

A shot at a better future



Dr Teresa Anderson and Jacob Strange, making history at the new COVID-19 vaccination centre at Sydney Airport

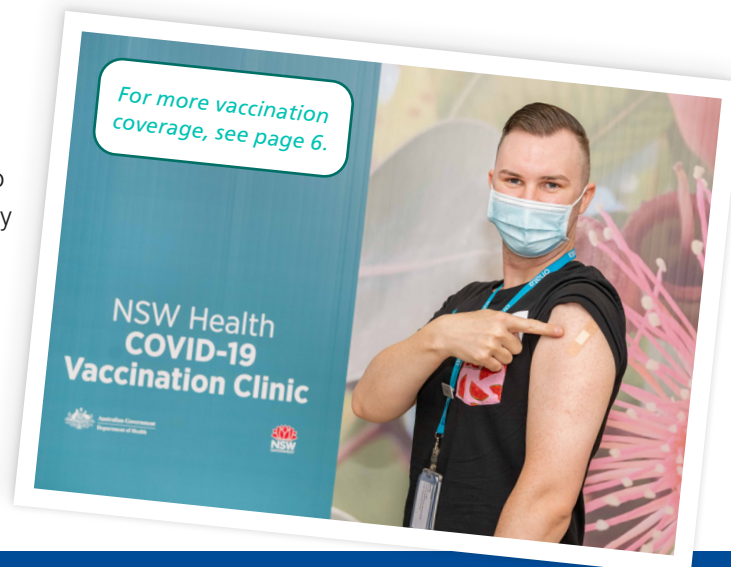
For Jacob Strange, being the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at our new Sydney Airport vaccination centre was about much more than travelling.

As a passenger services agent for Dnata, the pandemic has radically altered his workplace in the past year.

"We've been well looked after, and our bosses have done their very best to ensure available work has been shared around fairly but to go from having thousands of travellers in the airport every day to virtually none has been very hard," says the 28-year-old.

"I'm thrilled; so excited to be getting vaccinated today. It's a piece of history. I have such a sense of relief that I'm now one step ahead of this pandemic. I can't wait to get back to doing a job I love in an airport which is as close to full capacity as possible."

The airport centre was opened less than three weeks after RPA became first hospital in Australia to open a vaccination hub.





Message from the Chief Executive



Dr Teresa Anderson AM

*Chief Executive,
Sydney Local Health District*

It seems 2021 is moving just as quickly as 2020, but what a difference a year makes.

In recent months, we have been incredibly busy setting up and operating our vaccination centres at RPA and Sydney International Airport, and I'd like to thank everyone involved.

It is a proud hallmark of this District that, no matter what the challenge, our staff rise to the occasion with innovative solutions, positive attitudes and a willingness to get the job done for the benefit of our community.

It was also a pleasure to have the Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Premier Gladys Berejiklian and the Health Minister Brad Hazzard tour the RPA clinic; see firsthand the process and

meet our frontline staff getting their first vaccination.

I look forward to bringing you more information about the vaccination program as we expand and I thank all those staff who have already stepped forward to be vaccinated. I know we are all looking forward to getting back to life pre-pandemic.

In other news, work on our RPA Parents and Babies mental health unit is fast progressing with the concrete foundations laid in recent weeks. It is fantastic to see this much-needed project coming to fruition. Work on the \$341 million Concord redevelopment is also moving ahead quickly and expected to be finished by the end of the year. We'll then start on a multi-storey staff car park.

Until next time, stay healthy.

Message from the Acting Chair, District Board



Victoria Weekes

*Acting Chair,
Sydney Local Health
District Board*

I would like to congratulate everyone involved in the planning, set-up and operation of the District's COVID-19 Vaccination Centres, which have been a huge success.

It's a significant milestone in the District's ongoing response to the pandemic.

The Board is impressed with the way in which you've collaborated to ensure the smooth rollout of the program to those at the highest risk from the virus – and it has been lovely to see how enthusiastic people have been to receive the vaccine.

