Thrilling bed-making races, sizzling barbecues and a dazzling Black and White Ball were among the activities to mark one of the most important celebrations of the year for Sydney Local Health District - International Nurses and Midwives Day.

It was a day to say ‘thank you’ to the 4,500 registered nurses, enrolled nurses, nurse practitioners and midwives who work at facilities across the District and to reflect upon their invaluable contributions to the health and wellbeing of our community. More stories and photographs, Page 6 and 7.

Sydney celebrates its special nurses and midwives
Sydney Local Health District is finalising plans ahead of the implementation of Activity Based Funding (ABF) on the first of July. The District has engaged KPMG to assist with the budgeting process to ensure it is ready for the new challenges the new funding model brings. A symposium was held at Redfern in May for senior executive from around the state to discuss the implementation of ABF and provide valuable insight to the changes Local Health Districts can expect.

Dr Teresa Anderson  
Sydney Local Health District  
Chief Executive

Progress on the Lifehouse project continues on the RPA campus this month. Ambulatory care services will begin operating from Lifehouse mid 2013. Information sessions are currently being held for staff ahead of the transition of services. If staff have any questions, they can contact the District HR department.

In SLHD we value our partnerships with our community and I am very pleased to announce the appointment of our new District-wide Community Participation Manager, Tarika Rivers. In her role, Ms Rivers will work with each Hospital’s Community Participation Officer to ensure there is effective two-way communication and participation between our health services and the communities we serve.

The District is also looking forward to the launch of our first Community Participation Framework over the coming months.

I am delighted to announce the appointment of Paula Caffrey as SLHD Allied Health Director, Graeme Angus as Manager of Corporate and Shared Services and Julie Finch as SLHD Chronic Care Program Manager. I am sure you will join me in welcoming them to their new roles.

The District reaffirmed its commitment to Aboriginal health equity last month when it commemorated National Sorry Day at Concord General Repatriation Hospital. The event followed the District’s highly successful Close the Gap event at RPA in March. Through our services, we are committed to doing what we can to help the spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

I’d also like thank staff for their participation in International Nurses Day events across the District. The pictures in this month’s photo gallery highlight some of the wonderful celebrations held in all of our facilities and services.

The Hon. Ron Phillips  
Sydney Local Health District  
Board Chairman

As part of its Strategic Planning process, Sydney recently conducted a consultation forum to help shape the future of education and training across the Local Health District.

Executive staff and leaders in education and training across the District attended the session, facilitated by Dr Norman Swan, with a keynote address by Heather Gray, Chief Executive of the new Health Education Training Institute.

In her address, Ms Gray recognised the District’s long-standing strength in education and training. She also spoke about the positive partnership already made with SLHD and the role of HETI in providing a state-wide approach to education and training.

Sydney needs to ensure we have a highly skilled, adaptable, culturally sensitive workforce ready to take on the challenges we face in healthcare now and those we know are coming in the future. Education is also an integral part of ensuring we remain a recognised leader in health service delivery.

I look forward to seeing the results of the consultation in delivering on a plan with realistic goals to ensure Sydney remains at the forefront of healthcare training delivery in NSW.

I would like to encourage interested staff and members of the public to visit the SLHD website (www.slhd.nsw.gov.au). Visitors will find a range of videos of recent District events, publications, Board minutes and more.
Playing for keeps: how mates saved a life

As a cardiac arrest survivor, the latest addition to the trophy cabinet at John Jacovides’ home puts him in an elite club, but he knows the real glory belongs to those who saved his life.

The 36-year-old father of two was suffering heartburn before his weekly game of Saturday afternoon soccer last month, but thought little of it.

Within minutes, he had collapsed on the field, unresponsive to teammates. Quick-thinking friends rang Triple Zero while a player on the opposing team started cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Fellow players ran to the nearby swimming pool for help, bringing back lifeguards and a defibrillator.

One shock and Mr Jacovides’ heart was beating again. But he is one of the lucky few.

