

# HealthMatters

Sydney – it's *your* local health district

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## RPA HealthOne at Green Square underway



**The construction of a new health centre RPA HealthOne is underway, bringing the local community another step closer to accessing comprehensive care close to home.**

The NSW Health Secretary Elizabeth Koff, Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson, and Health Infrastructure's Executive Director, Northern Region Leisa Rathborne were on hand to help turn the first sod to celebrate the project milestone.

They were joined by John Ajaka, the District's Chair of the Board, Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network Chief Executive officer

Nathalie Hansen and Professor Joshua Burns, Head of School and Dean of School of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney.

RPA HealthOne will provide health services to support the community's health and wellbeing and integrate specialist services and primary health practitioners in one spot.

It will focus on early intervention, health promotion and prevention including services that would traditionally be provided in a hospital setting at RPA.

"Sydney Local Health District, in partnership with Health Infrastructure, has been working with the community

on the plans for RPA HealthOne," Dr Anderson said.

Located at 944 Bourke Street, Zetland, close to the Green Square train station, the area is projected to be home to more than 61,000 people by 2031, making it one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in Australia.

The project is part of a \$100 million NSW Government HealthOne Strategy. RPA HealthOne is expected to be completed in early 2023.



For more information, visit [www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/RPA/HealthOne](http://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/RPA/HealthOne)



## Message from the Chief Executive



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

**As the world begins to open again, and things start to return to a more normal way of life as we know it, many of our community are still being impacted by the pandemic, keeping our hospitals and staff busy.**

A big thank you to all our staff for their continued efforts in caring for our community and continuing to go above and beyond to care for those who need it most.

Looking to the future, we have a number of exciting developments on the horizon with the new HealthOne now underway. This project is part of a \$100 million NSW Government HealthOne Strategy and will be key

to providing local care to the growing community in Green Square.

It feels like only yesterday that the Sydney Local Health District opened the vaccination centre at the Airport. Now 12 months on, we have provided over 70,000 vaccinations to security, air crew and their families. A big congratulations to the team involved as we close the centre this month.

We also celebrated another milestone this month, marking **rpavirtual's** second birthday. It was a great opportunity to recognising the important work the team continues to provide to our community virtually and the importance of this service, right at a time when it is needed most.

Until next time, stay healthy.

## Message from the Chair, District Board



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

**It was a great honour to join Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson AM, NSW Health Secretary Elizabeth Koff and Health Infrastructure's Executive Director, Northern Region, Leisa Rathborne, at the turning of the sod for the RPA HealthOne project which is part of a \$100 million NSW Government HealthOne Strategy. This centre will be a place for comprehensive care for our community, closer to home and I look forward to being there in early 2023 to welcome the community.**

A big congratulations to all those involved in the Airport vaccination centre. More than 500 staff worked

to make this vaccination centre possible and ensuring the safety of our community with over 70,000 vaccinations administered over the 12 month period. The District should be extremely proud of its involvement in the pandemic response, in particular this great initiative to be vaccinated at our borders.

It is exciting to see the movement and progress being made with the \$750 million RPA Redevelopment and I'm looking forward to sharing future plans with the community and our staff.

I hope you are all keeping well and thank you again to the SLHD Staff for their continued efforts in keeping our community safe.



## Family honours

**Members of the Sydney Local Health District family were named in the 2022 Australia Day Honours List, in recognition of their contribution to caring for our community.**

Dr Deborah Cockrell was appointed a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia for her significant service to dentistry, to professional organisations, and to education.

An international dental specialist who runs a private practice on the NSW Central Coast, Dr Cockrell is the Lead for Oral Health at the Centre for Research and Education into Ageing at Concord Hospital.

Pamela Cohen, Dr Peter Gianoutsos, Alice Kang and Dr Conrad Winer were awarded a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division.

Ms Cohen was awarded an OAM for her service to community health, and to the social work profession. Now at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, Ms Cohen was a social worker at the Thoracic Unit at RPA from 1966-1968.

