



# Pathology unit the lifeblood of hospital

**BY OLIVIA SHYING**

WE ALL see the doctors on the front line, but the little-seen pathologists are just as vital when it comes to life-saving blood transfusions.

In October, 2013, Riley Nixon was kicked by a horse.

The six-year-old suffered a lacerated liver and had to have 60 units of blood transfused.

This was five times more blood than his natural blood level.

Doctors had to ensure each unit was correctly delivered on time to him.

Yesterday, member for Riverina Michael McCormack visited Wagga Base Hospital's pathology lab.

Mr McCormack said Riley was the "pathology poster boy of Wagga".

"He personalises exactly what they do," Mr McCormack said.

Dr Peter Harman of Pathology Awareness Australia said many people were not aware of the vital role pathology played in life-saving medicine.

"Over half the Australian population had a pathology test in

last 12 months and our services are world class, yet few people understand the vital role pathology plays in medicine," Dr Harman said.

"This tour is a great opportunity to open the doors on the engine room of healthcare."

Dr Harman visited Wagga as part of a regional tour to showcase the importance of pathology in all areas of the country.

"It is a hidden speciality that, until they need it, most people don't know about it," Dr Harman said.

He said pathology is particularly vital in regional areas that often lack specialists.

"Pathology can be used to diagnose liver disease, diabetes, chronic rheumatoid arthritis, cancer (among other illnesses)," Dr Harman said.

He said the tour was a key aspect of the campaign, to ensure politicians and the general public were aware that maintaining quality pathology units is vital to delivering top medical treatment.

Mr McCormack said the visit highlighted the need to continue to support pathology.

"They are currently operating in the oldest part of the hospital and the conditions need to be looked at," Mr McCormack said.



**IN THE LAB:** (Back, from left) Member for Riverina Michael McCormack tours the Wagga Base Hospital Pathology West unit with acting laboratory manager Naomi Hocker, Pathology Awareness Australia's Dr Peter Harman and Riley Nixon, 6, who had a large volume of blood transfused last year. Picture: Les Smith