

HealthMatters

Sydney – it's *your* local health district

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Santa gets his booster



Santa's getting ready for his round the world trip this month – but he's not leaving without his COVID-19 booster.

Santa appeared at the front door of our Sydney Olympic Park vaccination centre with Mrs Claus and their favourite Christmas elf and tree in tow.

So, of course, our team did the honours to ensure he's safe no matter

where he goes to deliver gifts.

COVID-19 boosters are now available, if it's been six months since your last vaccination, you can get a booster to help you rest easy mingling with the clan over the festive feast this year.

A special thanks to Sven Nilsson, Caren Friend, Lainie Anderson, Natalie Shiel and Melissa Wever for getting into the spirit.

Wishing everyone a safe and festive holiday season.



Message from the Chief Executive



Dr Teresa Anderson AM
*Chief Executive,
Sydney Local Health District*

After another busy year working with the challenges of the pandemic, I hope that our staff, families, and community are able to take some time out to enjoy the festive season.

Our Annual General Meeting was a great chance to celebrate the amazing work being done by our staff and departments across the District and to reflect on the year that was.

We had accreditation at RPA and Balmain with both facilities being recognised for the great work being done.

Congratulations to all the staff involved for making sure we

continue to provide the best support to our trainees and a great service to the community.

As the end of the year is only weeks away, I want to thank the staff for the incredible work they have done in 2021 including the continued focus on vaccinating our community and caring for our most vulnerable populations in a time of need.

And to the community who have come forward to be vaccinated in the efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, we say thank you.

Wishing everyone a safe and festive holiday season.

Until next time, stay healthy.

Message from the Chair, District Board



The Hon John Ajaka
*Chair, Sydney Local Health
District Board*

What a year we have had but the staff at Sydney Local Health District have still managed to continue to provide our community with world class care and go above and beyond to ensuring the safety in our committee. In particular, working alongside our vulnerable populations and other health organisation which the District has created throughout the course of the pandemic.

Even after the incredible year we have had the District has still managed to open the \$341 million Concord Redevelopment ahead of schedule and RPA's \$750 million redevelopment is still on track to

be complete by 2025. This is very exciting news as it will deliver a much-needed new emergency department, intensive care unit, medical imaging services, operating theatres, maternity, birthing and neonatal services and adult inpatient services.

The District has won numerous awards throughout the year including international recognition for our ICT teams, clinicians recognised at top researchers in Australia and many other incredible achievements.

As we look towards 2022, and hopefully a more normal year, I want to thank you all for your hard work and wish you all a very safe and happy holiday season.



Annual General Meeting

New Board chair John Ajaka describes 2021 as one of Sydney Local Health District's toughest.

"The Sydney Local Health District team has gone above and beyond to care for and protect our community from COVID-19," he told the District's Annual General Meeting.

"This has been the biggest public health response in our history, not just here in Sydney, but all around the world.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your courage, compassion and grit. When I say grit, it is tenacity, resilience and leadership," he said.

Mr Ajaka was joined by Board members, the NSW Health Deputy Secretary Susan Pearce, and the District's Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson AM at the AGM.

Many members of the Executive, hospital and service general managers, staff and the community attended virtually too.

"As 2020 began, no one could have imagined the challenges that would lie ahead for our District, our staff, our patients and our community," Dr Anderson said.

"Everyone has played a pivotal role in our COVID-19 response, and by continuing to work together to provide exceptional care for patients who rely on us every day of the year.

"I am so proud of my leadership team – and all of our staff – who stepped up to help without hesitation. Our District's achievements would not have been possible without you," Dr Anderson said.

During the AGM, the Chief Executive of AMS Redfern LaVerne Bellar and Ahmad Malas, a community leader from Lakemba, joined a conversation about caring for the community during COVID-19.



Associate Professor Rebekah Ahmed shared her ground-breaking gene therapy trial into frontotemporal dementia, while Professor Chris Maher highlighted the role of a new flagship research centre for musculoskeletal health.

And, the District announced the winners of its Innovation and Excellence Awards, including a series of Awards introduced to recognise the significant contribution of staff during the District's COVID-19 response.

In a video message, the NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said "Sydney Local Health District has risen to the occasion, whenever asked. The work that has been done... has been absolutely incredible. It's exemplary.

"I want to thank all the frontline staff, particularly the doctors, the nurses, allied health staff, the cleaners and the administrative staff. You've all been amazing," he said.

Congratulations to all our award winners. Thank you for your dedication to caring for our patients, their families and the community.