Dr Gianoutsos was awarded an OAM for his service to medicine as a respiratory physician. He's been an Emeritus Consultant Physician at RPA since 2014. He was a Senior Respiratory Physician at the Respiratory and Sleep Medicine Department from 1971-2013.

Ms Kang (pictured) was awarded an OAM for service to veterans, and to community health. A founding member of



the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway in inner-Sydney, Ms Kang was Concord Hospital's Director of Marketing and Community Relations until her retirement in 2020.

Dr Winer was awarded an OAM for his service to musculoskeletal medicine. He was the Director of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Medicine at RPA for 19 years to 1998.

They are among the 1,040 Australians recognised in the Australia Day 2022 Honours List.

"I would like to thank them for their exceptional service and congratulate them on their outstanding achievement," Dr Teresa Anderson AM, the District's Chief Executive, said.

## Final call for airport vaccination centre

**It was the final call this month for our vaccination centre at Sydney Airport, now closed after providing more than 70,000 jabs.**

Since March last year, the centre has been home to more than 500 of our staff.

Initially, the team vaccinated airport and airline staff, including those from Australian Border Force, NSW Police, Australian Federal Police, plus cleaners, engineers, baggage handlers and biosecurity experts.

Later, they vaccinated the broader community, delivering 618 vaccinations on their busiest day.

Each member of the team has been given a special NSW Health COVID-19 Airport team pin in recognition of their service.

Nurse Unit Managers Kris Louis, Jane Raftesath and Jill Wild joined nurses, doctors, pharmacists, the administration

team and cleaners on the final day of operations.

"One of the best things about working here is having the opportunity to work very closely with people from all different professions – people from dentistry, doctors... [and] nurses with all different specialties," says Jill.

"We've all come together to make this work in a very changeable environment and I'm really proud of everything we've achieved and the teamwork."

Our airport crew is returning to RPA's vaccination centre or to their former roles across the District.





## Big advances in heart care

**Australia now has more adults than children living with congenital heart disease (CHD) and with more than 30,000 adults living with CHD, a national registry has been developed to document patients with CHD across their lifetime.**

“What an extraordinary revolution. There are very few examples in medicine of such tremendous advances in the past few decades,” Professor David Celermajer (pictured), the Director of Adult Congenital Heart Services at RPA’s Cardiology Department, said.

In 1950 almost every child with congenital heart disease (CHD) died. In 1975, about half of children with CHD died. In 2020, fewer than five per cent of children with CHD died of their disease.

“Conditions that were once fatal are now treated as chronic medical conditions. Advances in medicine and technology mean there are now more adults with CHD in Australia than children,” Professor Celermajer said.

He described it as a triumph of modern medicine, but said it has given rise to a new challenge.

“The challenge ahead is about how to best provide the complex, specialist medical care they need, plus emotional and social support, throughout their whole-of-life journey as adults with CHD,” he said.

Professor Celermajer is leading the project setting up a national registry of every child and adult with CHD in Australia, to document the prevalence of CHD, the burden of disease and clinical outcomes for patients with CHD across their lifetime.

“It will include more than 50,000 people with CHD from every state and territory and will be invaluable to patients, their families, healthcare professionals, healthcare providers and governments,” he said.

It’s one of a series of measures being implemented as a result of a federal government-funded National Strategic Action Plan which aims to reduce the impact of CHD for the estimated



65,000 children and adults living with the disease in Australia.

The Plan was devised in collaboration with clinicians, researchers, children and adults with CHD and their families, policymakers and community organisations – including national charity HeartKids which supports those impacted by CHD.

As well as being Director of Adult CHD Services at RPA – the largest such expert centre in Australia and one of the largest in the world – Professor Celermajer is a HeartKids board member.

## A virtual powerhouse

**The state’s first virtual hospital, rpavirtual, is set to become a research powerhouse, forming flagship partnerships with tertiary institutions and medical and health research centres to assess the effectiveness of virtual care.**

Launched in February 2020, rpavirtual combines the latest digital healthcare strategies and technology with the delivery of hospital level care in the community and rapidly redesigned

its services to support the District’s COVID-19 response.

