

## CEO INSIGHT

# Referrals to St Vincent's on the rise

Dear Doctor,

**Border restrictions** - With the recent Queensland border restrictions more GPs in our region are referring their patients to our specialists. For many patients, with the current uncertainty, it's comforting to know they can receive quality care right here in Lismore at the hospital and at our clinics.



Thankfully St Vincent's has not been significantly affected by the border closure with very few of our staff and doctors impacted.

In these times more doctors are more regularly referring to our range of specialists. And the good news is we have the capacity to manage this boost in referrals.

**Ballina consulting booming** - Our Ballina consulting rooms are increasingly popular with patients who live on the Coast including those from Ballina, Lennox Head, Byron Bay and beyond. You may not be aware we now have 12 specialists consulting in Ballina which is saving many patients from having to drive longer distances and over the border. For more information about the specialists consulting from our rooms please refer to our website at [www.svh.org.au](http://www.svh.org.au)

**Hospital refurbishments** - Just to keep you in the loop. St Vincent's is in the early stages of planning for refurbishments at the hospital to improve the patient experience. Please do reach out to me directly on any matter relating to St Vincent's. My email below.

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## Melanoma Reminders

*Living in the melanoma capital of Australia as we do, St Vincent's General Surgeon Sally Butchers reminds GPs of some key things to look out for and medical advances.*

**What do you do if your patient has a pigmented lesion?** Beyond the basics of taking a history, checking if the lesion has changed or new and reviewing patient's recent sun exposure, the most important thing if you are concerned is to do an initial excisional biopsy.

**What are the key prognostic features?** Tumour thickness at diagnosis is a key determinant of patient survivability. So early detection and timely referral are crucial in determining good outcomes. Providing regular skin checks for your patients is important.

**What are the surgical options?** After initial diagnosis of melanoma, a surgical review for wider excision and consideration of sentinel node biopsy (seeing if their melanoma has spread to the glands) is important. If caught early melanoma can be cured with surgery alone.

**What are the medical advances?** For those with metastatic disease at presentation or who develop metastases after initial treatment, we have more options. Immunotherapy and targeted therapy prolong progression-free and overall survival compared to chemotherapy.

**Recommended follow-up.** The best follow-up beyond ongoing skin checks is a multidisciplinary approach incorporating the GP, specialists in general surgery, dermatology, oncology, oncologic surgery, and plastic surgery, where appropriate

**About Sally.** Sally Butchers is the Vice President of General Surgeons Australia. Her full medical profile and contact details can be found at: <https://www.svh.org.au/doctor/dr-sally-butchers/>



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