of Recreational Fishing, COS Office Supplies, Norths Ladies Day, North Turramurra Golf Day, and the Lions Club of Ryde for a memorial legacy to a former Weemala resident, Len Mullard.

**Acknowledgments** to David Gyngell, CEO of Channel Nine, David Leckie, CEO of Channel Seven, John Hartigan, CEO of News Ltd. Thanks also to local media support for events and activities through the Northern District Times and The Weekly Times.



## ...like a duck to water

Our son James Gribble has a c4/c5 incomplete spinal injury suffered under freaky circumstances whilst travelling in Africa 18 months ago.

He has received wonderfully supportive rehabilitation from Royal Rehab with seven months at the Spinal Injury Unit and subsequently continuing therapy from the Coorabel gym.

During the warmer months we were able to use the Aqua Chair, a donation made possible by the Primary Club. Having used it twenty times or more, James has discovered the freedom of being in the Ocean.

We have perfected the method of entry and exit from the sea which may not gain many accolades from any diving judges, and once James is free

in the water, he makes the most of the exciting therapy environment that surrounds him.

The chair has really opened up a completely new and different opportunity, and we wanted to thank the Primary Club for making this possible. The physio and OT staff at Royal Rehab have been so helpful in all aspects relating to James recovery, and their suggestion to use the chair has seen enormous improvements being gained through the use of all his limbs in the salt water environment.

The impact of your generosity is hard to measure. Thank you again for the donation that made this all possible.

**Roger Gribble** (Father to James)

## The Rehabilitation Directorate

The Rehabilitation Directorate provides a range of inpatient, outpatient, and community based and outreach services for clients who have recently had an injury or illness and require rehabilitation. Our rehabilitation services offer individually tailored, multidisciplinary programs designed to maximise function; and assist our clients in adjusting to their disability and attaining as much independence as possible. Rehabilitation bed days increased on prior year as did the revenue from privately insured and compensable clients.

### Spinal Injuries Unit and Spinal Outreach Service

The state wide Spinal Injuries Service provides inpatient rehabilitation; and post discharge, community based clinical support through our Spinal Outreach Service for clients who have suffered traumatic or non traumatic spinal cord injury. In 2009/2010 the service increased from 18 beds to 20 beds.

The Spinal Outreach Service focuses on effective education for both clients and clinicians, living and working in metropolitan Sydney and rural areas of NSW, helping spinal cord injury clients maintain their health and participation in their local community.

### Brain Injury Unit and Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation Team

The state wide Brain Injury Service provides inpatient rehabilitation and community based transitional support for clients from across Northern NSW who have sustained a traumatic head injury. The rehabilitation programs address the individual needs depending on the type of injury and part of the brain affected. Prevalent causal factors are assaults, motor vehicle accidents, sporting accidents and falls.

The Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation Team provides case management services and assistance addressing health issues, relationships, learning, finance, work and leisure following discharge from inpatient rehabilitation.

### Neurobehavioural Rehabilitation Service

The Neurobehavioural Rehabilitation Service for clients with acquired brain injury was launched in February 2010. This service offers people who have sustained a traumatic brain injury an opportunity to relearn skills, and provides an option for young people from nursing home care to transition to supported community living. The NRS is a joint venture between Royal Rehab and the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust of UK.

### Adult (CARS) and Aged Care (Dixson) Rehabilitation

The CARS and Dixson programs provide rehabilitation for clients following stroke, burns, neurological disease, amputation, and orthopaedic injury. The Adult Rehabilitation program is designed for clients of working age, whilst Dixson clients are over the age of 65 and are part of the Ryde Aged Care Service. A major focus of 2009/10 was on developing neurological and stroke rehabilitation programs to ensure best practice in the delivery of those programs.

### Outpatient Service

The Outpatient Department provides a range of goal directed individual and group therapy programs for clients who have experienced a decline in function. The aim is to enhance the quality of life enjoyed by all our clients.

The service provides clients with the option to remain living in their own home and visit the Centre as often as they require therapy. Through this service clients access medical care and skilled multiple allied health services in one team, comprehensive assessment and treatment facilities, and regular updates to their GP on progress.