Survival rates for people suffering cardiac arrest outside of a hospital are as low as 3 per cent, mainly because most people do not have access to defibrillators, and few receive treatment in the first few minutes after an arrest, said the cardiac project officer with the Ambulance Service of NSW, Bernard Coren.

“Common precursors to absence of pulse and subsequent death are two ineffective heart rhythms called ventricular fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia,” Mr Coren said.

“Heart attack warning signs may include pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness in one or more parts of the upper body (chest, neck, jaw, arm(s), shoulder(s) or back) in combination with other symptoms of nausea, shortness of breath, dizziness or a cold sweat.

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A second chance: John Jacovides (centre), thanks paramedics Gavin Wood and Matthew Gourlay for saving his life.

“Early application of an automated external defibrillator can shock these lethal rhythms back into an effective heart beat through electrical therapy. CPR should be given before defibrillation if possible.

“Early CPR and defibrillation can minimise damage to the brain by restoring the pumping action of the heart. AEDs have saved many lives. They are simple to use and are an essential item in the modern workplace.”

He said most paramedics had stories of patients who waited too late for treatment.

“I can’t stress enough how important it is to pick up the phone and call triple zero straight away for people who experience the warning signs of a heart attack or cardiac arrest.”

After more than a week in RPA, Mr Jacovides was given the chance, as part of Healthy Heart Week, to thank paramedics, Matthew Gourlay and Gavin Wood, for saving his life. They also presented him with a cardiac arrest survivors’ award.

“I’m alive today and can continue to be a father and husband because of the hard work of these paramedics. I will never be able to thank them enough,” Mr Jacovides said.

Help for carers of people with dementia

Do you live with or care for someone with dementia? Concord Repatriation General Hospital will host a series of free information sessions to give people a chance to ask questions about everything from support services, legal issues and how to plan ahead.

The dates are Thursday, 23 August and Monday, 5 November.

For more information or to register contact Anne Tunks on 9378 1258 or anne.tunks@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

Say ‘thank you’ to outstanding staff

Staff and members of the community are reminded that they can acknowledge those staff members they feel have offered exceptional care and service through the Sydney Local Health District Staff Recognition Program

The program, launched in March, aims to recognise hard work, commitment and outstanding care of patients.

‘Have your say’ boxes, flyers and nomination forms can be found in each hospital and at the District office. Nominations can also be made on line: http://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/feedback.html
Unlocking the secrets of statins

Researchers from the Heart Research Institute (HRI) believe they may have discovered why increasing the dosage of statins doesn’t necessarily result in a corresponding reduction in bad cholesterol.

Australians are the highest users of cholesterol-lowering drugs in the world, with around two million people thought to be taking some form of statin.

Statins reduce bad cholesterol (also known as LDL) by as much as 50 per cent and the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) by up to 30 per cent. The lower a person’s LDL, the less likely they are to have a heart attack.

Professor Kerry-Anne Rye from the Lipid Group at HRI said it had been a biological puzzle as to why increasing the dose of statins beyond a certain level did not necessarily result in a corresponding additional reduction in LDL.

“We know that statins work by blocking a critical step of the cholesterol synthesis pathway inside the cell, which in turn activates a feedback mechanism resulting in cells removing LDL from the blood. The overall result is a reduction in levels of circulating LDL,” Prof Rye said.

“So what is stopping higher doses of statins reducing cholesterol levels even further? This can be partially explained because statins also activate a protein (known as PCSK9) that blocks cells from absorbing cholesterol from the blood.

“We already know that increasing the dose of statins does not result in a corresponding drop in LDL cholesterol, so we predicted that PCSK9 might also be going up.”

Prof Rye’s team measured the levels of PCSK9 in 1613 patients who were taking part in the Treating to New Targets (TNT) study, a trial developed to compare the effectiveness of low versus high doses of atorvastatin, known commercially as Lipitor, on cholesterol levels.

