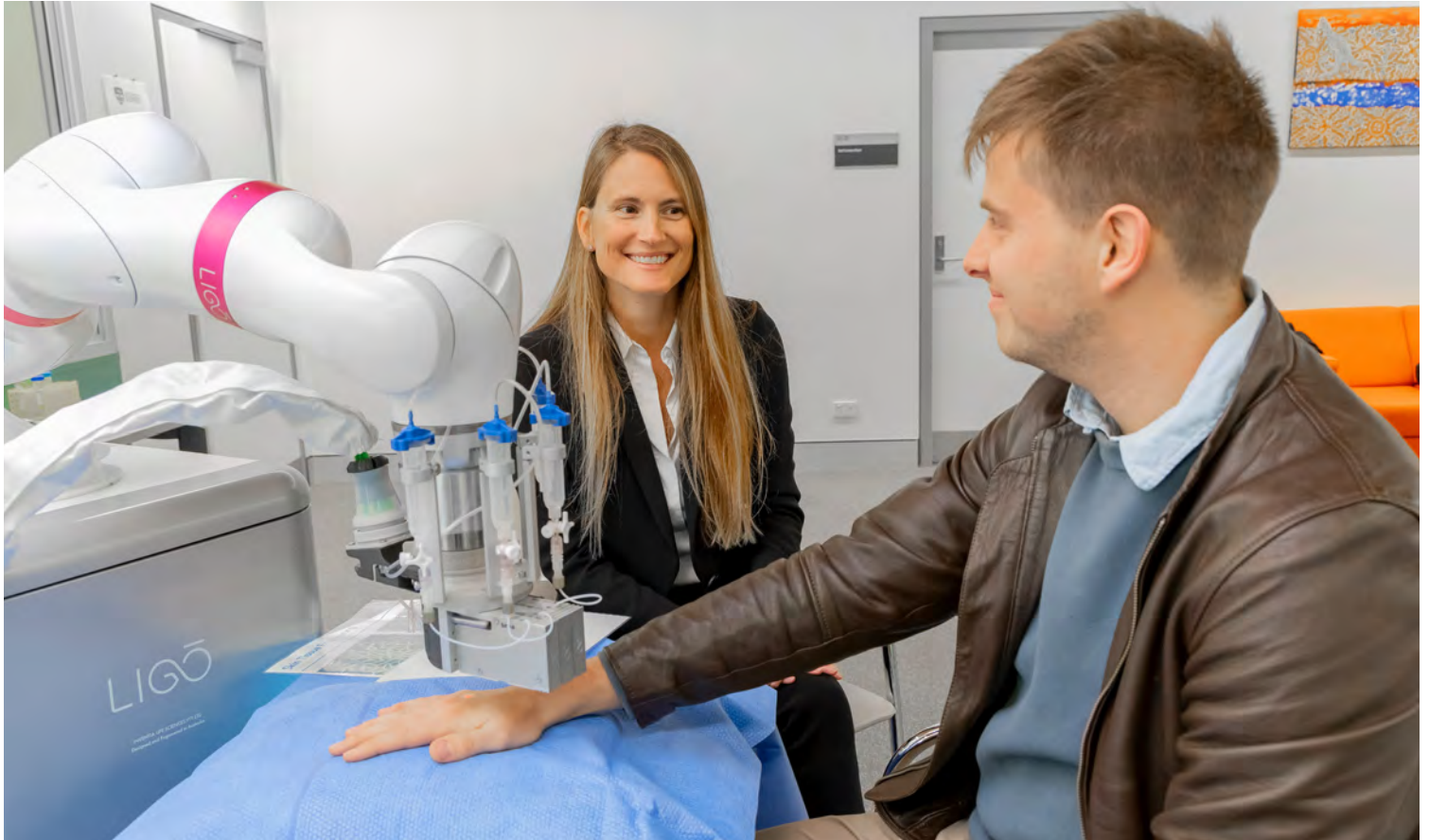
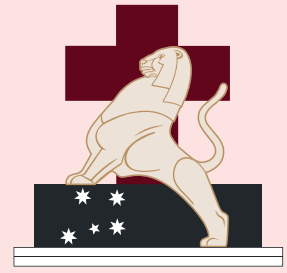


# Concord Connection

The official newsletter of Concord Hospital



## How printed skin changed game

At the Concord Burns Unit Skin Lab, Dr Joanneke Maitz saw a problem in the way soft tissue reconstruction and wounds were being treated.

