

Oarsome show by medicos

TRACEY FINDLAY

STAFF from the Sydney Adventist Hospital will be displaying some oarsome strength on Sunday in support of survivors of breast cancer.

The San is sponsoring two teams of 22 doctors, nurses and other health professionals in the Dragons Abreast Hospital Dragon Boat Challenge.

The challenge is part of the Chinese New Year Dragon Boat Festival at Darling Harbour.

The San teams will be paddling against 11 teams from other hospitals including Royal North Shore, The Mater, Royal Prince Alfred and the Prince of Wales.

The challenge will also include members of Dragons Abreast Australia – a group of breast cancer survivors who share a passion for dragon boating.

Turrumurra resident Sue Gibson joined the Dragons Abreast Sydney crew in July 2004.

"I tried out and was immediately hooked on it and I have been dragon boating ever since," she said.

"Initially I enjoyed the camaraderie – being with people who had similar experiences so you could talk to people about things and they had an understanding of what you were going through."

Mrs Gibson has also found that the activity has helped to control a problem in her arm that emerged after her cancer treatment.

She suffers lymphoedema – severe swelling in her arm caused by a build-up of lymph fluid.

"What I have found is in the 18 months since I began dragon boating I have reduced the size of my arm by 10cm.

"It has been a huge benefit for me. It has



Dragons Abreast Sydney crew member Sue Gibson and San surgeon Dr Pip Middleton are looking forward to Sunday's dragon boat challenge.

Picture: PETER KELLY

been a very exciting by-product of dragon boating."

The mother-of-two has become so passionate about the sport that she has branched out to compete at state and national level.

She was a member of the Australian masters crew which competed in the dragon boat world championships in Berlin in August.

"To be training and competing with fit athletic people I have pushed my body to limits it didn't realise it could actually go to," she said.

San surgeon Dr Pip Middleton will be among those taking part in Sunday's challenge.

"Last year a group of us raced and it was great fun," he said.

"It's a great concept, it's such a positive set-up."

Mrs Gibson said the participation of the health professionals sent a positive message about the benefits of exercise.

"For a very long time breast cancer survivors were told don't do any upper body exercise because it could be detrimental," she said.

"In fact it has been proven to be the reverse.

"Sport I think plays an important part in your recovery."

The action starts at Darling Harbour on Sunday at 9.30am.