

HealthMatters

Sydney – it's *your* local health district

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New era in healthcare



Concord Hospital's new clinical services building has officially opened, with the \$341 million redevelopment marking a new era for staff, patients and the community.

The eight-storey building has 214 beds and houses a comprehensive cancer centre, aged health and rehabilitation centre and The National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare.

It has been named in honour of veteran and former NSW RSL President Godfrey Eugene "Rusty" Priest, a strong supporter of the hospital and a champion for veterans' health and wellbeing.

During the official ceremony, Rusty's daughter Carole-Anne and son Tim were presented with a plaque recognising their father's significant contribution to veterans.

Our clinicians can now continue to provide world-class care matched by state-of-the-art facilities, including larger, single-bed rooms, and the latest in technology and equipment.

"This is a dream come true for my clinician colleagues and my patients," the District's Clinical Director for Cancer Care Illona Cunningham said.

The redevelopment was fast-tracked to support the state's pandemic response with dedicated wards opening in September last year for patients with COVID-19.

Last month, a traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremony was held to cleanse the space and promote visitors' wellbeing.

On hand for the opening were Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson, Health Minister Brad Hazzard, Minister for



Veterans David Elliott, local MP John Sidoti, the District's Board Chair John Ajaka, the hospital's General Manager Dr Genevieve Wallace, Health Infrastructure's Executive Director of Northern Region Leisa Rathborne and Roberts Co Chief Executive Alison Mirams.

Now, we're starting on new \$32.4 million multi-storey car park.



*Like to see more?
Watch a clip from the
official opening here*



Message from the Chief Executive



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

Another year off to a flying start, with many new and exciting projects starting to take shape. Our team are still working tirelessly to deal with COVID-19 in the community but it has been a proud moment to see the way in which our staff have come together to work together and deliver a collaborative care model to continue to provide the best care for our patients.

March means March Arts, with a modified program due to the pandemic. This hasn't stopped the incredible artists bringing colour to blank walls and developing new concepts of integrating technology into the arts.

We had the momentous official opening of The Rusty Priest building after the completion of the \$341 million redevelopment of the hospital. This building will provide the community with a comprehensive cancer centre, an aged health and rehabilitation centre and the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare.

I am also very excited that we have commenced the filming of *RPA* which is making a return soon. This is exciting news for the District, as it's a way of showcasing the incredible work being done by our staff every day to help the lives of our patients and community.

Until next time, stay healthy.

Message from the Chair, District Board



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

This month we had a number of exciting announcements including the official opening of Concord Repatriation General Hospital, with the \$341 million build being brought forward to accommodate the increase in demand with the pandemic.

It must also be noted that RPA was voted as one of the top hospitals in the world, leading the way in Australia which requires an enormous congratulations to the staff for continuing to provide excellence in healthcare for the community.

We look to the exciting developments across the number of capital works projects that

are continuing to take shape across the District including the state-wide Parents and Baby Unit at RPA, turning of the sod at Green Square and the \$750 million redevelopment of RPA hospital.

I would like to recognise that the last few months in particular have been challenging for our staff with the peaks of the pandemic and recognise the continued efforts our staff are putting in to protect our community. This hard work and dedication does not go unnoticed and I thank you all for your continued support in the pandemic response.

Trailblazer shares her story



On 8 March we celebrated International Women's Day, and this year's theme is *Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*. One of the gastroenterologists, Payal Saxena, has forthright career advice for women in her field.

"Set a career goal rather than wait for career opportunities to fall into your lap. Consider what you want and how to achieve it. Work hard and it will pay off." —Payal Saxena

She's a trailblazing gastroenterologist who specialises in interventional endoscopy and is a Visiting Medical Officer at RPA's AW Morrow Gastroenterology and Liver Centre.

"It's a male dominated field. About 20 per cent of gastroenterologists in Australia are women and, globally in my sub-specialty of interventional endoscopy, only about one per cent are women," she said.

Trained in Sydney, the now Associate Professor Saxena completed an Interventional Endoscopy and Research Fellowship at the internationally recognised Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States.

Invited by RPA's Director of Endoscopy, Arthur Kaffes, to join his team, she returned to Australia, but initially faced opposition from some about introducing the pioneering procedures.

She later co-founded the Women in Gastroenterology Network Asia-Pacific (or WIGNAP) – a network which provides training opportunities, mentoring and develops the leadership skills of women in the field.

Now she's secured funding for a 12-month Interventional Endoscopy Fellowship specifically for training women – to be offered for the first time in 2023.

There's another first at the AW Morrow Gastroenterology and Liver Centre this year too – all of the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Advanced Trainees and Fellows are women.