About 38,000 patients have received virtual care – including more than 13,500 COVID-19 positive patients in SHA or in self-isolation at home.

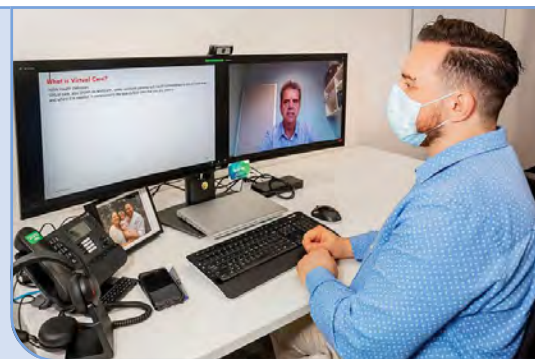
During the pandemic, rpavirtual also began to build a strong research program of research with the support of the District’s Director of Research Professor Warwick Britton.

An rpavirtual research committee, co-chaired by Professor Britton and the

District’s Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson, fosters partnerships with universities, research institutes and investigators at the District.

So far, the committee has assessed more than 40 collaborative research proposals.

The group have received a grant from Medical Research Future Fund which researchers will use to explore rpavirtual’s



experience with pulse oximetry in COVID-19 patients. The study’s results will apply Australia-wide.

“Research needs to be integral to clinical practice. We have to be nimble and flexible at integrating this with all our clinical staff in each of these studies,” Professor Britton said.



## Second birthday for rpavirtual

**And just like that, our virtual hospital has turned two.**

Launched in February 2020, **rpavirtual** has now cared for more than 36,000 patients after rapidly redesigning its services at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Its 24-hour Virtual Care Centre and the Sydney District Nursing service are key to its operations and combine the latest in digital healthcare strategies and technology.

The purpose-built Virtual Care Centre is equipped with ‘care pods’ with videoconferencing technology and the ability to remotely monitor patients with wearable health technology.

The team has grown from six registered nurses to more than 70 staff, including an Aboriginal Cultural Response Team.

Feedback has been positive with 88 per cent of patients reporting they felt confident at home knowing they were being supported virtually.

And **rpavirtual** has turned heads, winning a NSW Premier’s Award for Digital Excellence, coming second in the National Value Based Healthcare Awards and receiving



the Board Chair Award for Excellence at the District’s 2020 Innovation and Excellence Awards.

“Our team has also shared its learnings about virtual care with more than 50 agencies in Australia and internationally at conferences and forums in Malaysia, Singapore, the US and UK,” say general manager Miranda Shaw.

Happy birthday, virtuals.

## Lending a helping hand

**Our hospitals are currently under significant pressure due to COVID-19 case numbers, and health staff being furloughed.**

To help, we’ve implemented a new model of care where clinical and non-clinical staff from across Sydney Local Health District are assisting on our wards.

Your loved one will still get the very best medical care from our doctors and nurses, but we’ll have extra staff helping with other tasks, such as making beds, delivering meals and restocking supplies. This will ensure ward staff can focus on clinical care and take meal breaks to rest and recharge.

So far, we’ve had more than 300 staff offering to help from a wide variety of areas, including engineering, dental, research, internal audit, population health, community health, clinical governance and our sleep unit.

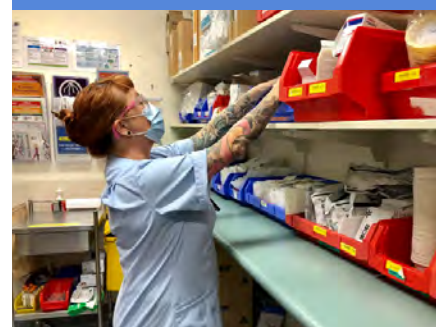
Even our Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson has donned scrubs this week to help deliver patient meals.

Staff with clinical backgrounds will assist with oral and eye care, mobilising patients, recording vital signs, toileting/catheter care, and pressure area care.

Those who do not have clinical backgrounds might tidy bed spaces, make beds, help patients eat, restock equipment or answer ward phones.