Please remember that, until most of the nation is vaccinated, it is still important to get tested for COVID-19 if you have flu-like symptoms. Please do not go to work or school, and continue to take precautions where you can, such as social distancing and using hand sanitiser.

NSW has done a fantastic job dealing with the pandemic, but we still have some way to go. Together, we will find our way through this.

Members of the Board also had the pleasure of touring the progress of Concord Hospital's redevelopment and the new eight-storey Clinical Services Building.

The building's design, layout, and functionality will be of enormous benefit to patients, their families, staff and the community. The sweeping views across the Yaralla Estate and the warmth of the environment will undoubtedly bring comfort to patients, and I believe, contribute to the healing process.

And, as a passionate advocate for gender equality, I would also like to acknowledge International Women's Day which is celebrated in March.

More than 10,500 women are employed across District, making up more than 70 per cent of the workforce, and I share Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson's drive and commitment to boost the numbers of women holding senior leadership positions.

And finally, take care, everyone. We are grateful for your hard work.



Board tours redevelopment

Sydney Local Health District's board members have returned to inspect the progress of Concord Hospital's redevelopment, set to transform healthcare in the inner west.

It's the first time members of the board have toured the \$341 million redevelopment project since the main works began in late 2019 to construct a new eight-storey Clinical Services Building.

The Acting Chair of the Board Victoria Weekes, and members Dr Thomas Karplus and David McLean were joined by the District's Chief Executive Dr . Teresa Anderson and the hospital's Acting General Manager Kiel Harvey.

They viewed the dedicated patient drop-off zones for aged health and cancer services, the new concourse, oncology bays, staff stations and break-out spaces in the open courtyard in the new building.

"The internal design, scheme and layout is welcoming and comforting. The fit-outs, openness and functionality is going to be great," Ms Weekes said.

"I'm so proud as a board member of the District. It is looking just fantastic



and it will be great for the community and our patients."

The District and Health Infrastructure are working in partnership to deliver the project with ongoing consultation with clinicians, staff, patients and the community.

The hospital's Acting General Manager Kiel Harvey also had his first view of the site since taking on his role earlier this month.

"The new Clinical Services Building will create state-of-the-art environments for our clinicians and researchers that will help translate research and drive innovation to deliver better patient care and a healthier community.

The building will have more than 200 inpatient beds, adding an additional 111 beds to the campus, and will boost the hospital's capacity to deliver specialist aged health, rehabilitation, haematology and oncology services.

New radiation oncology service at Concord

Concord Hospital has announced an advanced radiation oncology service will be available in the hospital's new comprehensive cancer centre when it opens later this year.

The centre will be part of the hospital's \$341 million redevelopment, giving patients access to a wide-range of cancer treatments under the one roof including medical oncology and radiation oncology.

Icon Cancer Centre has been selected to deliver the radiation oncology service which will include the state of the art Varian IDENTIFY™ Surface Guidance System.



Image: Icon Cancer Centre, Rockingham

The Concord Cancer Centre will have the capacity to deliver about 900 new courses of radiation therapy each year, offering precise and complex treatment for advanced cancers.

The IDENTIFY system uses advanced technology to deliver highly precise radiation to the tumour with the potential to reduce radiation exposure to healthy organs, improve treatment accuracy and reduce treatment times. It also eliminates the need for patients to have permanent, and often unwelcome, tattoos.

Sydney Local Health District's clinical director for cancer care Clinical Associate Professor Ilona Cunningham welcomed the new service to Concord and thanked the community for its enthusiastic support.

"I am very pleased to be able to assure our patients that they no longer have to travel to have their radiotherapy. They will have their life-saving or palliative radiation consultation and treatment close to home at Concord Hospital."



World-class honours for ADRI

In a world first, the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute at Concord Hospital, has been designated by the World Health Organisation as a Collaborating Centre for the Elimination of Asbestos-Related Diseases.

