

RPA home to nation's first full body scanner

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is now home to Australia's first full body scanner which will provide clearer images at lower doses of radiation in about a quarter of the time previously taken.

NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research Brad Hazzard officially opened the \$12 million Quadra PET (positron emission tomography) CT scanner, only the second of its kind in the world.

Sydney Local Health District's Clinical Director of Medical Imaging Professor Michael Fulham said the scanner was 106 centimetres in length and able to scan a patient from the top of the head to the upper thighs simultaneously, a feat which has not previously been possible.

"Clinicians will be able to see in real time what is happening in a patient's brain, heart, liver and other organs in the abdomen and pelvis simultaneously, rather than requiring sequential scans of the body.

"This technology will be invaluable in treating patients with cancer and neurological conditions including brain tumours, epilepsy and dementia and offers new opportunities in assessing heart disease," Professor Fulham said.



The Quadra, engineered and manufactured by Siemens Healthineers in Chicago, left the United States in two 12-metre freight containers. Weighing almost 6,000kg, it was lifted into place at RPA by a crane.

Minister Hazzard said it had the potential to revolutionise patient care and offered enormous research capabilities, including a better understanding of why tumours in different parts of the body respond differently to treatment.

"RPA has a proud history of delivering world-class health care and this cutting edge technology will ensure it continues to be a national leader," Mr Hazzard said.

RPA opened Australia's first PET scanner in 1992. Since then, RPA has been a pioneer and leader in the introduction of PET-CT technology into routine clinical care throughout the country.

RPA is currently undergoing a \$750 million redevelopment – the most significant investment in its 139-year history.



Message from the Chief Executive



Dr Teresa Anderson AM

*Chief Executive,
Sydney Local Health District*

The NSW Health Vaccination Centre at Sydney Olympic Park has now been open for more than two months and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the community.

I know how hard everyone has worked in bringing the centre to life in only 20 days, and keeping it running six days a week, so it is fantastic to see how well it has been received by our patients. Many have commented on our friendly, happy and helpful staff, our military precision service and our focus on making vaccination an enjoyable, easy experience for our patients.

Congratulations, everyone. And thank you for all you have done so far.

Please don't forget to also get your flu vaccination this year. You need to wait one week between your COVID-19 and flu vaccinations, but it is very important to get both to ensure we can keep our community safe this winter. And thanks to everyone for continuing to maintain social distancing, washing your hands and wearing masks when necessary. Together, we can keep both viruses at bay.

In other news, we've said goodbye to our Executive Director of Operations, Dr Tim Sinclair. Tim was with the District for 16 years, starting with us as a Graduate Management trainee and going on to hold many senior positions, including as general manager of Balmain and Concord hospitals. When he took on the top job at Concord, he was the youngest general manager of a tertiary health facility in the state.

He lists his "big wins" as the \$341 million Stage One redevelopment of Concord Hospital, set to open later this year; the NSW Government's \$750 million commitment to redevelop RPA, the establishment of the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare, the opening of RPA Virtual Hospital and the NSW Health COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

Tim has been a wonderful leader, administrator and mentor who will be sorely missed by all. I know you will join me in wishing him all the very best in his future endeavours.

Until next time, stay healthy.

Message from the Acting Chair, District Board



Victoria Weekes

*Acting Chair,
Sydney Local Health
District Board*

Welcome to winter – and another very busy time of year across the District.

I am so very incredibly proud of the hard work everyone has put in during the pandemic right across all of our hospitals and services – but particularly since opening the RPA, Olympic Park and Canterbury vaccination centres. It is no easy task to stand up vaccinations centres in a short space of time, while continuing to deliver world-class health care, but you have pulled it off.

As mentioned previously, this has been my last month on the board of Sydney Local Health District. It has been a wonderful and inspiring experience to have worked among you.

I know you will warmly welcome the incoming board members and you will continue to impress them with your deep commitment to making life better each and every day for those in our community and beyond.

Thank you for the past decade. It has been a privilege to work such extraordinary people.



Fond farewell to Tim

We've farewelled the District's Executive Director of Operations Dr Tim Sinclair after nearly two decades working at the heart of our leadership team.

Dr Sinclair began his career in the District in 2004 after graduating (with distinction) from the University of Sydney.

He joined the Graduate Health Management Program, and has numerous roles in the District including Associate Director of Clinical Operations (for the former Sydney South West Area Health Service), Acting Director of the District's Performance and Business Units and General Manager of Balmain Hospital. In 2013, he was the Acting General Manager of Concord Repatriation General Hospital.

The District's Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson said Dr Sinclair's career showed the impact young people with great ideas, and the ability to build partnerships with others, can make – particularly in health care.



