

# HealthMatters

Sydney – it's *your* local health district

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## Half a million + counting



**Having only opened its doors in May, the NSW Vaccination Centre at Sydney Olympic Park has celebrated half a million vaccinations.**

This fantastic milestone could only have been achieved with the support of our extensive dedicated teams, and community members who continue to come forward to be vaccinated.

The lucky recipient of the 500,000th dose was teacher Ksenija McCarlie, 45, from Middleton Grange, in Sydney's south west.

A huge thanks to everyone involved in this milestone.



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**Health**  
Sydney  
Local Health District



## Message from the Chief Executive



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

**Firstly, I would like to warmly welcome our new Chair of the Board, The Hon John Ajaka. It is a great privilege to have his expertise on our board and I know he will provide us with great leadership and guidance. We also welcome Mr John McGee who is joining as a new member of the board, bring with him over 30 years of industry experience.**

What a month we have had with another big milestone of half a million vaccinations administered at the state's vaccination centre at Homebush, which doesn't take into account the thousands of vaccinations being administered at our various other vaccination hubs across the District including our inpatients at Balmain Hospital, pop up clinics and Mallet street centre.

Our staff have once again risen to the occasion by being flexible to the conditions

we are currently facing in NSW. Metropolitan Sydney is facing unprecedented times with COVID-19 community transmission, and I cannot thank our staff enough for willingness to get the job done for the benefit of the greater community.

In other news, we have celebrated DonatLife Week which is an important week to recognise organ donations and the impact that donations have on not only the recipients but their families too. Our District undertakes the largest number of transplantation surgeries in the State which wouldn't be possible without our dedicated expert transplantation team who work around the clock providing this service to those in need.

Although we are facing challenging times, I know we will get through this and support each other along the way.

Until next time, stay healthy.

## Message from the Chair, District Board



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

**I would like to start by thanking you all for your warm welcome as I take my position as the Chair of the Sydney Local Health District Board. It is an honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to be part of such a respected and world-leading health organisation.**

I am already amazed by the dedication of the staff in caring for each other and the community. The recent milestone of half a million vaccinations is a great achievement and one to be proud of, I know that it's not a small task to get these centres off the ground.

Through the strong leadership from our Chief Executive, Dr Teresa Anderson, I am confident the District will continue to outshine itself year upon year and I am looking forward to being part of the journey.

I have joined the District having worked as a lawyer and politician for many years, with my most recent position as the President of the NSW Legislative Council. I have worked as a state minister, parliamentary secretary and local councillor and hold a number of other positions including director and patron of the

Biaggio Signorelli Foundation for Asbestos Cancer, chair of the NSW Rugby League Foundation and patron of NSW Wheelchair Rugby League. I have a real passion for serving the community.

I would like to acknowledge Mr John McGee who is joining me as a new member of the Board. John brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience, with a career in the financial markets and a wide range of experience working as a non-executive director, I know you will warmly welcome John to the District and I look forward to working with both John and the existing board members.

Although the COVID-19 response is dominating our day-to-day business, the District continues with many exciting projects including the Concord redevelopment which is in its final stages and the planning for the RPA development.

I look forward to working alongside many of you to ensure that Sydney Local Health continues to provide the world class care and support to our community.

## In the news

**RPA has been on the frontline of COVID-19 management since the pandemic began early last year. Now, the game has changed.**

Our frontline staff are facing two challenges. The challenges to vaccinate and educate the community of the importance of vaccination and to care for those with COVID-19.

The Delta variant means our affected Intensive Care Unit patients are younger, they progress to respiratory failure faster and they stay in the ICU for considerably longer.

RPA's ICU co-director Dr Richard Totaro has been a face in the media informing the public of the real impacts that this virus can have on our loved ones.

He notes "We haven't had anyone fully vaccinated in our ICU" – and his message remains clear, "please get vaccinated to stay out of ICU."