They are Dr Simone Chin, Dr Rachael Jacob, Dr Emily Nash, Dr Nadia Perera, Dr Lauren Tang and Dr Karen Waller (pictured with Associate Professor Saxena and Associate Professor Simone Strasser).

RPA ranked top hospital



We are excited to announce that RPA has been ranked the best hospital in Australia, and number 71 in the world, in Newsweek's 2022 World's Best Hospital list. RPA is one of just seven Australian hospitals to make this year's top 250 hospital global list.

This recognition is the result of the incredible work that all our staff do in caring for our patients and the community, congratulations to all.

"It's the first time women have been appointed to all of these positions. They're a group of smart, hardworking women who are supportive of each other," Associate Professor Simone Strasser, a Senior Staff Specialist at the Centre, said.

Associate Professor Strasser, who specialises in liver transplantation and has worked at RPA since 1999, will act as a mentor for them.

Associate Professor Strasser, the Immediate Past President of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia, has outlined ways to improve career opportunities for women in gastroenterology.

She's identified barriers to training, a desire for work-life balance and a lack of female role models among the reasons for the gender imbalance in the speciality.



SBA to fast track research



A new health and medical research complex is set to fast track the translation of research from the bench to the bedside – improving the lives of patients across Sydney Local Health District, NSW and beyond.

The Sydney Biomedical Accelerator (SBA) is a collaborative initiative between the District and the University of Sydney, which will combine clinical excellence with research and education expertise in an all-encompassing health and innovation precinct.

“At no other time in history have we seen how important partnership is, than through the last two years of the pandemic with our partnerships across NSW Health, our university, research and industry collaborators and the broader community,” Dr Teresa Anderson AM, the District’s Chief Executive, said.

The SBA will be a keystone of the Camperdown Health Education and Research Precinct and establish the region as a hotspot for health and medical research and innovation at the heart of Tech Central. It will also feature a strong partnership with the Centenary Institute as the first research collaborator of the SBA.

The activation of the SBA will begin with the refurbishment of Gloucester House and creation of a new Innovation Hub by next year, with two new buildings ready for occupancy in early 2026.

More than 180 individuals joined the SBA’s first industry engagement event, including former NSW Health Secretary Elizabeth Koff, Chancellor of the University of Sydney Belinda Hutchinson AC, Dr Teresa Anderson AM, Professor Robyn Ward AM, and Centenary Institute’s Board Chair Joseph Carrozzi AM.

CTE study finds alarming trend

Neuropathologist at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the University of Sydney, Associate Professor Michael Buckland and colleagues have been studying donated brains of retired sportspeople. Of the 21 brains donated by the sports people that were prone to repetitive head injury, half had chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disease.

“I never saw CTE until I started looking at retired sportspeople,” said Associate Professor Buckland.

The study was discussed in a research letter published

by the *Medical Journal of Australia*, where Associate Professor Michael Buckland and colleagues highlighted findings from the first three years of the Australian Sports Brain Bank (ASBB).

He described the results of the study as “disturbing” and expressed the importance of those regulating contact sports such as Australian Rules football and rugby to acknowledge the risks

attached to the games. CTE has been associated with a number of neuropsychological issues including impact on mood, changes in behaviour as well as cognitive impairment.

A festival to celebrate the arts in Health

Aboriginal artist Lee Hampton's latest work is all about connection.

"The inspiration behind the artworks was to represent Concord Hospital and its services," he said.

The painting – which Lee describes as urban Aboriginal art – depicts an aerial view of Concord and surrounding suburbs, showing the reach of the hospital and the services' links with the community.

The painting is one of three artworks Sydney Local Health District commissioned him to create for the new Clinical Services Building at Concord.

The building will also feature a mural hand painted by Rachel Stone and major works by Alesandro Ljubicic and Tim Maguire.

Maguire's floral artwork will include a remembrance poppy, painted on aluminium, and will be the centrepiece of the new main concourse area.



**Check out
the arts
website**

For many, the District's annual celebration of arts in healthcare, March Arts, will provide the first opportunity to view them.

"The Arts make a powerful contribution to the health and wellbeing of our patients, their families, our staff and the community. March Arts highlights the benefits of

integrating the arts into the design and delivery of our services, facilities and hospitals," Dr Teresa Anderson, the District's Chief Executive said.

The month-long festival also features Sydney-based artist Charles Clapshaw who uses augmented reality and other technology in his works.

More about the March Arts program can be found on the website slhdarts.org

District expands focus on LGBTIQ+ community

Shih-Chi Kao's team aims to empower the LGBTIQ+ community.