Sabrina Sharp (pictured) is usually a clinical nurse consultant in the RPA Diabetes Centre, but this week she’s helping out where she can.

“I come by at lunchtime to help with meals so the ward staff can have a proper break. And to relieve some pressure on our food services staff. It also helps families know that, while they can’t be here, their loved ones are still being cared for, no matter how busy we are.”





## Welcome new starters

**More than 100 medical graduate interns have joined Sydney Local Health District this year, with graduate registered nurses, midwives and allied health clinicians also welcomed to the ranks.**

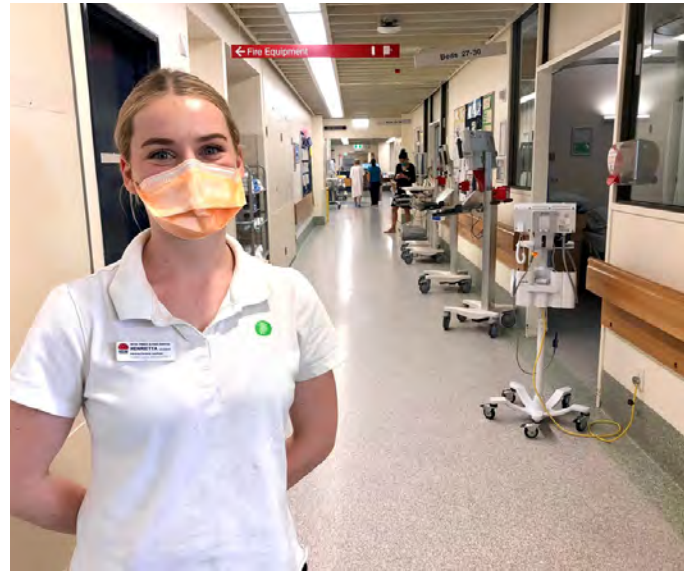
“They are beginning their careers during a crucial time and will provide valuable support for our teams during our ongoing COVID-19 response,” Dr Teresa Anderson, the District’s Chief Executive said.

Interns have completed their medical degree and are required to complete a supervised year of practice in order to become independent practitioners.

The new doctors will complete a comprehensive orientation program before beginning an on-the-job training program. They’ll work across RPA, Balmain and Dubbo hospitals, with others employed across Canterbury, Concord and Broken Hill hospitals.

Henrietta Gruzman (pictured) was one of the 230 graduate registered nurses and midwives welcomed across the District who will be based at RPA, Concord, Canterbury, Balmain, mental health, Community Health, Drug Health Services, metro/rural exchange and at Tresillian.

“Our supported and facilitated programs provide opportunities to work across a range of clinical specialties to develop and consolidate skills, knowledge and practice,” said Laura Johns, the District’s Acting Workforce Nurse Manager.



And, 34 allied health graduates – physiotherapists, dietitians, occupational therapists, social workers and speech pathologists – will work across Balmain Canterbury, Concord and RPA hospitals and Child and Family Health Services.

“They’ll participate in a training program which aims to support new graduates with the transition from student to health professional by further developing their knowledge, skills and confidence in key professional areas,” Sarah Whitney, the District’s Director of Allied Health, said.

A very big welcome to all our new starters.

## National award for exercise physiologist

**She has already made a name for herself as Sydney Local Health District’s first exercise physiologist in palliative care.**

Now, Caoimhe Scales has won a national award, honoured as the



Accredited Exercise Physiologist of the Year for 2021 by Exercise and Sports Science Australia.

Based at Concord, Caoimhe led the development and implementation of the District’s Palliative Care Community Exercise Physiology Service. It was set up at Concord in October last year and has now been expanded to RPA, providing patients with exercise advice and programs to help maintain and improve their function, independence and quality of life.

“Each patient has active goals they’re working towards,” she says. “For example, making everyday tasks a

little easier, re-engaging in activities or hobbies or being able to better manage living in their own home.”

Associate Professor Ghauri Aggarwal, the District’s Clinical Deputy Director for Cancer Services and Palliative Care, congratulated Caoimhe on her award win.

