

The Westerly

“Te Hauauru”

January (Kohitatea) 2006

Vietnam service honoured - finally

In 1966 Lorraine Menzies headed off to a distant land for what she thought was going to be a great adventure. Now more than 35 years later Lorraine has finally had the two years to spent working in a refugee camp in Vietnam officially recognised.

That recognition came in October last year when Lorraine was awarded the New Zealand Operation Service medal and the New Zealand General Service Medal for the work she performed caring for those who had been displaced by the war. Those two years were highly memorable for Lorraine and yet she like many others who returned from Vietnam rarely discusses her experiences.

During her two years in Vietnam for which she was a member of the Volunteer Asian Christian Service Lorraine worked in a refugee camp that had become home to over 4000 people.

“The families in the camp all needed care and were very appreciative for the help.”

While those who lived in the camp may have been appreciative for her help, upon returning to New Zealand in 1968 she soon realised that her service in Vietnam was a topic that was not openly discussed.

“I just don’t talk about it.



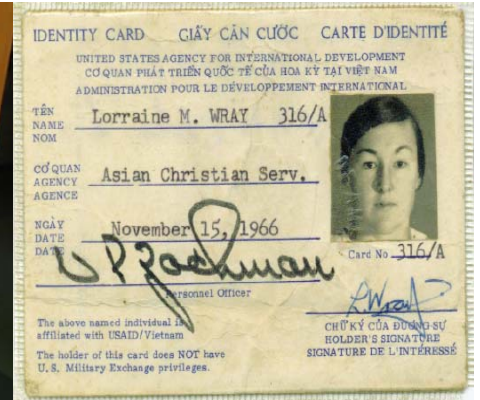
Lorraine Menzies with her service medals.

However, she remembers vividly the month she spent living in a bunker while the TET offensive was carried out and of despite literally living in a war zone being invited to a ball.

She says she was far too busy working in the camp to be scared.

“I was actually sad to leave.”

The only regret she has from her time



Top: Lorraine’s Vietnam era ID card.

Bottom: Lorraine, with those she worked with in Vietnam

Living in Vietnam is that she never got to go to one of the resort islands set up for those who got ill.

“I heard they were wonderful places but I never got ill.”

Things looking up in Buller

There was been a 180-degree turn around for health services in Buller last year.

Last months announcement Buller Health project was a major event in the evolution of health services in the region this year.

Twelve months ago the DHB made the announcement that doctor coverage would be severely limited over the Christmas period in Buller.

Primary Care General Manager Hecta Williams who took over the service in the early part of this year said it had been a major accomplishment on the part of several people to turn the practice around to the point where it was now fully staffed.

She said the staff working in Buller deserved a huge thank you for the work they had done to keep the service going and for helping to recruit doctors to the practice, as did the DHB recruitment team.

“They have been fantastic, they have worked together as a team and done a great job in securing a stable health service for Buller.

“I feel it is important to acknowledge all the staff who have worked to provide their community with an excellent service.”

She said the prospects for health services in Buller during 2006 were looking increasingly positive.

“While we never announce the appointment of new doctors until we have seen their signatures on the contracts, we can say we have some excellent prospects.”

She said having a stable core of medical professionals working in the region was making it easier to attract GPs.

From the CEO's Desk



I watched the recent 'docudrama' about bird flu on TV1 with a strong sense of déjà vu. Before I came to the West Coast I was very heavily involved in New

Zealand's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS (which is already a real communicable disease pandemic), and I was reminded of the mid 1980s, when people in New Zealand (and many other countries) responded to HIV with near hysterical panic. Two decades on, and most New Zealanders don't give HIV/AIDS a second thought, even though the actual risk of HIV infection now faced has increased at least tenfold, I guess there are some lessons for influenza pandemic planning: it's important to get risk into perspective, and a panic reaction is not helpful, particularly if it means an 'out of sight, out of mind' reaction later.

Emergency planning is important, and in general human beings are not great at preparing for events that have high impact but occur rarely or slowly. Living on the West Coast, in the shadow of the Alpine Fault, we need to be better prepared than that, and our preparations need to be flexible enough to deal with whatever emergency comes along, including outbreaks of infectious diseases. An influenza pandemic is just one of the risks. Just like a serious earthquake, an influenza pandemic *will* affect the West Coast some time, but in both cases we can't tell whether that will happen next week or a hundred years from now. The H5N1 bird flu virus that has caused a number of human deaths in several parts of the world in recent times is unlikely to become pandemic amongst human beings. However the publicity that has been generated can be useful if, rather than whipping up hysteria, it adds some impetus to our planning. The key is to develop plans that are robust and flexible. To achieve this we can't afford to rush, but we should also proceed without undue delay.

Much of the leadership in pandemic planning will come from the Ministry of Health, but in the meantime this DHB is well advanced in developing our own plans. In the next few months some of our staff will be involved in further developing our plans, and in training exercises to test them. We will also be making more information available for staff and the community as it comes to hand. Right now the key message – that as DHB workers we can all be involved in promoting – is that there is a serious need for people to be prepared for future emergency situations, but no need to panic about bird flu. From a really practical point of view, the very best things people can do right now are washing their hands (with soap) regularly and using tissues (once only!) rather than hankies. It's that simple.

Thanks everyone for your efforts in 2005 and best wishes for 2006 – I think it's going to be a good one for West Coast DHB.

Kevin Hague CEO

Stop the spread of germs.

Bird-flu maybe a hot topic of conversation right now, but there are steps people can take every day to prevent themselves and others from getting sick. The recent Hepatitis A outbreak in Christchurch is a good example of how easily illness can spread when basic personal hygiene measures are not followed.



Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze

Wash and dry your hands often, especially after sneezing or coughing—use soap.



