

Rowena's back - as neighbourly Mad Mary

By RACHEL BROWNE

ROWENA Wallace is making a television comeback - signing up for a two-month stint on Channel Ten soap *Neighbours*.

The 63-year-old actress, best known for her long-running role as Pat the Rat Hamilton on *Sons And Daughters*, will play a loveable eccentric called Mad Mary on the soap.

Wallace avoided a 20-year jail sentence in 2005 after defrauding Centrelink of \$30,000.

The money, which Wallace repaid, was a disability support pension that she received between 1999 and 2003, despite working on the drama *Water Rats*, panel show *Beauty And The Beast* and talk program *Good Morning Australia*.



HARD TIMES: Wallace during her court case.

Wallace was given a six-month suspended jail sentence with a two-year good behaviour bond.

The first female winner of a Gold Logie (1985) for the most popular personality on Australian TV, Wallace

fell upon hard times when her acting work dried up. She became addicted to painkillers which she used to treat the chronic back condition scoliosis and suffered periods of depression.

Wallace, who made her TV debut in 1967 in the drama *You Can't See Round Corners*, has struggled to find regular television work in the past few years with her most recent appearances including Channel Nine's *Celebrity Overhaul* and a special production of the quiz show *Temptation* featuring high-profile identities.

She recently completed her autobiography and has started filming scenes for *Neighbours* that will be seen on air from early April.

A source close to the show described Mad Mary as "someone we'll love".



NEW ROLE: Wallace has signed up for a two-month stint.

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Pathology shortages hit cancer test times

By LOUISE HALL
HEALTH REPORTER

DIAGNOSING cancer could take up to eight weeks and blood transfusions in NSW could become unsafe because of a critical shortage of pathologists.

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) also expects the dire lack of specialist forensic pathologists to cause autopsies to be routinely postponed or cancelled, delaying burials and coronial inquests.

The crisis is set to worsen in the next five years because one in four pathologists is nearing retirement and the State Government is not funding enough training positions to replace them.

In 2004, the Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee recommended that 100 new training positions be created nationally every year for the next five years.

Of the 140 registrar positions - 35 each year - which should have been established in NSW, only five have been funded, and only for 12 months, not the full five-year training program.

RCPA chief executive Debra Graves said it was "a woefully inadequate

response from the NSW Government" - 70 per cent of all medical diagnoses were based on pathology, but governments ignored the discipline because it was not a "front-line service".

"We are heading towards longer delays in getting pathology results, fewer autopsies being done and a higher risk of mistakes happening and that's why we need to get the funding immediately," she said.

A spokesman for NSW Health Minister John Hatzistergos said Canberra had left the states "to shoulder the burden of training the specialists, who will no doubt move into the private sector as soon as they are qualified," and that "a large proportion of pathology services are [already] provided in the public sector."

But Dr Graves said specialist medical training was traditionally done in hospitals, which was a state responsibility.

Head of tissue pathology at Westmead Hospital Associate Professor Michael Bilous said the lack of new trainees not lead to delays in cancer diagnostic services.

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Man stabbed as 20 brawl

A MAN was stabbed in the shoulder during a brawl between 20 males at Darling Harbour early yesterday.

Police said the 18-year-old of Chester Hill was taken to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in a stable condition. A 16-year-old Botany male was also repeatedly punched and kicked in the brawl.

Two men and five youths were charged with affray and will appear in court later this month.

Police expect that more charges will be laid.