

Mask up and make a difference

Proceeds from the ball will go towards providing private spaces at the oncology unit

By **JAVIER ENCALADA**
Reporter

ENTERING a hospital's oncology unit is a daunting experience.

Nurses get everyone the help they need but the mood is somewhat grim.

A bright glittery mask comes up from nowhere and puts smiles on some faces, and after a couple of quick dance steps around the room, both staff and patients seem brighter.

Friends of St Vincent's Private Hospital in Lismore are inviting the community to their latest fundraising event: a Valentine's Masked Ball and Auction at the Lismore Workers Club on Saturday, February 11 from 6pm, to put smiles on more faces.

With more than 2000 oncology treatments delivered at St Vincent's Hospital every year, the unit is always busy.

Rick Somerville, one of the nurses at the oncology unit, said it had been open for four years and patients were treated four days a week.

Focus groups conducted recently highlighted the need for more private spaces for doctors to discuss treatment and results with their patients.

All proceeds from the ball



GOOD CAUSE: Senior RN at St Vincent's Richard Somerville with Masquerade Ball organisers Mary Vidler and Cheryl Jux.

Picture: JAY CRONAN

will be invested in expanding and renovating the oncology unit.

A \$48 ticket provides access to a glamorous evening of socialising, good music, a

two-course dinner, lucky prizes and raffles.

There will be prizes for best mask and belle and beau of the ball.

Sheryl Jux, from Friends of

St Vincent's Private Hospital, became involved in helping to raise money for the oncology unit of St Vincent's Private Hospital "to help with their renovations in adding

more private rooms so patients can have appointments with their oncologists in a private setting to discuss their issues".

The project will mean

renovating a room adjacent to the current oncology unit with enclosed areas for patients and doctors to discuss treatment options and results, especially in those initial months of treatment that can be the most difficult.

Asked how much money they are hoping to raise, Sheryl said: "Oh, I don't know, but I hope it's a lot." Some items are expected to attract some good bids, especially St George and Broncos guernsey.

"I myself have been affected by skin cancers all my life and I feel that this is a small way of saying thank you for the help that has been given to me," Sheryl said.

Mary Vidler, also from the Friends of St Vincent's Private Hospital, called for people to book tables and attend the ball "even if they don't own a mask. The most important thing is that they get their tickets soon, and we can get them their masks that night".

Tables can be booked at the Lismore Workers Club office.

Information on donations or to become a volunteer can be obtained from Ann Spinane, co-ordinator of Friends of St Vincent's Private Hospital on 6627 9240.

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Environmental concerns over pathway plans

THE Ballina Environment Society announced it would no longer support plans for a coastal pathway in the shire, claiming the council had failed to abide by agreements made in relation to the design.

Instead of a single shared coastal pathway, there will be a shared path west of The Coast Road between East Ballina and Lennox Head, as well as a coastal recreational path east of The Coast Road.

Most stakeholders agreed this "two pathways" policy would meet the needs of the community.

But president of the Ballina Environment Society, Dr Lyn Walker, said Ballina Shire Council had now taken a "destructive direction".

"At today's council meeting, a report on the coastal pathways recommends endorsing asphalt and boardwalks for the segment of the path from Flat Rock to the Sharpes Beach underpass.

This is so disabled access can be provided.

For the section between the Sharpes Beach underpass to Boulder Beach, the recommendation is to use consolidated gravel and steps. From Boulder Beach to Pat Morton, consolidated gravel, boardwalks and has been recommended.

But these recommendations have angered the Ballina Environment Society, which has withdrawn its support for the agreements made about the pathway in early 2010.

Ballina mayor Phillip Silver admitted the coastal pathways project was "difficult".

"There are a number of competing interests," he said.

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Highway speed reduced at Alstonville

THE urban surroundings and a run of "near-misses" have prompted the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) to reduce the speed limit on the Bruxner Hwy at Alstonville.

The Ballina Rd intersection with the Bruxner Hwy, on the eastern end of Alstonville, has been decreased to 80kmh following a routine review of the highway.

The review was carried out by the RMS as part of the Alstonville bypass project.

An RMS spokeswoman said the former 100kmh speed limit was inappropriate considering

the urban surrounding.

"The changes on the Bruxner Hwy will improve road safety, providing safer access to Alstonville from the highway," she said.

"There are a significant number of vehicles turning at the intersection of the Bruxner Hwy and Ballina Rd.

"The reduction of the speed limit to 80kmh near the Ballina Rd intersection on the Bruxner Hwy will better reflect the roadside environment and improve the safety of road users."

The intersection in question

DO YOU THINK THE SPEED LIMIT SHOULD BE REDUCED?

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was only a week old when it claimed its first crash casualty.

In June last year a car and a surgical delivery van collided at the intersection of the Bruxner Hwy and Ballina Rd.

The driver of the car only suffered minor injuries despite being trapped for 20 minutes.

An RMS spokeswoman said there had only been one crash

reported at the intersection since the Alstonville Bypass opened but several near misses.

"A speed zone review was always planned in the first 12 months after the bypass opened," she said.

"Following community feedback which suggested the 100kmh speed limit should be reconsidered, the review was carried out sooner than scheduled and the change for a lower speed limit was deemed appropriate."

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