"We partner with our LGBTIQ+ community to enhance their health and wellbeing. Our vision is to deliver equitable healthcare services that are responsive to their needs," Dr Kao, the Director of Priority Population Programs, said.

As home to one of Australia's biggest LGBTIQ+ communities, the District is dedicated to ensuring that all people, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity, feel accepted, welcomed, and valued.

The District is recruiting a new LGBTIQ+ Program Manager in Population Health, to support implementation of the first *NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022–2027*.

Launched by the NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard, the strategy is a comprehensive plan to understand and address the health and wellbeing needs of the state's LGBTIQ+ population.

Evidence shows the LGBTIQ+ community experiences poorer health outcomes, overall, than the rest of the general population – with health issues and barriers to accessing healthcare disproportionately impacting them.

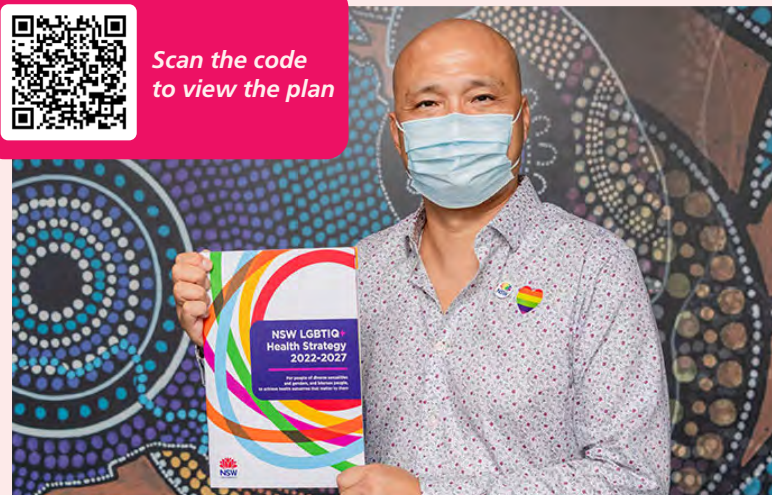
The strategy focuses on delivering high quality, safe, inclusive and responsive care for this community

with the District committed to delivering these key priorities.

The *NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022–2027* was developed by an expert advisory committee, in consultation with more than 1,600 LGBTIQ+ people and more than 750 NSW Health staff.



**Scan the code
to view the plan**





Older people get health boost

Kevin McCutcheon was lost when his wife died.

"Maureen gave me a purpose in life. She was perfect. She was worth solid gold," the retired manufacturing engineer, 81, said of his wife of more than 50 years.

"When she died, I was moping about, thinking 'what's left in life?' I wasn't eating properly, and I dropped a lot of weight. There wasn't a lot of meat on my bones."

His GP referred him to the Malnutrition Intervention Clinic at Concord Hospital – a nutrition clinic which helps older people eat well and remain healthy for longer.

This year's theme for Dietitians Week is "Dietitians Improve Lives."

The Dietitians Association of Australia states research shows about 50 per cent of older Australians are either at risk of malnutrition or are malnourished.

"Eating well is very important as people become older. It can help them stay fit, mobile and independent," Susan Bloomfield-Stone, the dietitian

who runs the Malnutrition Intervention Clinic, said.

She's one of more than 80 dietitians and 20 dietitian assistants who are employed in a range of different practice areas in Sydney Local Health District.

Susan empowers older people living in the community to make changes that will enhance their health and wellbeing.

"As people age, missing meals and poor appetite can be common. Eating can feel like an effort and weight loss may occur. This can make it difficult to stay well and strong enough to keep doing everyday tasks and it can increase people's risk of falls or sickness," she said.

At the first Clinic appointment, she conducts a nutrition assessment and helps people to address any challenges they may face.

With Susan's help, Kevin has learnt about the value of healthy eating. He's added more nutritious food to



his daily diet and makes sure he eats meals regularly.

Susan also encouraged him to volunteer at a local native plant nursery where he's met others with similar interests.

While his weight has fluctuated over time, Kevin credits Susan's support with helping him to live at home on his own.

"I don't want to sell and move away. Everywhere around me I have memories of Maureen and our family. How can you walk away from that?"

"Susan has had a major impact on my life. She's educated and motivated me to make better food choices. Her guidance has meant I've been able to stay in my own home."

Extra support on offer for new parents

Laura Ramos De Carvalho and Rodrigo Nemer are first time parents.

Laura and Rodrigo have been meeting with Caroline Parkee, a Child and Family Health Nurse who has been supporting the family as they tackle the challenges that can come with parenthood.