“To our surprise, PCSK9 did not change from low doses of statins (10 mg) to high doses (80 mg), suggesting that the levels of PCSK9 present in patients taking 10 mg statin are already maximally high”, Prof Rye said.

“So even when we increase the dose of statins 8-fold, PCSK9 will prevent them from working optimally. This indicates to us that PCSK9 might be an extremely promising target for therapeutic intervention.

“Our findings pave the way for the use of PCSK9 inhibitors in addition to statins to reduce the risk of heart disease which is an increasingly large problem.”

In a paper recently published in the prestigious Journal of the American College of Cardiology, Prof Rye’s team looked at what happens to PCSK9 when patients receive increased doses of statins.

Professor Kerry-Anne Rye, group leader of The Lipid Research Group, works with PhD student Francine Petrides.
Sydney commemorates Sorry Day

School children from Concord West Public School quietly ‘planted’ dozens of coloured plastic feet around Concord Repatriation General Hospital’s flag pole last month as part of SLHD’s National Sorry Day event.

The 54 feet, in the colours of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, represented the 54 recommendations of the 1998 Bringing Them Home Report, which revealed the true extent of the trauma caused by past removal policies on Aboriginal people.

SLHD Director Aboriginal Health, George Long, said the report showed how the policies had left Aboriginal people spiritually, emotionally and physically traumatised by the broken connection to traditional land, culture and language and the separation of families.

“SLHD acknowledges how these factors have contributed to poor health and risk taking behaviours such as substance abuse within the Aboriginal community and to the 10-17 year health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians,” Mr Long said.

“We acknowledge that members of the Stolen Generation and of the Aboriginal community in general have greater health challenges and needs than non-Indigenous Australians.

“We are committed to delivering accessible, culturally appropriate, holistic health services to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, one of the largest urban Aboriginal populations in NSW, and to doing what we can to help heal the spiritual, emotional and physical wounds of the past, and the present,” he said.

The event also featured guest speakers, Aboriginal cultural performances and displays.

Mentoring honours for SLHD doctor

Balmain and RPA Hospital geriatrician Dr Scott Murray has been honoured by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians for his work mentoring young clinicians.

The Excellence in Mentoring Award was presented at the Royal Australasian College of Physicians congress in May. Dr Murray has pioneered training and mentoring programs at Balmain Hospital for 15 years, as Director of Prevocational Education and Training and Director of Physician Training.

“This award reflects highly on the successful education programs running across Sydney Local Health District,” Dr Murray said.

Balmain Hospital General Manager, Tim Sinclair, said Dr Murray was an excellent role model for junior staff.

“He has shown an exceptional and sustained commitment to the education and support of young doctors from their student and intern years through to completion of physician training and beyond,” Mr Sinclair said.
Sydney celebrates its nurses and midwives

Thrilling bed-making races, sizzling barbecues and a dazzling Black and White Ball were among the activities to mark one of the most important celebrations of the year for Sydney Local Health District mark - International Nurses and Midwives Day.

SLHD Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Katharine Sztiniak, said all the events held across the District on May 11 were a chance to shine the spotlight on the largest of all health professions and to say ‘thank you’.

“Our nursing staff work hard every day to make a difference to the lives of their patients and their families, and to our community,” Ms Sztiniak said.

“International Nurses and Midwives Day is a day when we can publicly acknowledge their outstanding commitment and dedication and to reflect on how vital they are to our health system.”

This year, for the first time, one nurse from each of the District’s hospitals and services was recognised by the SLHD Executive for Excellence in Person Centred Care.

The winners are: Violetta Buesing (Balmain Hospital), Ya Ying (Liz) Yang (The Canterbury Hospital), Denise Cummins (Community Health), Margaret Molloy (Concord Repatriation General Hospital), Lesly Jones (Mental Health) and Mary Lordan (RPA).


For more photos from International Nurses and Midwives Day go to http://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/media_photo.html
Known affectionately by some clients as ‘the doc’, Community Health Nurse Practitioner, Tony Hecimovic, is a welcome and familiar face at The Exodus Foundation in Ashfield.