"Tim truly cares about the community he serves. He has driven projects that have made, and will continue to make, a difference to the people in our community," she said.

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which is set to open later this year, the NSW Government's \$750 million commitment to redevelop RPA, the establishment of the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare, the opening of RPA Virtual Hospital and the NSW Health COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

Fussell House open

Concord's veterans accommodation Fussell House has been officially opened by the parents of Michael Fussell, an Australian soldier killed in Afghanistan.

Ken and Madeline Fussell joined Federal MP Dr Fiona Martin, NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Veterans James Griffin, veterans groups and supporters for the official opening.

Fussell House is a 19-room residential accommodation facility funded by a \$6.7 million investment from the Federal Government. It's available for veterans and their families when accessing comprehensive healthcare services at

the world-class National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare.

Ken and Madeline stayed at Fussell House, met the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare team and toured the centre's clinic space in a new building under construction as part of the redevelopment of the hospital.

"We're so excited about the difference this is going to make for a new generation of veterans because nothing like this has ever been on offer before," Madeline said.

She said her son, Michael, would be "embarrassed in some ways but also very chuffed" that the accommodation had been named after him.





Top marks in trials



Sydney Local Health District has been awarded the highest rating in a new national accreditation process for the conduct of clinical trials.

The National Clinical Trials Governance Framework has been developed by The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

Under the framework, two National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards – Clinical Governance and Partnering with Consumers – now also apply to clinical trials services.

The framework is being implemented to ensure clinical trials are high-quality,

integrated, consumer-focused and undertaken in a safe environment.

“Our District was one of 14 health care institutions selected to pilot the new framework and we have been awarded the highest rating – Established Systems,” Professor Warwick Britton AO, the District’s Director of Research, said.

RPA’s Institute of Haematology, AW Morrow Gastroenterology and Liver Centre, Chemical Pathology, Renal Medicine, Cardiovascular Surgery, SOuRce and Pharmacy contributed to the pilot.

The pilot was overseen by Merela Ghazal, Genevieve Watt, Louise Ford

and Akila Dharmendar from the District’s Research team.

“We’d also like to thank our research support staff for their hard work, time and effort,” Professor Britton said.

The District is exploring opportunities for further enhancement of its research capabilities based on the feedback from the pilot.

There are more than 600 clinical trials underway in about 75 different units across the District including haematology, gastroenterology and hepatology, respiratory medicine, surgery, neurology, cancer and cardiology.

Medicines matter



Each year, almost 20,000 Australians have a stroke.

Most are caused by a blockage of an artery in the brain. Two in five people can expect to have another stroke in the next 10 years, but medicines and lifestyle changes can minimise this risk.

RPA advanced trainee in clinical pharmacology Dr Chris Tremonti recently featured in Australian Prescriber

magazine, talking about the medicines important in reducing this risk.

“Depending on whether or not you have an irregular heartbeat, you may be given an ‘antiplatelet’ or ‘anticoagulant’ blood thinner to reduce the risk of a blood clot forming, which could cause a stroke,” Dr Tremonti said.

“If you have high blood pressure after a stroke, it is especially important to bring it back to a safe range. Your doctor may prescribe blood pressure medicines to bring your blood pressure down.

“No matter what your cholesterol level, cholesterol-lowering ‘statin’ medicines reduce the risk of a second stroke,” he says.

Treatment recommendations for stroke prevention change regularly.

“People who have a stroke are at the greatest risk of having a second stroke in the first few weeks. Keeping to the treatment tailored to the individual, in these few weeks and beyond, is an important way to prevent another stroke,” Dr Tremonti said.



Time to give up the cigs



Sydney Local Health District is stepping up its support for cancer patients to quit smoking, with evidence showing there is a significant boost in treatment outcomes and survival rates when patients stop using tobacco.

According to the Cancer Institute NSW, the risk of dying from cancer could be lowered by 30 to 40 per cent if a patient diagnosed with any form of cancer quits smoking at the time of diagnosis.

"Cancer patients may not know about the benefits of quitting smoking. It gives them a greater chance of defeating the disease," Kevin Ancog, a Clinical Nurse Consultant at the District's new Prostate Cancer Specialist Nursing Clinic at RPA, said.

Earlier this year, Kevin participated in a special training session designed to better equip cancer services staff to talk with patients about quitting smoking – and he's now championing the cause.

"It's important for all of us to support patients to quit using tobacco. It can change the trajectory of the disease and the patient's prognosis," he said.

During his consultations with patients, he routinely follows a quick, simple three-step process called "Ask, Advise and Act".