The Collaborating Centre Designation was formally announced at a special ceremony in the presence of Governor of NSW, Margaret Beazley QC, confirming ADRI as a global leader in asbestos related diseases and asbestos mitigation.

ADRI's world class team of researchers, scientists, public health experts and lung nurses have been proactively training and teaching health professionals through workshops in developing countries aimed to detect, diagnose and treat asbestos-related diseases since 2017.

The assistant Director General of the World Health Organisation, Dr Naoka Yamamoto, said:

"The World Health Assembly Resolution has called for global



campaigns to eliminate asbestos-related diseases and take action on the preventable cancers associated with this exposure. This requires building capacities in countries to improve knowledge and practices."

Since it opened in 2009, ADRI has pioneered bio-medical, clinical, public health and community initiatives and programs domestically and

internationally to eliminate asbestos related diseases. The specialist research and science team examine the interaction between genetics and environmental factors to help explain how diseases like mesothelioma occur and progress; test new ways to deliver cancer treatments to patients; and, look at which treatments may have success in limiting tumour growth and why.

Extra support for research projects

Three Sydney health services have granted a combined total of \$175,000 to collaborative projects which are piloting the implementation of robust research evidence into clinical practice.

Seven projects have received pilot grants of \$25,000 each after being shortlisted by the inaugural Sydney Health Partners Implementation Science Grant Program in 2020. The grants are in addition to the four projects funded directly by Sydney Health Partners last August as part of the program.

Sydney Health Partners Executive Director Professor Don Nutbeam says the extra financial support provided by Sydney Local Health District, Western Sydney Local Health District and Northern Sydney

Research implementation funded by Sydney Local Health District includes a web-based intervention to support families who have lost a young person to sudden cardiac

death, a holistic approach to reducing the risk of hip fractures, the development of Australian guidelines for the use of mobile chest radiographs for COVID-19 patients, and an oncologist-delivered intervention to manage fear of cancer recurrence.

"We have always been committed to ensuring high-quality research and innovation underpin our services, and help improve the health outcomes of our patients, their families and our community," said Chief Executive, Dr Teresa Anderson.





Celebrating matters of the heart

It was a special Valentine's Day for Gemma and Terry Moon – the first with their baby boy Jesse.

"He has a cheeky streak. And, he has his Dad's appetite, he likes to eat, eat and eat," Gemma said.

Gemma has a rare congenital heart condition and her pregnancy was not without risk.

"My heart only has one ventricle to pump blood around my body. So, there were a few risks with blood supply for the baby and for me during my pregnancy. But my specialist was confident my heart was strong enough," Gemma said.

Her specialist, Professor David Celermajer, the Director of Adult Congenital Heart Services at RPA's Cardiology Department, has cared for Gemma since she was 16 years old.

"She was born with a single heart pumping chamber or a one pump heart. Almost all people have two pumps in their heart. One pump hearts are rare and often associated with early mortality in childhood or beyond," Professor Celermajer said.

As a child, Gemma had two corrective operations including the Fontan procedure – which is surgery which results in the flow of venous blood (blood without oxygen) through the body to the lungs without being pushed by the heart.

"Women with a one pump heart usually have a lot of problems falling pregnant, have high rates of early miscarriage and their babies tend to grow more slowly than normal," Professor Celermajer said.

"Only about one-in-three such young women end up with a successful pregnancy, although the odds are getting better with recent medical advances," he said.



With specialists at RPA's High Risk Obstetrics Clinic, he monitored Gemma's progress throughout her pregnancy and she had regular scans to check her heart and the baby's too.

"Towards the end of my pregnancy, the baby wasn't growing as well as the doctors would have liked. So, Jesse was delivered at RPA four weeks early. He was 1.9 kilograms. He was a tiny baby," Gemma said.

Jesse was admitted to RPA's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and was discharged a week later and is now at home.

"It was lovely to be able to bring Jesse home with us. The care we received was second to none. I trust Professor Celermajer with everything – with my life," Gemma said.