Following the establishment of the new management team, 2009/10 has been a year of consolidation and planning for the future development of this service.

### Driver Assessment and Rehabilitation Service

The Driver Assessment and Rehabilitation Service is designed for clients who have had their driving ability compromised by a medical condition, and provides access to our highly skilled staff, in this very specialised area. Occupational Therapists have all completed postgraduate studies in driver assessment and are registered with the Roads and Traffic Authority. The Service offers heavy vehicle and scooter assessments and advice on modifications for clients wishing to learn to drive. Assessments are conducted in Ryde and Mona Vale and where restricted licenses apply, service is provided in the client's home environment.

### Mobility Equipment and Seating Service

The Mobility Equipment and Seating Service provides: hire, maintenance and seating service both internally to our inpatient clients and to external customers. Our maintenance service provides both routine services and emergency repairs for all types of mobility equipment and links clients back into our therapy services when new prescriptions are required. The hire service has expanded with the inclusion of a variety of highly specialised mobility and recreation items such as standing wheelchairs, beach wheelchairs, hand cycles and the modified SoloRider golf cart.



## Home Based Rehabilitation Service

The Home Based Rehabilitation Service provides intensive short term rehabilitation for clients in their own home. The clients may have suffered a recent injury or illness or a chronic musculoskeletal or neurological condition. The Home Based Rehabilitation Service has celebrated ten years of providing rehabilitation in the community. Over this time the multidisciplinary team has had a more than five fold increase in the number of hours of service delivered.

The contract with the Northern Area Health Service to provide the allied health therapy component of the transitional aged care program has contributed to the expansion.



The Home Based team ready for another day on the road.

## The Community Services Directorate

The Community Services Directorate provides supported accommodation and rehabilitation. The service works with adults who have experienced acquired brain injury or spinal cord injury, and with clients with developmental disability. Most clients also have complex care, challenging behaviour, or mental health issues.

During 2009-10 clients achieved some significant milestones, as a result of continuing to develop strategies and tools to keep up with the latest research in rehabilitation and to build this knowledge into our practice.



## Our Clients

### *Transition Unit Clients*

The Community Services Directorate operates the Transition Unit on behalf of the rehabilitation services. The Transition Unit supports clients who have completed their active rehabilitation phase and are waiting to move into their next accommodation. Our service continues to provide rehabilitation for many of these clients as well as assistance in moving into their new accommodation.

### *Continuing and New Clients*

We supported over 110 long-term clients in accommodation. These clients continue to receive support, rehabilitation, training, and, where needed, nursing and medical support. During the year support was extended to include new clients. It is anticipated that Community Services will be providing support and rehabilitation to these clients over the long term.

### *Service Achievements*

The review of the research on effective rehabilitation and service delivery has led to an increased focus on improving the coordination of services in clients' home environments. The aim of this coordination is to increase the inter-relationship between therapies and the support that clients receive while they carry out activities in their homes and in the community.

### *Senior Client Support Officers*

Senior Client Support Officers - coordinate support and rehabilitation in clients' homes and are part of the team delivering care.

### *Independent Living Coordinator*

Independent Living Coordinator - works with clients in our Transition Unit and with clients from the Lifetime Care and Support Authority. The function of this role is to ensure services are coordinated to minimise delays in returning home or moving to other community living and to maximise outcomes while in the care of Community Services.

### *Increasing Staff Skills*

Applying up-to-date knowledge is essential for the clients of our services. A major project has commenced to add additional skills for our staff who work directly with clients. Staff completed additional training to be able to assist in conducting therapies, as Certificate IV - Allied Health Assistants, and these staff will be better equipped to build therapy interventions into everyday client activities. Staff attended training sessions to learn new skills and increase skills and knowledge of treatments; staff attended training in working constructively with clients' challenging behaviours; and staff participated in training in areas related to service systems and development.

Weemala residents enjoy the Annual Ducati Day held at Royal Rehab by the NSW Ducati Owners Club.

## Rehabilitation Nursing Research and Development Unit (RNRDU)

The RNRDU is funded by Royal Rehab for the purpose of developing rehabilitation nursing research and providing leadership in rehabilitation nursing practice.