On the other side, Sydney Local Health District nurse Sarah Fletcher spoke at the COVID-19 media conference with the Premier to spread the word on our community pop-up vaccination clinics.

The District has been working to vaccinate the community at our pop-ups in Lakemba, Campsie, Greenacre, Riverwood, Glebe, Waterloo, Redfern, and the Sydney Markets at Flemington. As well as vaccinating those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Ashfield and Camperdown.

Thanks, Sarah and Richard, for helping spread the message about the importance of vaccination.



## Care packs for our community...

**We were grateful to receive 500 personal hygiene care packs and 4,000 Lindt chocolates from charity group, Every Little Bit Helps. The care packs were filled with travel-sized hotel toiletries such as toothbrushes, soaps, shampoos, soap, combs, moisturisers, sleeping masks, ear plugs and lip balm and were distributed to our most vulnerable members in our community – those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, the elderly and people living with disability.**

The chocolates were shared with our incredibly busy frontline staff dealing with COVID-19 which brought sweet moments to their day.

Over the past seven years, Every Little Bit Helps has collected unopened hotel toiletries and airline amenity kits to create almost 70,000 personal hygiene care packs for those in need.

A big thanks to Every Little Bit Helps for their generous donations.



## ...And our staff

**More than 13,000 care packs were put together by our staff for our staff to ensure they don't take COVID-19 home to their loved ones.**

The packs included two washable calico bags containing two Ziploc bags, a zip holder for staff ID passes, sanitiser, a handy sheet of safe staff tips – and some very important chocolate, kindly donated by Lindt.



## Good news for cancer patients

**Thanks to generous donations from our patients, we've provided more than \$110,000 in funding for new research projects into gynaecological cancers in a bid to drive improvements in diagnosis, treatment, cure and survival rates.**

Endometrial cancer is the most common gynaecological cancer diagnosed in women in Australia, with the Cancer Council estimating there will be more than 3,000 new cases this year. Other types include cancers of the cervix, ovaries, fallopian tubes, placenta, vagina and vulva.

Earlier this year, our newly formed Gynae-Oncology Research Advisory Group issued an expression of interest about funding for research projects in the field.

Proposals received were considered by an independent peer review panel who recommended funding be allocated to four research projects.

The head of RPA's Gynaecological Oncology Department, Associate Professor Rhonda Farrell, has received about \$33,000 for a research project to



explore the best treatment options for women with endometrial cancer.

Gynaecological oncologist Associate Professor Selvan Pather, gynaecological surgeon Associate Professor Trevor Tejada-Berges and medical oncologist Dr Yeh Chen Lee have also been awarded funding.

The advisory group, chaired by colorectal surgeon Professor Michael

Solomon, will oversee research in this area across the RPA and Chris O'Brien Lifehouse campus.

The funding has been allocated from money mainly donated by patients to the District which has been put towards cancer research.

More funding will be available next year.

## Recognition for CE

**Social enterprise Franklin Women has named its 2021 Carer's Support Scholarship – The Teresa Anderson Award, in recognition of Dr Anderson's contributions at the forefront of the COVID-19 response and in supporting the greater community during this difficult time, as well as the contributions made to this scholarship and the continued support provided by Sydney Local Health District as a member of Franklin Women.**

The Teresa Anderson Award will provide funds to support up to 16 health and medical researchers, who have had to assume unexpected caring responsibilities because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the extended lockdown in Sydney.

Named in honour of English scientist Rosalind Franklin, Franklin Women is a professional community connecting individuals and organisations within the health and medical research sector and supporting individuals to thrive.

Congratulations to Dr Anderson on this well-deserved recognition.





## Unique program turns one



### **The Canterbury Antenatal and Postnatal Service, or CAPS, has turned one.**

And what a year it has been providing families with care by the same midwife during pregnancy and two weeks post birth, either at home, hospital or in community clinics.

Over the past 12 months, the CAPS team at Canterbury Hospital has grown from two midwives to six providing support to 236 Canterbury families.