Jesse's now six weeks old and weighs over three kilograms. And, Gemma will now return to having a yearly check-up with Professor Celermajer.

"Gemma is amazing. She has had some heart palpitations and she takes some regular medication but overall, she has had an excellent quality of life. She has wonderful resilience and I couldn't be happier for her and Terry.

"Valentine's Day is all about celebrating matters of the heart. It's been a wonderful outcome for Gemma, Terry and baby Jesse. They are all doing super well," Professor Celermajer said.

New statewide mental health service launched

Sydney Local Health District has opened a new service to improve access to specialist mental health support for adults with an intellectual disability across NSW.

The Statewide Intellectual Disability Mental Health Outreach Service (SIDMHOS) provides advice and consultation to healthcare professionals working with adults with intellectual disabilities where there are concerns about their mental health or behaviour.

Data shows more than 125,000 people in NSW have an intellectual disability. And they are up to three times more likely to experience a mental health condition at any time in their life.

"Many will experience barriers to accessing mental health support in mainstream services," says David Thompson, a clinical nurse consultant coordinating the service.

"We aim to improve access to tailored, evidence-based treatment and support to individuals, their families and treating mental health care teams."

The multidisciplinary team, based at the Concord Centre for Mental Health, includes two psychiatrists, a psychiatric registrar, a clinical psychologist and a clinical neuropsychologist.

The team can provide advice over the phone to health professionals, conduct case reviews and hold joint clinical assessments with patients, families, and mental health teams.

For more information, please see the SIDMHOS webpage, email SLHD-SIDMHOS@health.nsw.gov.au or call 02 9767 7889.





Vaccination clinics open

MARCH 2021





Family donates special cot to RPA

For Raquel and Frank Virtu, it's a bittersweet time.

The couple, parents to daughters Mila, 3, and Allegra, 2, experienced the loss of their third child in November last year. Their baby, a boy named Luca Samuel, was stillborn.

"The midwife at RPA was so caring. She made the hardest of experiences somewhat easier," Raquel said.

At the time, visitor numbers to the hospital were limited as part of the District's response to COVID-19.

Raquel and Frank arranged to bring Luca home from RPA for 24 hours with the use of a Cuddle Cot – a specially designed cot fitted with a cooling system in a basket that lies beneath the baby.

It extends the precious time families are able to spend with their baby before saying goodbye.

"We're so glad we did it. Our girls were able to kiss and hold Luca. We told them, 'zHe's an angel who will look after you.' It helped them understand a little. And it gave us some comfort," Raquel said.

Now, they have donated one of the \$6,500 cots to the Women and Babies maternity service at RPA raising the money via Bears of Hope, a pregnancy and infant loss support group.

"We're so grateful to our family and friends who helped us reach our fundraising goal in a short period of time," Raquel said.

"We wanted to help others in the same situation. If another family is able to benefit... then some good has come from this," Raquel said.

The cot has Luca's name and date of birth embroidered on the hood of the basket.



Every year, about 100 families in Sydney Local Health District experience stillbirth or neonatal death. The District's multidisciplinary iSAIL (integrated Support After Infant Loss) Clinic, was set up in 2015 to provide care, support and education for bereaved families.

The service has supported more than 400 families to date, including Raquel and Frank.

"The death of an infant either before or after birth is known to be one of the most profound losses a family can experience," Vanessa Postle, a Clinical Midwife Consultant, at iSAIL said.

"We would like to sincerely thank Raquel and Frank for the donation of a Cuddle Cot to RPA Women and Babies. In a time of immense grief, they've thought of others. It'll make a big difference to families who face the loss of their baby," she said.

There are Cuddle Cots in the postnatal wards at RPA and Canterbury hospitals and in RPA's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Delivering sustainable healthcare

Sydney Local Health District is now using more than 2 million biodegradable, compostable or recyclable pill, medicine and denture cups a year, saving the environment and the budget more than \$45,000.