And thank you to board chair the Hon. John Ajaka, board members, and the NSW Health Deputy Secretary Susan Pearce for joining us this afternoon.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

It's been a very busy year and the AGM was a chance to reflect on our achievements at and show our gratitude to staff whose hard work, compassion and resilience have contributed to our on-going COVID-19 response.

The Innovation and Excellence Award for Lifetime Achievement was presented to our Director of Pharmacy Rosemary Burke who began her career in public health in 1985 and has steered our pharmacy team through many changes.

She played a pivotal role in the development of our COVID-19 vaccination program, especially at the NSW Health vaccination centre at Sydney Olympic, which has now delivered more than 1.4 million doses.



See a video on Rosemary's experience during the pandemic

Congratulations Rosemary for the well-deserved award.



Innovation and Excellence Awards

Sydney Local Health District's Innovation and Excellence Awards recognise, celebrate and encourage healthcare innovation and excellence.

We congratulate our major award winners for 2021:



Delivering Integrated Care

The District is committed to collaborating and purposefully working in partnerships across government and community organisations.

winner

Community Paediatric School Clinic – Ngaramadhi Space

Health Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The District is committed to ensuring the services it provides are inclusive of all people in the community regardless of race, gender, sexuality and ability and that everyone is accepted, welcomed and valued.

winner

Aboriginal Health Unit and Executive Support Unit – COVID-19 Aboriginal Cultural Response Team

Excellence in the provision of Mental Health Services

This award recognises and showcases innovation in improving the quality and safety of mental health patient care.

winner

Mental Health Services – Providing psychological care for patients in Special Health Accommodation

Education and Workforce Development

Support for its people is one of the District's most important investments in delivering of excellence in healthcare for all.

winner

Carers Program – Carers as partners in care

Health Research and Innovation

Collaboration between clinicians, researchers, policy makers, service users, health managers and consumers in healthcare is critical and can lead to service improvements and research findings that improve outcomes for patients.

winner

RPA Hospital – Cell and molecular therapies

Keeping People Healthy

Keeping the community healthy is one of the District's key priorities. This includes raising awareness of healthy choices and improving the overall health and wellbeing.

winner

ICT Services – Turning the other cheek on COVID-19 quarantine testing

chief executive award for excellence winner

Canterbury Hospital – Emergency Department enhanced triage during COVID-19

chief executive award for excellence winner

Child Protection Strategy Unit – Innovations in Sydney district pregnancy family conferencing

Patient Safety First

Patient safety is one of the most important parts of providing excellent care. This includes engaging patients as partners in their care and delivering care in ways that they find relevant.

highly commended

Disability Inclusion and Strategy Service – Keeping Me Safe in my Home: protecting people living with disability in shared living accommodation safe during COVID-19 outbreak

winner

NSW Health Pathology – Laboratory testing boosts public safety during COVID-19

chief executive award for excellence winner

Special Health Accommodation – Keeping COVID-19 out of the community

Transforming Patient Experience

Patient-centred care is at the heart of the District's strategy. This category recognises the projects which have transformed patient experiences.

winner

COVID-19 Operations – Welcome to the NSW Health Mass Vaccination Centre

chief executive award for excellence winner

Residential Aged Care Facility Outreach Team – Expanding non-COVID activity to respond to COVID-19

Volunteer of the Year

This Award recognises the contribution of an individual who provides excellent support for patients, carers and families and acts as a role model for volunteering in the District.

winner

Wafa Zaim – Canterbury Hospital

Cleaner of the Year

winner

Joshua Antonio – Croydon Health Centre

Collaborative Staff Member of the Year

winner

Joseph Jewitt – General Manager, Special Health Accommodation

Recognition of Excellence in COVID-19 response

winner

Barbara Luisi – Director, Diversity Programs and Strategy Hub

chief executive award for excellence winner

Richard Taggart – Chief Information Officer

Chair of the Board's Award for Excellence

This award recognises a team that the Chair of the Board felt has made significant contribution in 2021.

winner

Sydney Local Health District's COVID-19 Vaccination Program

Chair of the Board's Award for Lifetime Achievement

This award recognises an individual dedicated to providing care through their chosen profession and who has made significant contributions to their field through their work at Sydney Local Health District.

winner

Rosemary Burke, Director of Pharmacy and Chief Pharmacy Information Officer



Thanks from a special visitor



A huge thanks to NSW Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer Jacqui Cross for visiting RPA to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our staff over the past 20 months.

Jacqui is currently travelling around the state, paying her thanks to pandemic superheroes everywhere.

While with us, she visited our Special Health Accommodation and rpa virtual teams in King George V, and then our emergency department, intensive care services and NARMU teams.

