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Pushing mental healthcare beyond 2017

New ways to evaluate practice and snapshots of great work being undertaken across Sydney Local Health District's mental health service were put in the spotlight at the Mental Health Research Symposium held in Concord Hospital earlier this month.

The showcase also bridged the gap between theory and clinical practice as highlighted in talks given by art psychotherapist Fran Nielsen, music therapist Claire Hogan-Gibbons, exercise scientist Caitlin Taylor and many more.

Alex Woods, Phil Escott and Clair Edwards at the Mental Health Research Symposium.

"The treatment at the Walker Unit is for those who haven't responded to standard medical and psychological treatments elsewhere and require extended intensive inpatient treatment," Ms Nielsen said.

"For children with a mental illness in the Walker Unit, sometimes art therapy can be used to express emotions safely as opposed to self-harm or aggression which would often lead to restraint or seclusion.

"The images made by consumers can be used as data that tracks their recovery and this will usually be reflected in their choice of art making. There is a lot of value for the consumer in being able to make the picture as it creates a safe space for them to discuss their feelings and share their projections," she said.

The District Mental Health Service's Director of Nursing, Clair Edwards, said this year's event saw attendance from a number of researchers, clinicians, academics and staff with an interest in mental health.

"This event was an ideal opportunity to build partnerships and exchange knowledge with like-minded professionals," she said.

"Many topics of interest were covered throughout the day including, but not limited to, using piano lessons as music therapy for mental health, how sprint interval training could help protect and improve the physiological health of adolescents and much more," she said.