The District had already replaced some traditional surgical equipment, such as non-sterile plastic kidney dishes with those that

are made of 100 per cent biodegradable sugarcane fibre, and investigations are underway to replace the 3.2 million foam cups used each year with a biodegradable or compostable cup that is suitable for both hot and cold drinks.

The types of straws, anaesthetic trays, sterile kidney dishes, bowls, gallipots and injection trays are also being reviewed.

A new Sustainability Plan is in development which will outline the ways the District will work towards incorporating additional sustainability measures in key areas such as energy and water consumption, procurement, food and waste.

"Every small step we take will bring us closer to achieving the District's long-term goal



to be carbon neutral by 2030," says Carl Sharp, the District's Acting Health Product Manager.



Thanks, Hitachi



A huge thanks to Hitachi Australia and The Humpty Dumpty Foundation for donating a \$4,900 neonatal jaundice detector to Canterbury Hospital.

The detector will allow

staff to screen and diagnose babies for jaundice, either in the Special Care Nursery or on home visits, says Claire Devonport, the hospital's Maternity Unit Manager.

"It's an early diagnostic tool. Babies may be able to be treated at home, reducing the need for frequent visits to hospital."

It will primarily be used by midwives in the Canterbury Antenatal and Postnatal Service, or CAPS, which provides families with care by the same midwife during pregnancy and two weeks post birth, either at home or in community clinics.

Baby Aryan, who was born nine weeks early at 1.3 kilograms, was one of the first to use the new detector.

Stem-cell therapy unpicked



Human stem cell therapy, or regenerative medicine, is a field of medical research that could unlock treatments for many common, painful and even fatal conditions.

Leading stem cell scientist and the head of RPA Cell and Molecular Therapies, Professor John Rasko has authored a book about the hype-filled field.

"A fly on the wall assessment and reality check of both the heroes, the successes of stem cell research but also those charlatans... over-hyping where we really are."

Flesh Made New: The Unnatural History and Broken Promise of Stem Cells is co-written by John Rasko and Carl Power and published by HarperCollins Australia.

New world-class health education facility opens



The University of Sydney has opened the state-of-the-art Susan Wakil Health Building, a world-class facility purpose-built to support the future health workforce.

Located next to RPA and the Charles Perkins Centre, the eight-floor, 21,500m² building includes simulated clinical learning spaces and state-of-the-art research facilities.

"The University of Sydney and NSW Health have a long and strong history of working together to deliver world-class health services and research outcomes for the people of NSW," says Health Minister Brad Hazzard.

Last year the NSW Government announced a \$750 million redevelopment of RPA Hospital. The fast-tracked investment will be a game-changer for staff and patients, with plans to integrate with the Susan Wakil Health Building and ensure connectivity between hospital's world-class clinical services and the University's quality education and training opportunities.

Farewell after 40 years

RPA has farewelled one of its leading renal physicians from clinical practice, with Associate Professor Adrian Gillin's retirement marking an end to close to four decades of caring for patients and their families.

RPA has farewelled one of its leading renal physicians from clinical practice, with Associate Professor Adrian Gillin's retirement marking an end to close to four decades of caring for patients and their families.

"I've been at RPA almost continually since becoming a registrar nearly 40 years ago," he says.

"Throughout the years, I've had many incredible opportunities and my roles changed notably. I look back on the great time that I've had at RPA and the great friendships that I've formed over the decades."

RPA's Director of Renal Medicine Professor Steve Chadban said Adrian's expertise would be missed.

"He is a respected leader in his field, an internationally recognised researcher, a generous mentor to generations of trainees and a loyal friend and colleague to many of us in Renal Medicine. He had strong links with many in maternal medicine and across the entire Division of Medicine, where he held the prestigious role of Chair for his past five years at RPA."

Throughout his career, Associate Professor Gillin held key roles including as chair of Medical Grand Rounds. He has also focussed on ensuring homeless people have had access to healthcare.

Associate Professor Gillin will continue to support vulnerable communities in his retirement working pro bono work for the Exodus Foundation. He is also looking forward to spending more time with his wife and grandson.

