

# Country-style care with big-city benefits

Westmead Private Hospital appeals to regional patients who want world-class surgery that doesn't break the bank.

The idea that life in a country town trumps life in a big city has carried weight for years.

Recent reports into Australia's mental wellbeing indicate some of the happiest members of our population tend to live a rural life.

However, access to some key medical services is one necessity that many country towns lack.

There are local doctors, but a major operation usually means a trip to the big smoke.

This was the situation facing Garry Stanford, an electrician from Gulgong, in the state's Central West. Doctors discovered he had a serious heart condition and would require specialist care.

"I was told by a cardiologist that I needed a new aortic valve," Stanford says.

"I was going to go to an inner-city hospital, but their costs were a little bit prohibitive, being above what my medical fund would pay."

Instead, Stanford went to Westmead Private Hospital, enlisting the services of cardiothoracic surgeon Dr Graham Meredith, who happens to be a former Gulgong resident.

The operation was successfully handled using the latest procedures, Dr Meredith says.

"Fortunately at Westmead Private we

were able to complete the procedure through a minimal access incision.

"That means the incision is smaller and we just go through the top part of the sternum, as opposed to going through the whole breastbone.

"This less invasive procedure allows patients to get back to work sooner, have less pain and recover quicker."

Stanford says the fuss-free experience at Westmead Private aided his recovery.

"There are facilities like 175 [formerly Wesley Lodge], which is a few minutes' walk from the hospital," he says.

"It provides cheap accommodation for families and friends who might be coming for visits, again limiting financial stress."

Dr Meredith says many country residents are turning to Westmead Private for affordable medical procedures.

"Myself and many of the cardiothoracic surgeons at Westmead don't charge a gap fee, so that can be very significant," he says.

Stanford says location was also a factor in his choice of hospital. "It's easy to get to, you just get off the M4 and you're there," he says. "It's not as daunting as having to drive into the inner city.

"It's all right for Sydney residents, who are used to it, but us country people are a little bit scared of the traffic in town."

Dr Meredith says it is reassuring for rural



Dr Graham Meredith says Westmead Private Hospital's facilities are "fantastic".

and regional Australians to know they have a quality care option that may be less expensive, as well as being straightforward to reach.

"The facilities at Westmead Private are fantastic," he says.

"The staff are exceptional, the theatre staff, the nurses you work with, the

anaesthetic staff, everyone is really top-notch."

Stanford is positive about his experience as a patient: "Everything was done in the one place: X-rays, blood tests, physio and speaking to doctors, everything was nice and smooth," he says. "I couldn't have been made more at ease."

## Westmead Private Hospital – providing a dedicated Cardiovascular Unit for patients who require any type of cardiac service or cardiothoracic surgery.

Our highly experienced health professionals including cardiologists, cardiothoracic surgeons, nurses and physiotherapists work seamlessly to provide the highest level of care to our patient's pre and post operatively.

Supported by a full range of on-site services including two cardiac catheter laboratories, a dedicated operating suite and a 14 bed intensive care unit.

We provide medical and surgical management for all cardiac conditions including chest pain, heart failure, and arrhythmias. Surgical surgeries performed include:

- Coronary artery bypass surgery
- Heart valve surgery
- Minimally invasive heart and lung surgery
- Thoracic surgery
- Congenital complexities
- Chest corrective surgery



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