

## First of its kind unit to help keep children with chronic conditions out of hospital

A General Practice Liaison Unit (GPLU) established at the Women's and Children's Hospital will improve the coordination of care for hundreds of South Australian children struggling with chronic conditions such as Type 1 Diabetes and Asthma... with the goal of reducing the need to visit hospital.

This is the first time in Australia such a unit has been established for paediatric patients.

The Unit has been created through a partnership between the Adelaide PHN, Country SA PHN and the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN).

"Children with chronic diseases often bounce between their GP and hospital as their condition gets better or worse," said Deb Lee, CEO of the Adelaide PHN.

"To give these children the best possible care, it's vital that the left and right hand – in this case the hospital and child's GP – know exactly what each other are doing. So we have identified the value of having a dedicated liaison unit to strengthen the collaboration, communication and integration between the hospital and treating GPs."

The GPLU will work closely with the Women's and Children's Hospital's inpatient and outpatient services and relevant GPs to ensure patient information is exchanged in a timely, thorough and appropriate manner as part of the clinical handover process.

For families in regional and remote areas, travelling to the Women's and Children's for treatment is a major burden.

"The better the co-ordination, the better the treatment and the greater chance we have of keeping these children healthy enough so they don't have to go to hospital. That is our ultimate outcome," said Kim Hosking, CEO of Country SA PHN.

Importantly, the Liaison Unit is headed by a highly experienced GP, Dr Helena Williams.

"I am really thrilled to be a part of this exciting work. As far as we know, this is the first time in Australia that a GP Liaison Unit has been established in a paediatric service. We have a great team, and

we are really committed to improving the experience for GPs, paediatric specialists and health care teams, and most importantly, for the patients and their families,” Dr Williams said.

The GPLU will also help patients and their families link with any other relevant services or resources operating out of the hospital.

“We are very excited that our vision for improving the connectedness of care for children is being realised through this important partnership,” said WCHN Chief Executive Officer Naomi Dwyer.

“Many of our children with complex and chronic conditions will benefit from the introduction of innovative approaches which better co-ordinate their care between our clinicians, general practitioners and their caregivers.

“The reality is that hospitals are an important, but only one part of the care journey for these children. The evidence is clear that connecting all parts of the health care team, around the child’s needs makes a positive difference in their health outcomes and overall experience of care.”

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