The first step is to ask a patient if they have used tobacco in the past 30 days. The second step is to advise patients about the treatment benefits of quitting tobacco and the negative impacts of tobacco use on cancer treatments.

The third step is to act by making a routine referral to the NSW Quitline, a free and confidential phone service which offers information and advice to help patients quit smoking.

"It can be a hard conversation to have with a patient after a cancer diagnosis, but I always aim to approach it in a sensitive and non-judgemental way," Kevin said.

Saviours in a time of need



Roger and Maria Bampton are childhood sweethearts.

"We met as teenagers at Coogee Beach and married five years later in 1974. We've been together for more than 50 years," Maria says.

They are now facing their greatest challenge.

In 2018, Roger was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease, affecting the muscles that enable people to move, speak, swallow and breathe. The average life expectancy is two to three years and there is no known cure.

"We were devastated. We were in disbelief about what was happening," says Maria.

Initially, she cared for Roger at their home at Kingsgrove – with the support of a consultant neurologist, RPA's respiratory physicians, a palliative care staff specialist and visits from Community Health nurses based at Canterbury Hospital.

Roger's condition gradually deteriorated and he has been admitted to the Concord Centre for Palliative Care four times in the past six months.

"They've been our saviour. Their empathy and compassion is beyond question," Maria says.

The centre, based at Concord Hospital, provides care for patients in Sydney Local Health District who have a life-limiting illness and their families.

Palliative care supports patients and their families by addressing their physical, emotional, spiritual and practical needs. The primary goal is to improve a patient's quality of life.

Roger has an Advanced Care Plan which outlines his wishes for end-of-life health care should he become too unwell to make his own decisions. He has now chosen to live in a nursing home with comprehensive 24/7 care, rather than return home.

Maria visits daily.

"I miss him madly when I'm at home. But I know he's getting the care he needs. I know he's in the best place. The time we spend together is so precious," she said.

It's the couple's wish to return to Concord Centre for Palliative Care as the disease progresses and Roger requires end-of-life care.

"The care we've experienced there has been the best part of our journey," Maria says.



Caring for the vulnerable

Sydney Local Health District is distributing 2,000 care packages to the most vulnerable members of the community to help them cope with COVID-19.

The packages include face masks, hand sanitiser, care products, a personal note from Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson and donations from food rescue charity OzHarvest Australia and publisher Hachette Australia.

The District is home to pockets of extreme disadvantage, with more than 6,000 estimated to be homeless. It also has more than 400 boarding houses, about 4,500 in residential aged care facilities and more than 28,000 people living with a disability.

The care packages were organised by the District's Integration and Partnerships team led by Director Lisa Parcsi.

"We're working together to protect vulnerable residents. Many of them have underlying health conditions that put them at a higher risk of getting COVID-19," she said.



"We want to show them that we care, and that we are here to support them throughout the pandemic."

The District's Waterloo Healthy Living Program Manager, Shane Brown, will distribute 50 of the care packages to clients in Redfern and Waterloo.

"Delivering a care package is one way we're able to stay connected with our clients. It'll help to reduce loneliness and isolation, and it's a positive way to show we care about them," he said.

Jude Page, a Service Development Manager with the District's Health Equity Research and Development Unit, has coordinated the packing and distribution of the care packages.

"We're working to help vulnerable people stay safe. We want to reach out to them and to let them know that we are here for them during this challenging time," she said.

Helping the homeless

Sydney Local Health District partnered with The Exodus Foundation to vaccinate more than 150 people who are homeless and at risk of becoming homeless.

Vulnerable people in our community often face barriers accessing mainstream health services. And, many also have significant underlying health conditions which put them at greater risk from COVID-19.

"They're a group of people who are highly unlikely to reach out quickly to get a COVID vaccination because of their circumstances," Paul Clenaghan, Community and Partnerships Manager for Mental Health Services, said.

Sarah Fletcher, from the Flying Squad, said it was "an absolute privilege" to help vaccinate the attendees because "it's an extra step to getting to a new future".



The Foundation's Rev Bill Crews expressed his thanks.

"Health are here today to make sure that those in my community, that is the vulnerable, the poorest of the poor, the needy, the homeless, get their first jab of the Pfizer vaccine and I am so pleased they are here," he said.

Leaders join forces

More than 40 religious and community leaders came together to be vaccinated at the NSW Health Vaccination Centre and encourage their communities to get the jab.

They were joined by the NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Health Minister Brad Hazzard, the Minister for Multiculturalism Dr Geoff Lee, NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant, Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Teresa Anderson and the Chair of Multicultural NSW Dr Hari Harinath.