Key functions include the promotion of the body of knowledge and evidence based practice:

- Building the research base for rehabilitation nursing practice and building rehabilitation nursing research capacity at Royal Rehab
- Professional and practice development of nurses and nursing at Royal Rehab
- Professional networking, proactively linking with a wide range of organizations, including universities
- Providing consultancy service
- Designing and running evidence informed education programs

The Rehabilitation Nursing Research and Development Unit is building the research capacity and skills of Royal Rehab based nurses, and strengthening the commitment to providing evidence based practice.

## Rehabilitation Studies Unit

The Rehabilitation Studies Unit research and educational program continues to be focused on injury related disability and aims to involve clinicians and promote evidence based practice. Regular educational sessions have been introduced involving eminent visiting speakers, followed by sessions facilitated by RSU academic staff aiming to develop research skills.

Most research projects relate to traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury. However, there is an increasing health services research theme developing that is aiming to assist the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme, and the provision of services to older people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Studies Unit is an interdisciplinary research and educational unit of the Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney. The Unit's main focus is injury related disability, particularly severe disability following motor vehicle accidents. The Unit has collaborative links with other university departments, clinical colleagues working in rehabilitation, as well as groups and individuals with interest in injury related disability. It is funded by a substantial grant from the Motor Accidents Authority of New South Wales (MAA), with additional funding from the Royal Rehabilitation Centre and the University of Sydney.

## Community Based Health Care Research Unit

The Community Based Health Care Research Unit was established in December 2007 with the appointment of Prof. Craig Veitch as Chair in Community Based Health Care. He draws on a wealth of experience in establishing and evaluating successful models of care, particularly to people living in community settings as well as rural and remote areas. The Unit is jointly funded by the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney, where it is located, and The University of Sydney's Faculty of Health Sciences. The Unit provides critical support to Royal Rehab as it continues to develop its community-based rehabilitation services.

The Unit's focus is the extension of care from rehabilitation facility into community. In particular, the Unit's aim is to develop research programs that address the effectiveness of community-based health care for people with major traumatic injuries and long-term conditions with complex care needs, concentrating on finding ways, in which people with a disability can participate in everyday tasks and be integrated into communities of their choice.

The Unit also examines the impact of impairments on activity and life participation, and the development and efficacy of interventions across the lifespan. Members of the Unit are currently undertaking research including investigating the most effective utilisation of therapy services in rural and remote NSW.

## Centre for Disability Studies

The Centre for Disability Studies (CDS) creates and disseminates knowledge that can improve the lives of people with disabilities.

CDS designs and develops research, teaching and clinical practice to inform policy and practice which impacts on people who have disabilities. It offers technical assistance and advice to organisations providing health, community support, accommodation and employment services to persons with developmental disabilities. CDS has its own independent Board of Directors.

Clinical Services: The NSW Developmental Disability Health Unit operates as a component of the Royal Rehab Outpatients' Department, providing medical and psychological assessments for adolescents and adults with developmental disability. Clinics include those for people with Down syndrome, Cornelia de Lange syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, rehabilitation clinics and ageing and dementia clinics. Psychology assessment and counselling clinics are provided.



## Professional Leaders

The Professional Leader model was launched in 2007. The model utilises the Professional Leaders for all Allied Health disciplines, Clinical Nurse Consultants, and Senior Nurse Educator in a multidisciplinary collaboration providing a professional platform that underpins the professional development of our clinicians and ultimately clinical care.

We have seen a significant involvement across the site in education and research with many staff engaging with the onsite units in both large and small projects. There is a monthly forum for discussion of professional issues across allied health, nursing, and medicine and this group interfaces with the operational managers to further ensure the progress of professional initiatives from an operational perspective and vice versa.

The Professional Leaders are engaged in their broader professional networks bringing the latest developments back to the Centre. Where networks do not exist, they have been charged to establish them to encourage benchmarking, shared learning, and marketing of our services.

### AWARD TO PROFESSIONAL LEADER



Rotary Award to Sarah Fereday, presented by John Alexander.

The Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award 2010 was presented to Sarah Fereday, Professional Leader for Physiotherapy. The award was presented by Member for Bennelong John Alexander. Sarah was recognised by Rotary for her 14 years of work as a physiotherapist at the Centre, where she has been a Professional Leader for the past three years.

Sarah has a particular interest in working with clients following a stroke, and is a member of committees for The Stroke Network and Smart Strokes. Ms Fereday has also shared her knowledge and experience as a presenter for Stroke recovery seminars and Stroke rehabilitation workshops as well as the Allied Health Council and NSW Severe Burns Unit.

## The Royal Rehabilitation College

The Royal Rehabilitation College vision is - to be recognised as an expert provider of high quality educational services and qualifications to health, rehabilitation and disability professionals within Australia and internationally.

This vision has led to great success, with the Royal Rehabilitation College securing a newly accredited Diploma of Rehabilitation, to commence in 2011.

The Education staff of the College are qualified health practitioners who have many years of experience in the provision of healthcare. They combine this background with tertiary qualifications and experience in health education and training including the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

The College is delivering training programs nationally through an increasing number of active partnerships and a growing enrolment of students. Several contracts were successfully negotiated to provide training, assessment or skills recognition in Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance. Successful relationships have been established with the tertiary sector and the College provides training for both undergraduate and post graduate students.

To maintain accreditation the Royal Rehab College complies with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) Standards and Conditions of registration, and within NSW, the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (VETAB).

Below: Graduation Day - Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance



## REALITY CHECK ON SPENDING

Some days start innocently with a morning run, returning calls, meetings and then, bang - a moment hits you that you know you will remember with clarity, forever.

I was invited to visit the Royal Rehabilitation Centre. The invitation came from a wonderful local woman who wanted to show me, as a potential Treasurer, a facility that enabled her to walk again.

I have received several invitations from people looking for State funds should we win government next year. But this stood out as a deep concern that a facility was under threat, a facility that literally helped someone walk again.

As is commonplace in many frontline services across NSW, I met a team that was inspiring and I saw resources that did not do them justice.

Just before leaving, management took me to a place I didn't know existed - Weemala. It is where we originally placed our "incurables". Those severely afflicted by the worst brain injuries, extreme

muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis and many more heartbreaking ailments.

The building looked cold and oppressive from the outside and it didn't improve as we went inside. The shock I felt wasn't because of the people I met (indeed their smiles defied their personal circumstances), nor the wonderful staff, but it was because of the facilities. They were sterile, depressing and certainly not a "home" despite residents living there for decades.

It was hard to put into words the impact of this facility but it was a stark reminder that every dollar matters. We can't just look at headlines when government wastes money and say-oh well they do it all the time ... it matters.

As a potential Treasurer, Weemala was a harsh jolt that every public dollar is precious and that waste has a tangible impact.

**Mike Baird MP**  
Manly Daily



On a recent visit to the Royal Rehabilitation Centre, Mike Baird was appalled at the lack of facilities and wondered if the government has moved with the times in terms of funding.

## Remarkable courage honoured

WHEN Rosanna Robertson from West Ryde was shot in the back of the head nearly three years ago, she could have easily been killed. Her attacker pulled out a gun and shot her - it was two hours before she was able to crawl to a security guard for help.

Because of her slurred speech the security guard and paramedics assumed Ms Robertson was just drunk, and it wasn't until she arrived at hospital that staff realised she had been shot.

Rosanna spent one week in a drug-induced coma, a month in intensive care, two months in a hospital ward and six months at the Royal Rehabilitation Centre in Ryde.

So it was remarkable that Ms Robertson was able to stand up and give a speech when she was inducted to Royal Rehab's Wall of Fame as part of Brain Injury Awareness Week.

Four others were also added to the Wall of Fame - Neil Donnelly, Arabella Horton, James Poole and Robert Gallagher, their induction acknowledging the hard work and determination they had shown to rebuild their lives following serious and often life-threatening brain injuries.

Ms Robertson said she felt grateful to be alive every day. "When I was shot, I remember thinking my little boy would need his mummy and at 25, I decided I was too young to die," she said.