“We cannot take skin from someone else and put it onto a wound because after three weeks it would be rejected, it’s not a permanent solution,” she said. “We needed something that we could just get off the shelf.”

As the Group Lead of the Burns and Reconstructive Surgery Research Group, she drove a new method of skin tissue engineering in the hospital – a process using robotics where skin could be printed directly onto a patient’s wound.

Joanneke’s presentation was a highlight of the first day of the Sydney Innovation and Research Symposium, as part of Sydney Innovation Week.

The novel process is based on the already available Rastrum technology, which bio-prints cells into a three-dimensional structure and recreates tissue.



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Sydney  
Local Health District



“We have a fully equipped laboratory attached to our operating theatre that allows us to grow skin,” said Joanneke.

“We take a biopsy from a patient and isolate the cells from the skin in that lab, and we can grow those cells into shapes.”

After rigorous testing and research, in collaboration with colleagues from the Charles Perkins Centre, the new method involves using the Inventia Life Science LIGO platform, a printhead mounted on a robotic arm.

A burns patient is now able to have skin 3D printed from their own cells with the process encouraging faster healing and less scarring.

“This is the future. It is a world first, at Concord Hospital, to 3D print at the bedside,” she said.

In opening the Symposium’s first day, Concord’s Director of Medical Services Dr Stewart Condon said high-profile innovations such as 3D skin printing and other “incremental” innovations could transform how teams across the District worked.

“Innovation can and should and will make a difference today and into the future,” he said.

Then-District Chief Executive Graeme Loy, PSM, said an event like Sydney Innovation Week, and the expertise it celebrated, would make the District stronger.

“The care that we offer helps today, the research and innovation that we will chase will change the problems of tomorrow,” Graeme said.

“The week, like this, is fantastic because it creates a platform, the ability to talk about it, and opportunity to recognise and celebrate achievements and successes and what might come next. That’s how you build culture, and a strong culture is how you build a strong innovation and research ecosystem.”

Front page: Joanneke Maitz, Group Lead of the Burns and Reconstructive Surgery Research Group, prints new skin on a volunteer’s hand.  
Above: A presentation on day one of the Innovation Symposium at Concord.

## Parkinsingers find their voices



Jessica Lamond, Concord Hospital Senior Speech Pathologist, is passionate about giving patients the best tools to improve their communication.

She facilitated the Concord Parkinsingers, a therapeutic singing group designed specifically for people with Parkinson’s disease and related movement disorders.

“The eight-week program helped our patients with breathing, speech, rhythm, vocal intensity, and social connectedness,” she said.

“All attendees were also linked with our large multi-disciplinary team in the Movement Disorders and Parkinson’s Disease service and integrated with other therapeutic programs available.”

Sessions were run in conjunction with a Registered Music Therapist, using evidence-based therapy designed to enhance communication skills and general wellbeing.

The singing group specifically for people living with Parkinson’s Disease began thanks to a donation from Pymont Ultimo Glebe Men’s Shed in 2023.



At the end of the term, family and carers were invited to connect with fellow music lovers for a final performance by patients where they showcased their new skills.

“We’ve received wonderful, positive feedback from participants, with 60 per cent reporting an increase in how they were able to communicate on a typical day,” she said.

“We had one participant say it has been a delightful journey that has brought joy and a sense of worth, and another can hardly wait for the next program to begin.”

We’ve received wonderful, positive feedback from participants, with 60 per cent reporting an increase in how they were able to communicate.



Above: Members of the group sing at a recent event at Concord.

## Message from the General Manager

Welcome to the Winter issue of Concord Connection.

It is a wonderful time to be working as the Acting General Manager at Concord Hospital.



There is so much happening within our hospital community and it’s great that we can highlight these achievements in our latest newsletter.

Concord Hospital has long had a reputation for first class research and it’s inspiring to see the ways in which our teams are finding new ways to improve the extraordinary care we provide.

The remarkable work of the Burns and Reconstructive Surgery Research Group with the robotic skin printing is pioneering and impressive. As Group Lead Dr Joanneke Maitz states, “This is the future.”

The commitment to improve patient outcomes is evident with the introduction of the Sip Til Send program, being monitored by the Concord Institute of Academic Surgery. This new fasting program will allow pre-operative patients to continue to drink small amounts of clear fluids right until they are sent for surgery. This will make fasting for surgery easier and enhance the patient experience.

