



Faster access to quality care

By **ANTONY DUBBER**

THE Pathology Department of Goulburn Base Hospital is benefitting from a state-of-the-art point of care testing program that will give Emergency Department patients faster access to pathology results and will improve their overall care.

NSW Health Pathology is leading a statewide effort to introduce the managed point-of-care testing (PoCT) scheme in public hospital emergency departments that don't have access to 24 hour pathology laboratories on site, such as Goulburn.

The hand-held device will provide an on-site analysis of patients' blood gasses, lactate, haemoglobin, troponin, chemistries and electrolyte levels and also International Normalized Ratio/Prothrombin Time (INR/PT) tests, which are some of the most common pathology tests emergency department teams rely upon.

Director of nursing Judy Ryall told the *Post* that staff were still entering results through a hard-copy printout system and were then having to manually enter these into the patient's records.

"Having this new point-of-care device within our Emergency Department means that results are

available in real-time electronically, so that we have the most up to date information on the status of the patient," Ms Ryall said.

"It's always safest when the patient's details are in one consolidated record.

"We can make quicker clinical decisions and improve time to treatment. It also means that our nursing staff are saving time in record keeping and can direct more of their efforts into patient care."

The Southern NSW Local Health District is the latest region to adopt

the program and is working with Pathology West (one of five NSW Health Pathology networks) to introduce 14 devices across 11 emergency departments by the middle of May.

The statewide PoCT rollout has been funded through a grant of \$5 million from the Council of Australian Government's National Partnerships Agreement Emergency Department capital program.

The program also includes training for ED staff to ensure the devices are used properly; technical support and ongoing monitoring of devices; and also software that will enable results to be electronically transferred to pathology laboratory information systems and ultimately to a patient's electronic medical records.



PLEASED: Goulburn Base Hospital Emergency Department Nurse Unit Manager Ainslie Tozer, registered nurses Lisa Best and Tammy Smith and director of nursing Judy Ryall (centre) model the point-of-care system which will give them an up to date pathology management system for their patients.