"I have been home since June 2008 and my eight-year-old son has been living with me full-time for the past six months. I want to say thank you to all of the hospital staff."

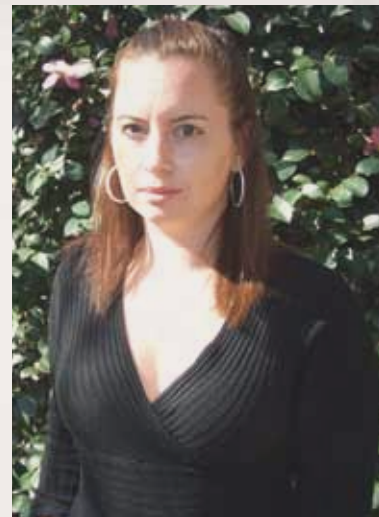
A former fitness instructor, Ms Robertson currently uses a rollator frame and said her attention was now focussed on being able to walk.

It was an emotional morning for those who attended as the inductees shared their stories, with many upset by the uncertain future of the hospital given recent funding cuts.

One wheelchair bound Royal Rehab patient was in tears as he yelled out from the crowd "Thank you for all of the care I have had in here."

The annual Wall of Fame event is in its ninth year, and the photos and stories of all Wall of Fame members can be found on the walls of the Brain Injury Unit.

**Melissa Davey**  
Northern District Times



**'At 25, I decided I was too young to die'**



## Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance describes the practices and processes adopted by Royal Rehab to ensure sound management of the organisation within the legal and clinical framework under which it operates. The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney is an Affiliated Health Organisation as defined in Schedule 3 of the Health Services Act 1997. It is a public company limited by guarantee with an independent Board of Directors, elected by the Members of the organisation. The Board of Directors is responsible for the overall corporate governance of Royal Rehab and believes it has the necessary experience, skills and mix of people to oversee the high standards of corporate integrity and accountability required of an ethical, values based organisation.

The Board has delegated responsibility for the operation and administration of the organisation to the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Management. Responsibilities are delineated by formal delegations of authority.

### Executive

Chief Executive Officer  
**Stephen Lowndes**

Director, Finance & Information Management  
**Chris Champ**

Director, Inpatient & Specialty Services/Director of Nursing  
**Elizabeth Drolz**

Director, Medical Services/Director Clinical Support Services  
**Professor Ian Cameron**

Director, Community Services /Allied Health Services  
**Delia Gray**

### Human Resources

In 2009-10, Royal Rehab had a committed team of over 670 people working on a full or part time basis. This equates to 440 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff.

### OH&S

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney has an OHS Risk Management System in place that includes the identification, assessment and elimination of all foreseeable hazards in the work environment and ensures safe systems of work.

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all of our staff, contractors, volunteers, clients and visitors. We are committed to proactive injury prevention and injury management aimed at the safe, sustainable and early return to work of any injured staff. OHS consultative arrangements enable staff to contribute to the development of safe systems of work and be involved in decisions that affect their health, safety and welfare in their place of work. 2009/10 saw a reduction in workers compensation claims.

## Professional Development

To demonstrate commitment to the professional development of staff at the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney we have a Leadership and Management program for all current and emerging leaders within the centre. The program provides the opportunity for our clinical and operational employees and managers to gain management skills and qualifications resulting in optimal operational decision making and succession planning within the centre.

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney continues to offer the services of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to all staff. The aim of the EAP is to assist staff resolve personal issues at an early stage and avoid situations which might otherwise ultimately affect their work performance or attendance. The EAP covers a wide variety of problems and concerns such as post incident debriefing, balancing family and work responsibilities, career and vocational issues, managing and coping with change, and dealing with difficult situations. Access to the EAP is available to all staff.

### Accreditation and Risk Management

In 2009 Royal Rehab was accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) until 2013.

Extensive Achievement (EA) was received in criteria related to research and learning and development. The surveyors noted that Royal Rehab has well-developed academic departments which work in close collaboration with clinical departments and support care delivery, based on current best practice and evidence. Royal Rehab was commended for its ideology of seeking to improve quality, access and appropriateness of patient services and the success that has resulted from this approach.