Restrictions prevented her from entering our COVID-19 wards, but she sent a warm thank you from afar.

Ahead of the curve at Tech Central

Sydney Local Health District is proud to announce our role as a founding member of the Tech Central innovation precinct.

In the heart of Sydney, Tech Central is set to become Australia's innovation engine by bringing together the brightest minds and most innovative organisations – achieving the NSW Government's vision for a world-class innovation and technology precinct.

We join our partners the University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney, Notre Dame University, TAFE NSW and more than 170 research institutes and centres of excellence within Tech Central.

For almost 140 years, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital has been one of the premier hospitals in Australia, a leader in health and medical research and innovation with a focus on rapidly translating research

from bench top to bedside to improve patients' lives and health outcomes.

Now, we join the impressive company of Tech Central tenants with multidisciplinary expertise like industry leaders Atlassian, Cicada and Canva as well as a range of start-ups and scale-ups in the fields of medtech, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and applied robotics to create a precinct with a collective vision

to push boundaries, challenge the everyday and change tomorrow for the better.

By being member of Tech Central, we will form a crucial part of a new biomedical innovation ecosystem that will accelerate innovation to commercialisation, revolutionise treatment, create the future of health care, and further our goal to deliver accessible, inclusive, culturally-appropriate and holistic health care services – achieving our vision of excellence in health and healthcare for all.



RPA Foundation Research Medal

The prestigious RPA Foundation Research Medal for 2021 has been won by Professor Matthew Kiernan for his pioneering work in neuroscience.

The RPA Medal is awarded for outstanding contributions to research, with the winner collecting \$50,000 in funding to further their research.

Professor Kiernan will use the funding to develop a more rapid diagnosis for dementia and neurodegenerative syndromes, an interest sparked by his mother.

He was an intern at RPA when his mother was diagnosed with motor neurone disease.

“I’d never heard of it. And, at the time there were no treatments. I was set for a career in surgery but decided to do medicine – specialising in neurology. The worst of experiences for my family has been the making of me,” he says.

His mother died of the disease in 1992 and he’s remained dedicated to finding ways to treat neuro-degenerative diseases.

Professor Kiernan is the Bushell Chair of Neurology at RPA, a senior staff specialist in the Department of Neurology and the co-director of the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney.



The outcomes of his world-leading research have driven changes in health policy, while his research techniques have been translated into tools that are now used globally, including in the UK, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Japan and the US.

Congratulations, Professor Kiernan.

Pride of Concord Medal

The 2021 Pride of Concord Medal has been awarded to respiratory medicine specialist Professor Matthew Peters in recognition of his significant contribution to the hospital.



Professor Peters has played a key leadership role in our response to the pandemic, providing valuable advice and support to executives, doctors, nurses and allied health workers over the past two years.

In September this year, he also oversaw the transfer of COVID ward patients to the new clinical services building.

General manager Dr Genevieve Wallace said it was a fitting accolade, given Professor Peters’ almost 40 years of service.

“Matthew has made a significant contribution to Concord Hospital. He has been the head of thoracic medicine since 2001. Most importantly, he has led our COVID activities at Concord and has been available 24 hours, seven days a week to provide advice.”

The peer-nominated award is the hospital’s highest honour, with colleagues describing him as a collaborative, approachable leader committed to providing high quality care for all patients, agile, adaptable and able to seamlessly respond to changes in policy and direction.

“Matthew is part of the heart of Concord Hospital,” says Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson.

“His leadership, particularly during COVID, has been invaluable. There’s no doubt our respiratory services are second to none, because of Matthew’s leadership.”

In addition to the framed medal, he received a gold lion pin, a cheque for \$5,000 to put towards professional development and a dinner voucher.



Seeking evidence in cardiac trial



More than 20,000 Australians suffer a cardiac arrest outside of hospital every year – but only about 2,000 survive.

Now, RPA and Concord hospitals are part of a world-leading trial with NSW Ambulance to find the very best way to treat cardiac arrest patients – and ensure their survival.

The EVIDENCE trial, which started in July and continues for two years, involves more than 1,300 paramedics and 15 hospitals across Sydney and Wollongong.

It tests various methods of mechanical CPR – such as the Lucas device which automatically delivers chest compressions and ECMO, a heart/lung bypass machine which gives the patient’s heart a chance to rest while clinicians diagnose and treat the cardiac arrest.

About 400 Lucas devices are currently in ambulances across the state, thanks to NSW Health.

The incredible doctors, nurses and paramedics showcased their skills for Health Minister Brad Hazzard and *9 News Sydney* with a simulated cardiac arrest on a Camperdown oval, before a swift transfer to RPA’s emergency department where our “patient” was put on ECMO – and lived to tell the tale.

