

Staff member of the year

Dementia and delirium clinical nurse consultant, Annie Hepworth, has won the District's staff member of the year award at the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

Annie was recognised for her work leading the assessment, management and support of patients who come into emergency with acute delirium or known dementia.

"I'm really there to make sure the patient has a good experience, as well as they can in this environment, because it can be quite chaotic," she said.

Annie is passionate about educating her patients' families about what dementia means for their loved one long-term.

"There's a lot of grief involved because dementia is a terminal illness and it's the second leading cause of death in this country.

"We're treating the whole family, not just the patient."

After roles in transplant and management, she took on the dementia role four years ago because it allowed her to work in her area of passion - aged care.

Not only are the staff in aged care "kind and committed", but the patients have often led "the most incredible, diverse lives", she said.

"Elderly people have always got this other life that they've lived outside their hospital admission and I think sometimes we can lose sight of that.

"Part of my role is to make sure whenever we're caring for someone – whether they have cognitive impairment or not – that we recognise who they are outside of hospital," she said.

Annie's colleagues say she is always open to working with others and is keen to identify new and improved ways of delivering acute aged care.

Humbled and honoured by her award, Annie hopes it will lead to better recognition of patients with dementia and delirium.

"They're in a group that are incredibly vulnerable because of their cognitive impairment and I feel this award that allows them to be seen," she said.

View the full list of 2017 Quality Award winners at www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/agm.



Chief Executive, Dr Teresa Anderson with 2017 staff member of the Year, Annie Hepworth.