The organisation's risk management program was reviewed in line with the new NSW Health Risk Management Policy and Framework.

### Food Safety Accreditation

The Food Services Department has developed and maintained a Food Safety Program (FSP) which requires training of all the food service staff including successful completion of the Advanced Food Handling & HACCP Principles Training Course.

The success of the new Program has been demonstrated by the audit done by the NSW Food Authority in 2009. Our Food Services Department received the highest possible grading, an A, which is testament to the hard work of the food services staff.

## The Board

### DIRECTORS

The following persons were Directors of the Company during the financial year and/or up to the date of this report.



#### **Mr Clive Austin LLM, FAICD**

Chairman Consolo Limited (Group) and consultant to Sydney legal practice, Hardings Solicitors, of which he was Senior Partner. Chairman of the Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation. Director since 1993. Chairman since 2003.



#### **Mr Anthony Staveley MComm, Grad Dip (Land Econ), FAPI, JP**

Director Balance Group Pty Limited and Balance Corporate Property. Director since 2000. Chairman, Planning & Development Committee since 2004. Vice Chairman since 2005.



#### **Professor Trevor Parmenter AM, BA, PhD, FACE, FAAIDD, FIASSID, FASSID**

Professor Emeritus, Sydney School of Medicine. Former Director of Centre for Disability Studies and Foundation Professor of Developmental Disability in the School of Medicine; Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Education & Social Work and the Faculty of Health Sciences, at the University of Sydney. Chair of Scientific Research Advisory Committee. Member of Planning & Development Committee and Client Outcomes & Participation Committee. Director since 2000.



#### **Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn PhD, DipOT, BA, MEd, DipContEd, NE, NSW Coll OT GAICD**

Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney. Chair of the Special Interest Research Group on Parents and Parenting with Intellectual Disability and Member of Council of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability. Director since 2004.



#### **Mr David Piper OAM**

Retired insurance company executive. Director of NSW Wheelchair Sports. President and life member of Queenscliff Surf Life Saving Club Inc. Life governor of Wheelchair Sports and life member of, Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches, and Surf Life Saving NSW. Director since 2004.



#### **Mr Bruce Hatchman FCA, MAICD, JP**

Former Chief Executive, WHK Horwath Pty Ltd. Has nearly 40 years experience in providing audit and assurance services to listed companies and large private enterprises. Director since 2006. Chairman, Audit & Finance Committee since 2006.



#### **Ms Bronwyn Connolly LLB, BA (Juris) MAICD**

Has held a number of legal counsel and other senior positions for organisations including Olympic Roads and Transport Authority, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Joined the Board in 2008.



#### **Mr John Cullity Grad Dip Mngt**

Former Chief General Manager - Information Technology of Allianz Australia and Director of a number of Allianz Australia subsidiary companies. Joined the Board in 2008.



#### **Mr John Dakin MEdAdmin, BA, DipEd**

Director of Directioneering Pty Ltd and Directioneering International focusing on career assessment, organisational development and career transition. Board member since 2008 and Chairman of the Royal Rehabilitation Foundation since 2009.



#### **Professor Richard Madden BSc, PhD, FIAA**

Professor of Health Statistics University of Sydney and Director of National Centre for Classification in Health. Former Director of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Joined the Board in 2008.



#### **Special Consultant: Professor Ian Cameron MBBS Phd FAFRM (RACP)**

Director of Medical Services at the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney. Ian is a Rehabilitation Physician with a PhD in Medicine. His major interests are rehabilitation and injury related disability. Ian is also the Director of the Rehabilitation Studies Unit and has research projects in falls and injury prevention, rehabilitation and recovery after injury, and health services research.



## Some don't walk away

The news bulletins are usually about another road tragedy, another fatality. "another horror weekend on our roads has seen a Sydney man die when his car.."

Among them are the miracle escapes. The pictures of a mangled car from which we wonder how anybody was ever able to walk away. In between, though, are the endings we rarely hear about.

Those traffic accidents that end not in a fatality. . . but with no one walking away, either.