One achievement I would like to mention is that of our cohort of medical trainees who recently passed the Basic Physician Trainee Clinical Exam. Our trainees produced the highest results in the state this year. I would like to congratulate all of them on this incredible result.

In this newsletter we also look at some of the remarkable people who work at Concord, such as runner and technical officer Mieke Masselos, nurse and badminton Olympian Tiffany Ho and Director of Medical Services Dr Stewart Condon with his insights on effective leadership.

Concord Hospital strives to develop a workplace culture that is vibrant and exciting and it’s a pleasure to share these stories celebrating same.

**Anthony Dombkins**  
Acting General Manager





## Surgeon's invaluable opportunity



Neurosurgeon Dr Benjamin Thomas is keen to take the lessons he has learnt at Concord Hospital back to Papua New Guinea and help expand the availability of his specialty in his home country.

Benjamin has been working at Concord alongside neurosurgeon Dr Prakash Damodaran on a Rowan Nicks Fellowship awarded by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The fellowships are awarded to clinicians identified as future medical or surgical leaders who can share their skills and expertise when they return to their home countries.

Benjamin said he had found the fellowship and connections he'd made with Australian colleagues invaluable.

"It's been a very valuable opportunity for me to come and work here and learn from the neurosurgeons here," he said. Benjamin said he had been keen to make spinal surgery a key part of his time in Australia.

"[My focus] is mainly spine because 95 per cent of my work is cranial and 5 per cent spinal," he said. "It's been a good exposure for me to learn from the guys here on the spine, so that is one big thing that I will take back when I return."

Benjamin has extended his initial five-month stay at Concord to a year and said he hoped to build on the connections he had made here.

"I've met a lot of other neurosurgeons ... they're important links that we should have with the guys here to help develop surgery standards in PNG," he said.

"Dr Damodaran has already made two trips up to PNG already and we've done some cases together but I'm thinking definitely there will be a lot more visits."

**It's been a very valuable opportunity for me to come and work here and learn from the neurosurgeons here ...**

Please contact Dr Benjamin Thomas ([dr.benjamin\\_thomas@yahoo.com](mailto:dr.benjamin_thomas@yahoo.com)) or Dr Prakash Damodaran ([office@neurosurgery.sydney](mailto:office@neurosurgery.sydney)) if you are interested in contributing to the development of specialist healthcare services in PNG.

*Above: Neurosurgeon Dr Ben Thomas is undertaking a Rowan Nicks Scholarship at Concord Hospital.*

## Guideline change puts patients on new fast track



Patients at Concord Hospital will now be allowed to drink small amounts of approved fluids before they undergo surgery in a significant change to fasting requirements.

The Sip Til Send program was launched at the hospital on August 12 and allows patients to consume 200ml of clear fluids – such as water or clear apple juice – every hour, right up until they are sent to theatre.

Anaesthetist Amy Lawrence, a member of the Concord Institute of Academic Surgery, said the previous rules meant patients fasted from fluids for "way too long".

"The rules are still the same as they always have been ... no food for six hours before you come into surgery," she said.

"But we know that water or clear fluids clear a lot quicker from the stomach, actually, generally within about 15 minutes to half an hour ... So this revolutionises [fluid fasting] and just allows people to drink small amounts of water coming up to any procedure."

Pioneered in the UK's National Health Service, Sip Til Send is designed to improve the patient experience and reduce dehydration and prolonged fluid deprivation.

Amy said the main driver of the initiative was to help patients feel better.

"It will make a big change to how people feel ... We also are hoping that it will reduce other adverse outcomes that you can get from prolonged fluid fasting, such as low blood pressure afterwards, renal failure, nausea and vomiting – all of those sorts of things which are not nice to experience after you've had surgery."

*Above: Nurse Wai Ki Tsui discusses the new Sip Til Send fasting program with patient Kathryn Araujo.*

## Upgraded ACE Unit opens

The refurbished Concord Hospital's Ambulatory Care Endoscopy (ACE) Unit has reopened and will provide a much-improved experience for patients and staff.

The Unit is part of the Gastroenterology Department, with staff performing more than 6500 procedures a year.

Renovations to the clinic include upgraded fixtures, fittings and lighting, painting and flooring, and general facility refurbishment for smoother service delivery.

Clinical Associate Professor Peter Katelaris, Head of Concord's Gastroenterology Department and District Co-Clinical Stream Director, said the refurbished unit delivers an improved experience for patients and for staff.



"It's a non-threatening environment for patients, with warm, soft, lighting, clean colours. Modernised and fit-for purpose," he said.