The couple's parents live in Brazil and were unable to fly to Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Laura was worried not only about Paulo, but her own health.

"I was very anxious about being a new parent and not being with my family," she said. "My mum had post-partum depression when she had me, so I was very worried that I would get it too."

Caroline was able to offer advice about Paulo's growth and development and seek additional help for Laura when she needed it.

Caroline is now based at a new Child and Family Health Clinic at Zetland that caters for the growing number of families who live in the area.

Child and Family Health nurses provide free health, growth and development checks for babies and children from birth to five years at clinics in 17 different locations in Sydney Local Health District.

There are future plans to also provide allied health and community paediatric clinics as well as RPA antenatal outreach appointments for people expecting a baby.



Men of League donation

We'd like to express our gratitude to the Men of League Foundation for their support of nursing at Concord Hospital.

Former Eastern Suburbs rugby league player, and Foundation member, Ron Pomeroy has helped to raise \$4,000 for the hospital.

He joined former players Kevin Junee and Bob Farrugia – and Concord's Fremont Café owner Jim Filippopoulos who also supported the cause – to present a cheque to the hospital's Director of Nursing, Helen Goldsack.

"We're grateful for the generous donation. The ongoing support of the community for our staff has kept them going – especially during the pandemic," she says.

The hospital received a similar donation in 2020.

Thank you to everyone involved. Your efforts are very much appreciated.



Hanging up her hat after 38 years

Sydney Local Health District clinical manager Judith Dixon has hung up her hat 38 years after arriving at RPA – and 46 years after starting her nursing career in England.

But she has no intention of retiring from life with swimming, kayaking and travelling on the agenda.

Judith started her nursing career in Cheltenham in the UK in 1976, arriving in Sydney in 1984 after deciding not to return home after her one-year working holiday visa in Australia.

She spent 25 years at RPA in the emergency department and the past 10 as clinical manager for our critical care and gastro and liver streams. She's also worked at Canterbury and Concord hospitals.

In her time with us, she's also managed to complete a Master's in healthcare administration and management and a PhD in health service management.

Thank you, Judith. We wish you all the very best. You will be greatly missed.





World Oral Health Day

Sydney Dental Hospital's Shilpi Ajwani has a mantra she'd like to share – healthy body, healthy mouth.

"As face masks come off, it's time to take charge of your smile and overall health, including your mouth and teeth," Associate Professor Ajwani, the Head of Oral Health Promotion and Oral Health Research at the Hospital, says.



World Oral Health Day is a day to promote oral health and the importance it has on our overall health.

She suggests a simple daily routine can help to maintain good oral health and a beautiful smile:

- brush your teeth twice a day; after breakfast and before bed
- choose to drink water over soft drinks, juices and other sugary options
- add more fresh vegetables and fruits to your meals instead of eating processed food
- have a regular dental check-up

"Taking care of your oral health – your teeth and gums – every day is key to your health, happiness and wellbeing," said consumer representative, Ramin Taghvaei who was helping share the message.

United we shine



Sydney celebrated diversity and inclusiveness – with the 44th Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade.

Our District is home to one of Australia's biggest LGBTIQ+ communities – and we're proud to support the parade. This year's theme is United We Shine.

We are also proud to partner with our LGBTIQ+ community to improve their health and wellbeing. Our vision is to deliver equitable healthcare services that are responsive to their needs.

Our Population Health team got into the spirit, celebrating their pride/allyship for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Farewell Mimi

After 32 years at RPA, Mimi Antonios has hung up her uniform and left the campus for a well-deserved retirement.

Mimi worked in several roles across Sydney Local Health District, most recently as nursing unit manager of one of our intensive care units.

In 2017, she donated a kidney through the Australian Paired Kidney Exchange Program to help a stranger have a better chance at survival. That generous act enabled her husband, Anthony (pictured), to receive a kidney from another altruistic stranger.

Happy retirement, Mimi. You'll be greatly missed. We thank you for your service and your incredible contributions throughout the years.



Social Work Day

We'd like to recognise the hard work, dedication and resilience of our social workers who support our patients and their families across our District.

This year's theme for World Social Work Day is "Co-building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind."

The theme encapsulates the heart of social work – working together to holistically care for the health and wellbeing of our patients, and ensuring their needs are met.

There are more than 200 social workers employed in our facilities and services and they collaborate with our Medical, Nursing, Allied Health and Aboriginal Health Liaison teams.

We'd like to thank our social workers for everything they do, each and every day, to deliver extra special care for our community.

