

## Family Care Centre seeks funding

The Northern Rivers General Practice Network and a number of local mums have a very important job for the new State Health Minister, Reba Meagher. They have written to ask her to ensure that funding continues for the Northern Rivers Family Care Centre, the region's post-natal day stay unit, which does not have guaranteed funding into the future.

Established five years ago by the NRGPN in a collaborative venture with St Vincent's Hospital where it is located rent free, and the North Coast Area Health Service, the Family Care Centre has helped

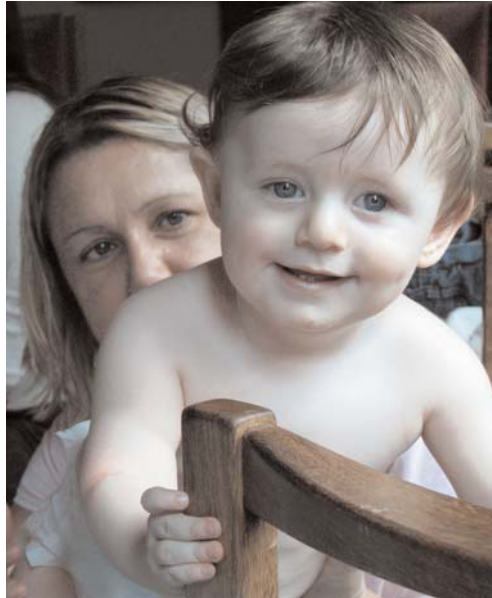
"I know that without the help of the Family Care Centre this very important bonding experience of breastfeeding my little girl would not have been a possibility. They had the expertise in the area of assisting premature babies and the ability to comfort and guide a very determined mother - and breast-feed we did until Esther was two!"

*Donna Barnes, Alstonville*

more than 1,700 families experiencing post natal problems. The NRGPN currently funds the annual \$180,000 operating costs.

"We are very proud of what the Family Care Centre is achieving for the community, and we are looking for a financial partner so that we can guarantee and maintain the service into the future," Dr Tony Lembke, chair of the NRGPN, said.

"Without securing an alternative funding



*Karen Baldwin & Jack Lynch, 10 months.*

stream, there is the possibility that the Family Care Centre will close down. This is something we categorically do not wish to see happening. However, while we would be happy to auspice the Family Care Centre on a funder's behalf, we simply cannot continue to fund it indefinitely."

According to the NRGPN, the Family Care Centre is more appropriately funded under NSW Health, either through the NCAHS or another funding stream. Equivalent services in other regions throughout the State are funded through their local area health service. Indeed, NSW Health guidelines for family care centres actually state that "The Family Care Centre is part of the network of services for families

with children 0-5 years provided by an Area Health Service."

The North Coast Area Health Service however, has said it cannot take over funding of the service because it does not have the funds available. The NRGPN will be meeting with CEO Chris Crawford on Friday 4 May and has also requested a meeting with Ms Meagher to try to secure funding. It is also starting the process of looking for potential community partners to help keep the Family Care Centre operating.

Mums who have used the service have been writing letters to the NCAHS and the Minister to explain what the centre has done for them. To read some of their stories, visit [www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au](http://www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au).

The Family Care Centre has proven itself to be a valuable component of local services for post natal and infant care with about 2,500 visits made by these 1,700 families. The service grows each year and last year 571

*Please turn over>*

"I never expected to have problems once I brought my little boy home from hospital, I thought motherhood would come naturally but unfortunately it didn't. The understanding and reassurance from the ladies at the Family Care Centre turned my life as a new mum from emotional and at times unbearable to a mum that has enjoyed every new moment and change in Max's life."

*Rachel Shannon-Hooper, Ballina*

## Shave for a cure nets 2 scalps, 1 beard, 2 hairy legs & \$1,700 for Leukaemia Foundation

Nine staff members shaved, waxed or coloured their hair last month, raising almost \$1,700 for the Leukaemia Foundation's World's Greatest Shave for a Cure.

Special thanks to Eva Merton from Intense Skin Care, Lismore and Alisa Bodley from Clipsso, Lismore.

The Northern Star, Northern Rivers Echo, North Coast Advocate and NBN TV covered the story. We had a lot of fun doing this and would like to thank all our sponsors for their generous support.



*Going going gone is John Gable's Grizzly Adams beard - the IMIT project officer had not seen his face without hair for more than 20 years.*

*Eva Merton from Intense Skin Care demonstrates how to pull strips of wax from the boss's legs. Easy really. While Cecily Barrack offers Chris a hand to hold on to, Katherine Breen Kurucsev lines up for first go.*

# New name for the organisation

The Northern Rivers Division of General Practice officially changed its name to the Northern Rivers General Practice Network on April 1.

As the NRGPN, we will continue to support our GPs and general practice to help improve the health of the community. We believe that the word 'network' better reflects what we do than 'division' and that you the community will have a better idea of who we are when you hear our name.

Our new tagline is: "...for healthy communities" and this reflects our mission to support general practice to care for the community on the Northern Rivers.

Our web address has changed to [www.nrgpn.org.au](http://www.nrgpn.org.au).



## WHAT IS THE NR GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK?

The NRGPN is part of the national divisions network. Divisions are organisations of GPs within a geographical area, and were set up by the Federal Government in 1993. Nationwide, 118 divisions provide a framework for GPs to network with each other, with local health services, and with the community to improve the community's health.

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families visited the centre for help with a range of post-natal issues. The community was a fantastic help getting the project off the ground, contributing more than \$30,000 in goods to set up the FCC in the grounds of St Vincent's Hospital with volunteers helping to get the building ready for occupation. Local community organisations, specifically Zonta, also contribute regularly to the on-going needs of the FCC.

Modelled on the Tresillian centres, the service is a day stay service for parents with children from newborn to around one year of age who are experiencing difficulties with parenting and cannot be managed in the primary care sector. The centre deals with the more complex feeding, sleeping and

adjustment problems of infancy.

Referrals to the FCC come primarily from early childhood nurses, but may also come from GPs. The service offers:

- Counselling for parents, often for post natal distress and family relationships;
- Supportive groups;
- Preventative programs to promote resilience;
- Outreach services to Ballina, Iluka, Ocean Shores;
- Phone based follow up;
- Links to on-referral to Tresillian programs;
- Lactation consultant; and
- Training for early childhood nurses.

"The health of tomorrow's mother is imperative. We want a future of happy parents who feel they can handle everything, not stumble from one sleepless night to the next where the future seems a world away."

Nikki Cronan, Ballina

Please visit [www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au](http://www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au).

Rachel Shannon-Hooper and her son Max (11mths) successfully used the services of the Family Care Centre to help with some early parenting issues.



She's always tired. I work all day and the baby sleeps half the time. What does she do all day?

He just doesn't get it, how exhausted I feel. There's never any time for me.

**ASK YOUR GP FOR A REFERRAL**  
[www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au](http://www.parenting.nrdgp.org.au)

For parents with children from newborn to around one year of age who are having difficulties, or require further support with: feeding (breast, weaning, bottle, solids); unsettled behaviour and related sleeping patterns; adjustment to parenthood issues for the family; post-natal distress; or parentcraft issues.



**SPIKE SAYS**  
**"Vax'em"**  
[www.vaccination.org.au](http://www.vaccination.org.au)

**FEEDBACK:** We value your feedback. If you would like to make the division aware of any ideas for possible health projects, or if you have comments on any of our current projects, please call us on 6622 4453, or email [media@nrgpn.org.au](mailto:media@nrgpn.org.au). Thank you.