"I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of our religious leaders, to all of our cultural leaders across NSW who have done an outstanding job during COVID, in supporting us getting out the message to keep our community safe. The next job we have is to ensure that all of us get vaccinated," Ms Berejiklian said.

Dr Ijaz Khan, a medical advisor for the Australian National Imams Council, said the goal was to keep the community safe.

"The only way that we know how to keep the community safe during a time of pandemic and global challenge is to get vaccinated. We strongly urge vaccination. So



please, for the community and for yourselves, please get vaccinated," he said.

Archbishop Makarios Griniezakis from the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia is fully vaccinated and encouraged others to also get the jab.

"The only light we have at the end of the tunnel is to get vaccinated. Take the decision and act. We have to protect our society. We have to protect our country," he said.

Roll up and join in

Disability advocate Tara Elliffe has a simple message.

"Be brave and have the jab. It's OK. Just do it," she said.

Tara, 33, has been vaccinated against COVID-19 at RPA's Vaccination Centre.

She has Down syndrome and wants to encourage other people living with a disability to have the vaccination.

"I had my jab and it didn't hurt at all. I'm here to protect myself from COVID-19, me and families and friends," she said.

Down syndrome is a genetic condition caused when a person is born with an extra chromosome in all of their body's cells. It impacts intellectual

development, health and some physical features.

Down Syndrome NSW estimates there are up to 15,000 people in Australia with the condition. It states it's the most commonly occurring chromosomal condition in the country.

Tara is on the organisation's advisory board. She is also a member of the Council for Intellectual Disability's advocacy committee and the City of Sydney's Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel.

Tara has attended the World Down Syndrome Congress multiple times, including in 2018 in Scotland and was set to present at the 2020 Congress in



the United Arab Emirates before it was postponed because of the pandemic.

She also works two days a week as an administrative assistant at the NSW Ombudsman and in her spare time likes watching movies, socialising with friends, drinking coffee, travelling overseas (pre-COVID-19) and visiting family.

"I'd like all my friends to roll-up their sleeve and have the vaccine, too. If I can do it, then they can too," she said.



Farewell



We've said goodbye to internationally-recognised child health expert John Eastwood who has dedicated his career to improving the lives of children and their families.

He's moving to New Zealand to take up a position as a public health physician with the Southern District Health Board, based in Dunedin, on the South Island.

Professor Eastwood designed and evaluated the District's Healthy Homes and Neighbourhoods Integrated Care Initiative for vulnerable families in inner-western Sydney.

In recognition of its success, he and the team won a Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management (Collaboration), a NSW Health award and two District AGM awards.

He's also an advisor to the World Health Organisation, leading a consultancy focused on advancing child and adolescent health and wellbeing, and leads the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence for Care for People with Complex Multi-morbidities.

"He's a passionate advocate for those in need," says Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson.

"His drive has resulted in his vision for integrated, inter-generational primary health and social care for vulnerable families coming to fruition."

We wish him all the very best in his new life over the ditch.

Socking it



This year's national Crazysocks4docs promotion to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health among doctors was a little different – it featured our own socks.

The District's MDOK

team had two custom-designed pairs on offer this year, selling for \$10 a pair. All proceeds went back into MDOK activities.

And our staff got right into them. You can still get yourself a pair here: www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/events/slhd-mdok

Major milestone



RPA has notched up the 900th pelvic exenteration procedure – the largest number of patients treated within one centre in the world.

The team celebrated the milestone with Clinical Nurse Consultant Sophie Hatcher and program lead, Dr Kirk Austin cutting a cake.

Colorectal surgeon

Professor Michael Solomon, who pioneered this major surgery, thanked the team for their work and the ongoing care provided to our patients.

RPA runs the state-wide pelvic exenteration service which consists of a large multi-specialty and multi-disciplinary team including nursing, surgeons, anaesthetics, stomal therapy, allied health, psychologist, researchers and administration.

In 2016, the team notched up the 500th procedure with a morning tea with some of the patients.

Congratulations to all involved in the program.

Happy birthday to us



It's been 10 years since Sydney Local Health District was formed and what a wild ride it has been.

"I'm proud to lead a District of more than 14,000 people – doctors, nurses, midwives, allied

health workers, researchers, administration, security and support staff – who are dedicated to caring for our patients, their families and the community," Dr Teresa Anderson, the District's Chief Executive, said.

"Our staff make a difference to the lives of others 24 hours a day, every day of the year. I value what they do. They play an important role in our community."

The District was established on 1 July 2011 as part of national health reform, with NSW the first state in Australia to implement locally-managed health districts.

The changes returned decision-making about how health care is delivered to the local level and gave the District more resources and greater responsibility.