"We've provided more than 2,500 occasions of service. We're passionate about the continuity of antenatal care and

delivering two weeks of postnatal support to parents," says Mel de Ferranti, one of the CAPS midwives.

"We've had families having their second baby return to CAPS for care, because of the positive experience they've had," Mel says.

The team has also expanded from one Child and Family Health Clinic to three with midwives now running clinics at Belmore, Earlwood and Punchbowl.

The model of care has also been shared with four other hospitals who are starting, or have started their own version of CAPS. And happy birthday, team.

## Dentists join the fight

**Our staff are known for rolling up their sleeves when needed and that is what dentist Hannah Dunn has done. She usually works at Sydney Dental Hospital, but is using her expertise to administer vaccines at Sydney Olympic Park.**

"I miss dentistry, but we're needed here at the moment. It's satisfying to be able to contribute in this way," she says.

Almost 50 dentists have been deployed to give vaccinations, and they'll soon be joined by six oral health therapists. Another 50 staff

have been trained to prepare the vaccines in our pharmacies.

Dental staff also carry out COVID-19 surveillance testing for other health care workers and have been seconded to our Special Health Accommodation for people in quarantine.

"We're proud of all our dedicated staff at Sydney Dental Hospital and the way they've stepped up to contribute," says general manager Dr Jason Cheng.





## A new leader for a new clinic

**It may still be under construction, but RPA's new Parent and Baby Unit already has a nurse manager. Alison Green has more than 30 years' experience in mental health nursing and will lead the unit's multidisciplinary team, providing care for new parents experiencing acute mental illness and their babies.**

"This combines both my life interests – mental health and babies," she says.

The team will include a nurse practitioner, child and family health nurses, a clinical midwife consultant, consultant and trainee psychiatrists, paediatricians, allied health staff and a peer support worker.

Patients will be able to remain with their babies during inpatient psychiatric care, and will receive caregiving,

parent-baby relationship and child development support.

With experience as the nurse manager for the District's Perinatal Infant Mental Health Team in the community and RPA's Perinatal Mental Health Service, Alison has witnessed the impact of mental illness on families.

"Acute perinatal mental illness can be completely and utterly random, with no family history. Deterioration can be rapid and outcomes can be catastrophic if not picked up quickly. But, it's also incredibly responsive



to treatment and it's possible to have a complete recovery. Keeping a primary care giver and their bub together will increase the likelihood of recovery," she said.

The unit is expected to open later this year.

## District's capital works back on track

**All of Sydney Local Health District's capital works project were 'paused' for a two-week period due to the stop work order placed on building construction industry across Sydney, because of the Public Health Order and rising COVID-19 case numbers.**

After a slight delay, the works resumed across the District in the Parents and Baby Unit (PBU), Health One Green Square, the \$750 million RPA Redevelopment, and the Concord Hospital Stage One Redevelopment.

The RPA Redevelopment Project has moved into the Master Planning and Design phase and Project User Consultation sessions have continued as have workshops and weekly team meetings. The Integrated Project team are preparing updates for an all staff forum scheduled for early September.

At Concord, construction resumed following the two-week pause with a reduction in the number of contractors on site. Planning for staff tours commenced and the Concord Hospital Redevelopment photographic competition was launched which is closing early September.

The Aged Care ramp wards are being demolished following the completion of the building and a new on-grade car park and new multi-storey car park will complete the transformation.

We are also excited to announce after a robust tendering process, Stazi Group will begin operating as food and retail providers on the Concord campus from 1 September.





## Honouring those giving new life



### Lifesaver to the end

**Keith Cardwell died as he lived – serving the community.**

The family of the much-loved former policeman and veteran surf lifesaver chose to donate his organs and body tissue after he had a stroke and died at age 60 at RPA's Intensive Care Unit earlier this year.

"After 45 years of lifesaving, he is now a life saver. He was saving lives right to the end," his wife Maria said.