Stay at home if you are sick

New Fox Glacier clinic opens

Construction of a new purpose built Fox Glacier clinic has been completed and the new facility was officially opened by West Coast/ Tasman MP Damien O'Connor on Friday.

Last year an audit of the facility had shown it no longer met the needs of the community and it was decided to move ahead with plans for a new purpose built facility.

The Fox Glacier clinic serves as the base for

emergency assessments, patient stabilisation and transfer services. It is also the base for the rural nurse specialist for the Fox Glacier and surrounding areas and weekly GP clinics are held at the clinic.

While the resident population is just 400 the township has 1300 tourist beds which run at near capacity during the summer season. The



Molly Sullivan of Fox Glacier and West Coast MP Damien O'Connor open the clinic

made in South Westland over the past 12 months.

A new permanent GP began in August last year and two new permanent nursing positions have also been added to South Westland this year. Damien O'Connor said he was delighted by the opening as he had set the opening of a new clinic in South Westland as a mark to judge the DHB by.

the nature of the town also means that residents and visitors are often young and are involved in high-risk activities.

On average around 20 patients a day are seen at the clinic.

The building of the clinic is a continuation of the improvements the DHB has



New and old clinics side by side

Buller Health Launched

The West Coast District Health Board is proud to announce "Buller Health" a new integrated medical service run from Buller. Health Services in Buller will now work as one integrated service within the West Coast DHB, with Buller Health operating under its own management structure.

Chief Executive Kevin Hague said that the Buller Health project had included staff from the full spectrum of DHB health services in Buller, including Buller Hospital, Buller Medical Service, Allied Health staff, Community Mental Health and Community Services.

"Their brief was to come up with a proposal that met the needs of staff at both BMS and the hospital as well as addressing the needs of the community.

"The support of staff has been key in developing the Buller Health project." Buller Health had been developed to provide a clearer and more integrated management structure across the GP practice and hospital without reducing access to services.

With the announcement of Buller Health the DHB will now begin recruiting for a manager to run the new integrated service in Westport.

"Having a dedicated manager of both the hospital and GP practice in Buller will deliver a service that is able to respond more quickly to the needs of patients and staff.

"Our aim is for Buller Health to have greater autonomy while still remaining part of the DHB."

The timing of the announcement regarding Buller Health had come at a time when services in the region were looking increasingly positive, as doctor numbers had stabilised.

"We expect the service to continue to move from strength to strength."

Key indicators of the projects success will be, keeping routine GP appointments to no more than a three-day waiting period and no transfers of patients who could be cared for in Buller Hospital.

Buller Health project leader Wayne Champion said today's announcement had

been the culmination of several months worth of work, including many hours of hard work put in by staff and community members most of it in their own time.

"The commitment they have shown to the project is a testament to how passionately they felt about building a positive pathway for health services in the region they live and work in."

"The overall aim of the project is to improve the integration and co-ordination of health services in Buller so that they can be more responsive to community needs".

West Coast District Health Board Chair Gregor Coster said the Board had viewed health services in Buller as one its priorities and was delighted with the announcement that would see a new positive approach to managing services in the region.

The DHB expects to make an announcement on interim management arrangements in the near future.

For those who may be interested for the full Buller Health report is now the West Coast DHB website.

Amelia and Lisa from HR on the move



If you are looking for Amelia and Lisa from HR they can now be found in Corporate Office at Grey Base Hospital. Here they pose with the new look ads and folders HR have created.

Grey Base nurse becomes TV Star

Grey Base Hospital Accident and Emergency nurse Tamara Jenkins can currently be seen starring in the latest advertisements for TV One News. Seen standing outside the Old Nurses Home Tamara is one of number of West Coasters chosen to be part of the One News "Its about me campaign". The curly headed blond can be seen almost every day of the week in the television commercials.

Don't forget to let me know if you have any articles or photographs for the Westerly.

**Email:
vikki.carter@westcoastdhb.org.nz**

Or call on extension 2665#

Hecta Williams named as General Manager Primary Care

The General Manager Primary Care role has been vacant for some time now, with Hecta Williams acting in that capacity while an internal consultation process was conducted to identify improvements that can be made to structure, policies and procedures in primary care.

This review has now been completed, with a high level of input from health professionals involved in primary care services. Very shortly I expect to be able to announce the full set of decisions arising from this, but this memo is to announce the first important

decision: For the most part this will not alter reporting arrangements, as staff employed in primary and community health services who have been reporting to Hecta will continue to do so.

With this decision now made it is also appropriate to announce that responsibility for the Buller Health project has now also transferred from Wayne Champion to Hecta, reflecting the closure of the planning phase for Buller Health and the beginning of the implementation phase.

Menz B update

A 4th dose of the MeNZB vaccine is being introduced for all babies who received their 1st dose before they were six months old.

This follows medicines regulator Medsafe granting approval for a 4th dose of the vaccine to be administered to babies, the age group at greatest risk from the country's group B meningococcal epidemic.

A 4th dose was signalled as likely when the vaccine was first licensed for young babies.

The Ministry of Health says the 4th dose, to be introduced in immediately, will significantly boost the immune response of babies and offer them increased protection from the disease. The 4th dose will be given to babies when they are at least 10 months old, and a minimum of four months after their 3rd dose, or as soon as possible after that time.

The Ministry's Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme director Dr Jane O'Hallahan says it is vital this vulnerable group receive the 4th dose to ensure optimum protection develops before the onset of winter, when meningococcal disease is most prevalent.

Departing Doctor dresses to impress

Departing obstetrician and gynaecologist David Hutchon decided to dress to impress on his last day with the DHB. Dr Hutchon who originated from Scotland (hence the outfit) worked at the DHB for two years and is now on his way back to the United Kingdom although he says he plans to make sure he enjoys a few stop-over's on his way back to his homeland.