We look forward to this trial helping us save many more lives.

Scholarship remembers Sami Azmol



Sami Azmol would have been 38 in November 2021, however he passed away unexpectedly on 6 December 2020.

His death devastated all who knew the popular RPA accountant and it has been a difficult year for family and colleagues alike.

Sami’s parents Nahida and Golam, brother Rafi and sister-in-law Riffat joined us to unveil a plaque at the entry of the RPA Finance Department in his honour and to launch The Sami Azmol Scholarship. The yearly scholarship of \$10,000 funded by the District is to support future finance leaders with their professional development.

Dr Teresa Anderson said “I know Sami was always encouraging his colleagues, so this is a wonderful and fitting way to honour his memory and benefit members of the Finance Team.”

Mr Ross Sinclair remembered Sami as “the most wonderful human being. He brought much light to our lives and was loved by so many”.

Sami’s colleagues presented his family with an album of ‘memories’, in which they described Sami as having a calm aura, being authentic, kind, articulate, a true friend and an exceptional person. In return, Sami’s family brought food and celebrated his birthday with the Finance team.



Stroke survivor Fred Adams gets a visit from Bulldogs legend Terry Lamb as the Broken Hill farmer tries to recover. Picture: Richard Dobson

Broken Hill miner lucky to be alive

Broken Hill miner Fred Adams, 43, is lucky to be alive. In July, he had a “one in a million” stroke caused by blockages in both carotid arteries. Fred was flown to RPA and, thanks to our incredible public health system, he survived. But it was the kindness of our staff – who have never stopped going above and beyond despite the exhaustion of the past 20 months – that has left its mark. A huge thank you to John O’Grady and Rhonda Moore for their warm hearts and to the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs legends Terry Lamb and Luke Goodwin for making Fred’s day. And to our amazing rehab staff on Balmain’s John Beasley Ward for all their work in getting Fred closer every day to getting home to his family.

Hospital staff take a tour of A380

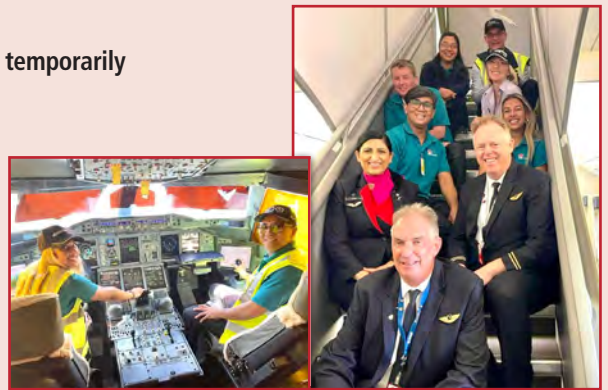
The pandemic brought us an amazing relationship with Qantas, when we temporarily employed about 350 of their staff stood down due to border closures.

Most have now returned to Qantas after working alongside us in our vaccination centres, quarantine services and hospitals.

In return, a group of concierge staff from our Sydney Olympic Park vaccination centre were given the opportunity to tour a Qantas A380 at Sydney Airport.

Pilots Tom Payne and Martin Loewensohn and flight attendant Sunita Giananey all worked at our Sydney Olympic Park centre during the pandemic, and were keen to give their former colleagues a fabulous inside glimpse of their world.

Thank you, Tom, Martin and Sunita. We’ll see you again in the skies.



Farewell Tate

It was the final call for Flight KGV 11 this afternoon when Tate Liedtke arrived in the gate lounge.

A Qantas flight attendant who usually covers the Sydney to Los Angeles route, Tate has been temporarily working with us for the past 18 months after being stood down when borders closed.

He’s been screening everyone entering our King George V building and emergency department at RPA.

His exemplary professionalism and friendliness have impressed us all, but now Tate is heading back to Qantas to prepare for his first post-pandemic flight.

Tate did the final honours by pushing a trolley down the “aisle” and handing out cupcakes, promising to wear his new RPA lapel pin on his first flight to the United States.

He may have joined us wanting to contribute through the pandemic, but he leaves with a new family and lifelong friendships.

104-year-old Nola Harris keeping STRONG

At 104, Nola Harris is still working out several times a week at our STRONG clinic at Balmain Hospital, where she meets up with Bill Leis, 100, and Marion McGregor, 96.

All three live independently at home – and credit the clinic’s medically supervised exercise program for keeping them fit as fiddles. The *Sunday Telegraph* was invited to meet the long-lived trio, sitting down to show off the clinic.