"A refurbished modernised work environment, does wonders for staff morale also."

The ACE Unit plays a pivotal role in the District through diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopic services, a motility and gastrointestinal function service, intestinal ultrasound, fibroscan and specialty hepatology and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) clinics.

The Direct Access Colonoscopy (DAC) clinic is the latest service added to the Unit, supporting patients who have received a positive faecal occult blood test (FOBT) with bowel cancer detection.

*Above: Clinical Associate Professor Peter Katelaris gives Skye Cooke and Grace Scott a tour of the refurbished ACE Unit.*



## Leadership forum puts focus on action



A willingness to act and being prepared to fail are key elements of leadership, according to Concord Hospital Director of Medical Services Dr Stewart Condon.

Stewart was the speaker at the hospital's first leadership forum, held at the Medical Education Centre in late July.

Using stories from his time with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Médecins Sans Frontières, he focused on the ideas of a duty to care – for patients, colleagues, friends or neighbours – a duty of care to those you work with and backing your belief.

Doing something is really important. Your actions really do, a lot of the times, speak louder than words.

While he hoped the audience could learn from the challenges he'd faced throughout his career, Stewart said the most important aspect of leadership is to act.

"I'd encourage you to act," he said.

"Doing something is really important. Your actions really do, a lot of the times, speak louder than words. My dad, when I was growing up, said, 'Don't put your head above the parapet.'

"I think you should. The risk is there ... but if you don't stand by your beliefs, if you don't stand by what you truly want to do in life ... you're going to stay in the trenches all your life. And that's the shame, that's the lost potential."

Stewart said he hoped his own stories could help his audience but said each story of leadership needed to be about each leader and the team they head.

"The best thing you can do about leadership is actually doing something about leadership yourself," he said.

"Writing it down and saying, 'OK, I'm going to make a plan for the next three years. This is what it looks like. This is the action that I'm going to take ... This is the opportunity for me and my colleagues to think differently about what we're doing.'"

*Above: Dr Stewart Condon, Director of Medical Services, says it's important that leaders embrace risk.*

# RESEARCH

## Cause to celebrate clinical trials



Concord Hospital's Haematology Clinical Research Unit continues to cement its reputation as one of the largest and most rapidly growing clinical trial units in Australia.

Established in 2005 as part of the Department of Haematology, the unit is now recruiting for 28 trials and has a further 32 trials in follow-up.

The Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause, which raises money for the unit's work, is gearing up for its signature event, A Bloody Great Night Out! The dinner will be held at Doltone House Darling Island in Pyrmont and all proceeds go to funding the unit's research.

Since its foundation, the Clinical Research Unit has recruited over 1000 patients for more than 140 trials. As a national leader in accessing emerging therapies, the unit has patients referred for clinical trial participation from across Sydney, NSW and the ACT.

Community support helped the Foundation raise more than \$200,000 in 2023. Professor Judith Trotman, Senior Consultant Haematologist, Concord Hospital, said that money gave the unit important freedom.

"Our community support gives us the financial independence to pick the trials that are of greatest priority to our patients," she said.



The **2024 Bloody Great Night Out!** will be held on **Friday 18 October** and aims to raise \$200,000. The event, hosted by comedian Ben Price, will include live music, entertainment, raffle prizes, and a gourmet four-course meal. Purchase tickets today and learn more about supporting the Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause at [www.abloodygreatcause.com.au](http://www.abloodygreatcause.com.au)

*Above: Haematology patient Keryne Rosato embraces nurse Raquel Hermosilla on a visit to the unit.*

## Geriatrician honoured

Concord Hospital staff specialist geriatrician Dr Janani Thillainadesan has received the Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators' 2024 Clinical Education Award.

The award is given to a clinical educator within five years of completing their degree for outstanding educational or scholarly efforts in a healthcare setting.

Janani received the award for her research on enhancing geriatric care and medical education through microlearning. She said she was grateful for the support of her research team and her mentors.



*Above: Dr Janani Thillainadesan accepts her Clinical Education Award from the Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators.*



# REDEVELOPMENT

## Multi-storey Car Park nears completion

The Concord Multi-storey Car Park (MSCP) is nearing completion, with the new facility scheduled to open at the beginning of next year.

Since the main structure was completed in May, main contractor Lipman has been working to finish the building's façade and services.

Construction has now begun on a new roundabout near the entrance to both the P3 staff car park and the MSCP. As a result of these works, which are expected to last about four months, a section of Hospital Road will be restricted to one lane between September 11 and October 31.