“Caoimhe has enormous enthusiasm, passion and energy. She has spearheaded the development of our new service which aims to maintain and enhance our patients’ functional abilities as they approach advancement in their underlying diseases.”

Congratulations, Caoimhe.



## Kylie Kwong dishes up

**Celebrity chef Kylie Kwong has teamed up with eateries in Eveleigh to provide free meals for RPA staff, to help with the Omicron workload.**

The meals (and drinks) are part of Kylie's new weekly ritual providing health workers with "a nourishing boost to their spirits and tummies before starting yet another long, complex, often heartbreaking shift".

"For two years, we've observed the daily mounting pressures that our frontline medical workers remain under with very little, if any, opportunity for a rest in between," she says.

"From all of us here at Lucky Kwong, thank you, thank you, thank you. We see you, we care about you and we are just so grateful for everything you are doing for our community."

A huge thanks to all at Lucky Kwong, Bekya Egyptian, Eat Fuh, Pepper Seeds Thai and Re. And to the Addison Road Food Pantry for delivering the meals.



## A team to support our most vulnerable

**Last year, we set up a Vulnerable Persons Outbreak Management Team to help those in our community who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or living in social housing keep safe from COVID-19.**

This year, we've partnered with the Department of Communities and Justice, the Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern, local non-government organisations and community leaders to further support testing and vaccination.

At least 5,000 people live in about 500 boarding houses across the District – accounting for 47 per cent of all registered boarding houses in NSW.

"The ease of transmission of the Omicron variant has provided an extra challenge," says Paul Clenaghan, who heads our Homeless and Rough Sleepers Program.

"Many boarding house residents have mental health or drug health issues and are less likely to seek early detection of COVID-19. So, we identified further ways to help them, particularly those who require extra assistance managing their health and wellbeing during self-isolation."

In one week last month, the team visited 22 boarding houses, and diagnosed 40 residents with COVID-19.

Most completed isolation at the District-run Special Health Accommodation.

So far this month, we've also run walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinics at Redfern and Waterloo for social housing residents, and have another planned for Common Ground in Camperdown.





## Branch meeting

**As if COVID-19 wasn't already packing a punch, one of our grandest trees outside RPA hit the deck this month, crushing a car and blocking the entrance to the ambulance bay.**

Fortunately, there were no injuries and all arriving ambulances were diverted into the bay via another entrance.

A huge thanks to NSW Fire and Rescue and the State Emergency Service volunteers who were on scene quickly, and had the enormous tree sliced up and out of the way in less than an hour.

And thanks to our staff who jumped in swiftly to manage the incident and ensure it didn't impact our patients.



## Jabbing to the beat

**Did you know Yabun means "music to a beat" in the Gadigal language – making it the perfect name for Australia's largest celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander culture.**

The Yabun Festival is held every year on 26 January – this year we were there to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations for children and adults.

Our team provided more than 80 vaccinations to guests at Victoria Park in Camperdown.

## Lucky 13

**At RPA and Canterbury Hospitals we celebrated the start to 2022 with the arrival of 13 babies on New Year's Day.**

At 1:11am Madeline and Simon from Dulwich Hill welcomed their first child, baby Elliot Joshua almost two weeks early at Canterbury Hospital.

"He's pretty cute," said new dad Simon.

It was a particularly special New Year for this new little family with their happy news shared across the globe.

Madeline's sister gave birth to a baby girl in the UK, two hours before Elliot was born.

"Mum and dad are pretty excited – they have two grandchildren in one night," Madeline said.

Congratulations to all of our new parents – and thank you to all of our maternity staff who were on shift.



## Pawsome work

**Our people never stop helping others – and even our canine friends seem to know we're a safe haven. A lost and exhausted malamute wandered into our King George V building at RPA.**

Security staff member Steven MacGregor swung into action, getting the old boy a cool drink of water, procuring a lead from a nurse and walking him to Sydney University veterinary hospital.

Vet staff told Steven the dog had been missing for a month and he's now been reunited with his very grateful owner.

