

DID YOU KNOW | Obesity is a major risk factor for developing osteoarthritis



Gillian Leach is the new chief executive of the Whitehorse Community Health Service.

N17WH500

Good habits are a key

Health | Stacy Allen

PREVENTION of chronic diseases is one of the keys to cutting waiting lists, says the new chief executive of Whitehorse Community Health Service.

Gillian Leach said health issues such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease and dental problems may be prevented through healthy diets, exercise and health programs.

Ms Leach said this proactive approach could cut the service's waiting lists, which for non-emergency dental treatment can be up to two years.

"We really need to focus on changes in lifestyle habits to make sure people do lead healthy lifestyles and prevent these chronic diseases," Ms Leach said.

"People think as they get older you get chronic diseases but that's not the case."

She said finding qualified staff was also an issue ...

"We have got an ageing population, particularly in Whitehorse, but everywhere we have unfortunately got workforce skill shortages and can't find qualified staff."

"That's why you've got the waiting lists but everyone who needs urgent attention

gets it immediately." Ms Leach said she hoped to help develop partnerships with GPs, Eastern Health and other community health services "to ensure the community gets the health care that they need".

She said integrating services "so clients have a relatively seamless journey" was also a priority.

Ms Leach relocated from Adelaide and brings 16 years experience as the chief executive of Arthritis South Australia to her new role.

Whitehorse Community Health Service is at 43 Carrington Rd, Box Hill. Details: 9890 2220.