Keith's lifesaving donation meant that two people on the nation's transplant wait list received a new kidney, while another received Keith's liver, but later had to have another transplant. Keith's musculoskeletal tissue has been stored at the NSW Tissue Bank.

"The process to donate organs and tissue is very thorough and, at a time of deep sadness, could be considered very confronting. But, with the possibility of saving other people from the heartache we as a family were going through, it gave us hope and comfort," Maria said.

The family was supported by one of Sydney Local Health District's donation specialist nurses, Kelly Lewis, who works across Concord and RPA hospitals.

"Maria and her family had asked if organ donation was possible. I chatted

with them and provided them with information, care and support during the donation process," Kelly said.

About 80,000 people die in Australian hospitals each year, but only about two per cent of them can

be considered for organ donation. To be an organ donor, a person must die in a hospital's intensive care unit and be medically assessed as suitable to donate organs for transplantation.

There are about 1,650 Australians waiting for a life-changing organ transplant.

Data shows that in 2020, 463 deceased organ donors and their families saved the lives of 1,270 organ recipients.

### Donating a life

**Organ transplant recipient Adrian McWilliam is feeling blessed thanks to a donor family's life-changing decision.**

Last year, Adrian, 28, had a liver transplant at the Australian National Liver Transplantation Unit based at RPA.

This came after presenting to RPA emergency with what he thought was a stomach bug. Tests revealed he had cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver and Wilson's disease, a rare genetic condition in which the liver is unable to process

excess copper in the body which can lead to liver failure.

Being a healthy person with no signs or symptoms, this diagnosis came as a shock to Adrian, with the daily medication prescribed by his specialist not working and his liver was failing, he required a liver transplant.

The operation went smoothly and Adrian has recovered well. He's since returned to work and is enjoying everyday life.

Adrian tells his story to share the importance of organ donation and to raise awareness about DonateLife Week.

"I know that for my transplant to happen a life was lost. I hope that the donor's family knows that some good has come from it," he said.

"I am 100 per cent thankful, and am so lucky that another family made the choice to do good for others. The organ donation has meant that I've got a second chance," he said.

DonateLife Week was established to raise awareness about the organ donation register and to encourage a conversation with loved ones about their organ donation wishes.





## Stepping up at Balmain



Our team at Balmain Hospital has been vaccinating vulnerable inpatients against COVID-19. William Leis and Christine Jorgensen were just two patients who jumped at the opportunity to be vaccinated.

Balmain Hospital general manager, Michael Morris said: "the program has been well received by both patients and staff.

It has been great to be able to provide our patients with the vaccination to protect them against COVID-19".

Staff running the program ensure that all patients being vaccinated are booked for their second dose in the community, whether it is with their GP or at one of our vaccination hubs.

## Another community collaboration



We teamed up with the Exodus Foundation to provide more than 150 people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness with their COVID-19 vaccinations.

Based in Ashfield, the foundation provides direct assistance including food, social welfare, and education to those experiencing homelessness.

## Night clinics a success



We understand it can be more challenging to get things done when you work night shift, so our amazing people have taken night vaccination clinics to the workers. More than 5,000 workers were provided with access to COVID-19 vaccination thanks to our team who set up overnight pop-up clinic on site at Sydney Markets in Homebush.

The clinics were run over two nights with appointments starting at 10:30pm and finished up at 5:30am to make it easier for delivery drivers and stall operators to get vaccinated. Our team also ran day clinics at the markets for the less nocturnal workers. So far, more than 6,400 supermarket and food industry workers have been vaccinated at the NSW Health Vaccination Centre at Sydney Olympic Park and we're grateful for their commitment to keeping themselves and their community safe.

## Teaming up to stop the spread



With south-western Sydney seeing increased number in COVID-19 cases, we partnered with community organisations including the Lebanese Muslim Association in Lakemba to set up COVID-19 mobile vaccination clinics. Nurses, doctors, cultural support workers, interpreters and administrations staff all participated, delivering another successful event.