David Todd, 21 this month, is at Royal Rehab's Brain Injury Unit. When he came out of a 28-day coma in February, taking some 10 days to come out fully, his post-traumatic amnesia was such that he had no short-term memory.

He has no memory of most of last year. Couldn't tell you what he had for breakfast. Pinned to his wall in Room 9, black writing on white, is a sign. "Hi David," it reads, "you had a car accident. You bumped your head." It is the hint of a mother's heartbreak. Di Todd's wish when she saw her son in a coma was for two things: that he would one day recognise her and that he would be able to say "Mum". He has already surpassed that. "They come and visit me every day, pretty much," David says.

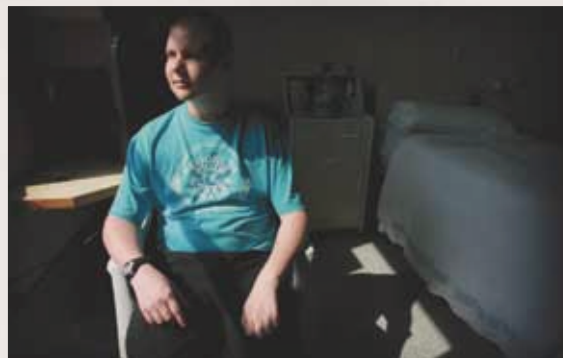
He was driving to work when he hit a pole. Nobody knows why or how, they only know its repercussions. So slowly his brain heals and pieces of memory come back to him. Keith and Di Todd are seeing the quirks in their son's personality returning and David, becoming aware himself, tries hard to please them. But months and years of therapy still lay ahead.

On the other side is Daniel Suwitra. His mother Lisa Ghofur is feeding him yoghurt in his motorised wheelchair, in the centre's ABI Neurobehavioural Unit. Daniel was 16 when he hired a moped in Bali. When he first came to from a head-on accident Daniel showed little more than abrasions. Inside Daniel's skull, though, his brain was swelling dangerously. He nearly died there. He nearly died in hospital later. He nearly died many times.

This week, five years after the accident, he underwent an operation to release some of the muscles in his hand that have constricted and make his life a grind. As you can see, his pain and problems are ongoing. He will never be anywhere near independent. He will always need his Mum and the fulltime care facilities like where he is now and the reality of that is cruel. "I accept what happened," he says, but his feelings are "half-half". "The first half I'm sad because I can't do normal things like other people," he says. "The other half is happy because I'm here ... because people care for me." He needs full care just to survive now. "What happens when I'm not around?" Lisa says. She looks at her son. "The bottom line is you don't realise the depth of the repercussions that are going to happen.

It was September 2009, the day the winds blew the red dust across Sydney, and Kane Fleeton was leaning his motorbike into a corner on the Central Coast. A gust of wind got under his bike and lifted him. It straightened him up and shot him across the road, straight into a tree. Fleeton, 27, doesn't know how long he was out. As he laid there in pain he tried to take stock of what had happened, as we all would. Then he realised he couldn't sit up. "I cried," he says.

"That was the only time I did cry." In that moment, Fleeton realised his life was changed forever. His back was broken. At Royal North Shore Hospital they drilled two plates and eight bolts into his spine and now, at the Spinal Injury Unit at Ryde's Royal Rehabilitation Centre six months later, a new life has started. "I know everything is different," he says. And he means



**Accidents happen:** David Todd (above) hit a tree while driving to work, Daniel Suwitra (below) on a moped in Bali and Kane Fleeton (bottom) injured in a motorcycle accident.



everything. After living at the Centre since leaving the hospital, Fleeton is ready to go home. When he leaves this month he will move back into his parents' home, where they will help take care of him. Their lives have changed forever, too.

Recently, his mother Mary and sister Leah spent a weekend with him at the Centre's transitional unit helping him re-learn the kind of skills we all take for granted. Getting into bed, for instance. Showering and cooking. Just last Wednesday, in one of his great triumphs, he got his driver's licence. But he knows it will never be the same again. "It's on my mind, just trying to work out how I'm going to be able to do workwise," he says. "Even just living at home. How hard it is going to be."

**Paul Kent**  
Daily Telegraph