Traffic controllers will manage traffic flow through this area during the day, while a boom gate and traffic lights will be used overnight.

The \$32.4 million car park project is part of the hospital's redevelopment that has also included construction of the on-grade P3 staff car park and the \$341 million Rusty Priest Building.

The MSCP will add an additional 550 new spaces, taking parking capacity for Concord Hospital to more than 2300 spaces, improving access to healthcare services for the whole community.

It will include 10 accessible spaces, lift access and provision for the later addition of electric vehicle charging stations. Security measures will include CCTV coverage and duress points on each level.



## Work under way on Concord Forensic Mental Health Unit

Construction is now well under way on the new Concord Forensic Mental Health Unit, with a tower crane installed on the site in late July.

Main contractor Built has completed work on piling foundations for the building and structural concrete pours are now going ahead.

The purpose-built forensic mental health facility will be built as an expansion of the Concord Centre of Mental Health and its services, on the grounds of Concord Hospital.

The project is part of the NSW Government's \$700 million investment in the Statewide Mental Health Infrastructure Program and it is expected to be complete by the end of 2025.

Complementing existing forensic mental health services at Concord Hospital, the new facility will provide low and medium secure mental health beds.

It will be named "Burudyara" (pronounced BOO-ruhd-YA-ruh), a local Aboriginal word meaning 'butterfly', in line with NSW Health's approach to building stronger connections between our facilities and the lands on which they're built.



## Staff stars



## Tiffany's Olympic adventure



Concord registered nurse Tiffany Ho has returned home from Paris after making her Olympic debut at the 2024 Games.

The 26-year-old badminton player faced some tough competition and loud parochial French crowds in her two pool matches. Despite her tenacity, Tiffany finished third in her pool and did not proceed to the next round.

In her first match, against the United States' Beiwen Zhang, Tiffany was playing on a court alongside a men's doubles match between France and Thailand.

The crowd's support for the hometown team was so loud she couldn't even hear her coach's instructions.

"It is a crazy crowd out there and it's really hard to even just think and listen to my coach, but it's the atmosphere I kind of want," Tiffany told the Australian Olympic Committee's news team after the match.

"I thrive in that kind of atmosphere even though it probably wasn't the best match, but I think I gave it everything that I could, so I feel really proud of myself."

Tiffany fought bravely in her second match, with solid support from Australian fans but couldn't overcome an in-form Thuy Linh Nguyen of Vietnam.

I gave it everything that I could, so I feel really proud of myself.



## Concord compliments

The husband of a patient wrote recently to compliment all staff working at Concord Hospital, with particular praise for the staff of Ward 1C.

The man said his wife received "wonderful compassionate care" from the 1C team after she suffered a seizure. He praised Nurse Manager Melinda Pestana, saying she was, "a credit to her profession and to Concord Hospital".

The family of a patient wrote to thank the Colorectal and Gastroenterology team in Ward 1 East for the care of their family member after a diagnosis of bowel cancer. "You've made a very difficult and trying time for us that much easier," the family wrote. They spoke of the compassion and kindness of staff as well as their knowledge and professionalism.

A patient has described being "blown away" by the high quality of treatment by Concord Emergency Department on two separate visits. The patient said both nurses and doctors went "above and beyond" to ensure they were comfortable and understood their treatment.



## Cool running a win for Mieke



It was a dare from her daughter that led Concord Hospital neurosciences technical officer Mieke Masselos to start running. Little did she know the sport would become a passion and lead her to races at Petra in Jordan, on the Great Wall of China and, most recently, in Antarctica.

“I’m very competitive,” she said.

“My daughter rang me about six years ago, and she dared me to go and do a five-kilometre fun run with her. I said, ‘Nice, I can’t even run 100 metres.’”

Mieke, 70, went to the Concord staff gym to speak with a personal trainer to see if she could get herself fit and fast enough to beat her daughter.

“I said to the PT, ‘Look, I can’t let her win. Can you make it happen in eight weeks, without being resuscitated?’ She said, ‘Yeah, doable.’ So, I rang my daughter up and I said, ‘You’re on!’”

That race didn’t go to plan – Mieke sustained a soft tissue injury – but she would not be stopped. Soon she had run the City to Surf and been talked into trying a half-marathon.

Since then Mieke has run many half-marathons, a marathon, multi-day events and one 150-kilometre event.

This year she decided on her latest challenge – a half-marathon in Antarctica.

“I thought, well, you know, at my age, let’s go and pick some interesting places to go and run a half-marathon,” Mieke said.

You’re never too old. Just live on the wild side.

Mieke finished mid-field in the 21 March half-marathon, run in icy minus-seven-degree conditions on King George Island, off Antarctica’s northern coast.

Again, she didn’t come away from the race unscathed.

“About 80 per cent of the runners fell, me included,” she said.

“So, I had a nice bruise to go with the medal, which looks really good, too.”

Mieke is also now determined to spread the word about the health benefits of running, even for those who may think they’re too old.

“You’re never too old – just live on the wild side,” she said.

“Go out and do something, you know, and it doesn’t cost much except for a pair of shoes. It’s amazing what kind of health benefits it gives ... and it’s some time for yourself. Time for reflection.”

And what’s next for Mieke?

“Well, the next adventure is hoping to be a four-day event in the Sahara desert,” she said. “I’ve got nothing to lose.”

*Above: Mieke Masselos celebrates after crossing the finish line in the Antarctica Half-Marathon*

## Ceremony marks Victory in Pacific

Members of the Concord Hospital community joined a special commemoration of Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway on Thursday 15 August 2024.

Acting General Manager Anthony Dombkins and Aged Health, Chronic Care and Rehabilitation Clinical Director Clinical Associate Professor John Cullen attended the ceremony, which marked the 79th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Concord chaplains Rev David Anthonisz and Father Graeme Malone participated in the ceremony, which featured a VP Day address by Air Commodore Steve Pesce, AM, Deputy Air Commander Australia.



*Above: Dignitaries prepare to lay wreaths at the Kokoda Track memorial.*



### A look back in time

Veterans chat as they browse through the newspapers and magazines in the Red Cross-run library at Concord in the mid-1950s.



## Events

**18 October**

### A Bloody Great Night Out

Doltone House, Darling Island, Pyrmont

Tickets available from [www.abloodygreatcause.com.au/a-bloody-great-night-out-2024/](http://www.abloodygreatcause.com.au/a-bloody-great-night-out-2024/)

**26 October**

### Concord Ball

Hosted by The Concord Hospital Resident Medical Officers’ Association

Doltone House, Darling Island Wharf, Pyrmont

Tickets available from [trybooking.com/events/landing/1279507](http://trybooking.com/events/landing/1279507)



## Get in touch

We would love to hear from you. To provide feedback, suggest stories or submit a staff photo, please contact our Concord Connection working group [SLHD-ConcordConnection@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SLHD-ConcordConnection@health.nsw.gov.au)

Find out more about Sydney Local Health District’s community events at: [slhd.health.nsw.gov.au/sydneyconnect/events](http://slhd.health.nsw.gov.au/sydneyconnect/events)



# "Sparkle with a Splash of Red"

You're invited on Friday 18 October  
Doltone House Darling Island Pymont

Join the Bloody Great Committee for

## a BLOODY<sup>®</sup> great night out!

A night of fantastic entertainment, fabulous food, dancing and fundraising in support of the world leading blood cancer clinical trials at Concord Cancer Centre, Concord Hospital.



Help Us Reach Our Fundraising Target

# \$200,000

Your Support will Save Lives

Your support will help patients with life-threatening blood cancers, such as Leukaemia, Lymphoma and Myeloma, and those with blood clotting disorders, participate in clinical trials and access millions of dollars' worth of new and innovative medicines, long before they are publicly funded.



## SPARKLE WITH A SPLASH OF RED to show your support for our cause...

**When:** Friday 18 October 2024

**Where:** Doltone House Darling Island, 48 Pirrama Rd Pymont

**Time:** 6.30pm

- Indulge in a gourmet four-course meal
- Dance to the amazing sounds of The Party Latte band
- Be entertained by the amazing Ben Price
- While having a fun night raising vital funds

ALL FUNDS RAISED WILL GO TOWARDS THE LIFE-SAVING WORK AT THE WORLD-LEADING HAEMATOLOGY CLINICAL RESEARCH UNIT AT CONCORD HOSPITAL.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Click on the QR Codes below to purchase dinner and raffle tickets. **Every dollar raised helps us achieve our fundraising goal.**

BUY DINNER TICKETS



BUY RAFFLE TICKETS



Or you can make a tax deductible donation at [www.abloodygreatcause.com.au/make-a-donation](http://www.abloodygreatcause.com.au/make-a-donation)

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