Mr Hecimovic has been running a health and wellbeing clinic at the welfare centre twice a week for the past three years.

“It’s about bringing healthcare directly to disadvantaged or marginalised people who wouldn’t normally go to a GP or hospital”, Mr Hecimovic said.

“I’m humbled to be a part of the team serving at The Exodus Foundation.

“I’ve been in community nursing for 10 years and this is one of the most rewarding parts of my job,” he said.

The Exodus Foundation is a ministry of the Uniting Church in Ashfield, providing welfare, healthcare and education programs for disadvantaged and homeless people.

To view Mr Hecimovic in the SLHD International Nurses Day video go to: http://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/videos.html?v=3

Midwives bake-off

Sweet treats were at the centre of celebrations when RPA midwives held a bake-off to mark International Midwives Day in May.

RPA Director of Nursing and Midwifery Joanne Edwards was among those tasked with deciding on the best tasting cakes.

Natalie Parker was awarded Best Decorated Cake for her creation, which was topped with an icing replica of a mother and baby in a birthing pool.

Leaders of the future

Watch these faces – they are the first nurses and midwives from across the Sydney Local Health District selected to train under the ‘Leaders of the Future Program’.

The new 10-month scheme uses practical training and mentoring sessions to enhance the knowledge and skills of registered nurses and midwives who want to become clinical and managerial leaders.

Participants have the opportunity to develop a well-rounded vision of management styles and practices.
Graduating in leadership

With Australia’s health care system coming under increasing pressure from an ageing population, new technologies and funding constraints, Sydney Local Health District last month celebrated a new generation of leaders in health service delivery to help guide the way into the future.

Kiel Harvey, Leanne Hunter, Kristen Ireland and Michael Morris formally graduate from the District’s 2011 Graduate Health Management Program at an event in RPA’s Kerry Packer Education Centre last month.

The two-year program saw the group undertake a range of learning and management development courses, including a part-time enrolment in a Masters of Business Administration majoring in Health Management, to support their understanding of the health system and the development of their leadership skills.

SLHD Chief Executive, Dr Teresa Anderson, said the value of the program was immeasurable.

“We need to ensure we have a highly skilled, adaptable, culturally sensitive workforce ready to take on the challenges we face in healthcare now and those we know are coming in the future.”

Graduate Kiel Harvey thanked the program’s supervisors for their ongoing support.

“This program has given us the opportunity to develop our careers after learning from the best and most senior managers in the state,” he said.

“We have seen our supervisors handle the toughest and most daunting of situations and have learnt to methodically approach them in a sensible manner.

“We feel prepared to tackle the any challenge thrown out in the world of health service management.”

A heartfelt donation to RPA cardiology ward

On the wall of RPA Cardiology Ward 6E4 hangs an original Aboriginal painting depicting a stylised pod of dolphins happily immersed in a deep, calm blue sea.

It was donated by the Coorey family, in gratitude for the care and love shown by cardiology staff towards their beloved mother, Tanam, who died late last year of chronic heart failure aged 89.

Mrs Coorey required regular admission into the ward for treatment when she became ill, receiving ongoing monitoring by Professor Phillip Harris in his clinic. Specialist Chronic Cardiac nurses, Robyn MacDonald and Nicole Bennett, also visited Mrs Coorey in her own home, a service they provide to many patients with chronic cardiac conditions.

“I can’t praise the doctors and the nursing staff highly enough,” May Coorey, the youngest of Mrs Coorey’s nine children, said.

“They were there for us 24/7. Nothing was too much trouble. They helped us get another 19 months with our mum. Our family is so grateful,” she said.

Mrs Coorey said her brother had first spotted the painting.

“To all of us, it was just perfect,” she said.

“The dolphins and the blue of the water are so peaceful. And the care and the treatment the staff here gave our mother was also beautiful.”

Mrs Coorey snr is survived by nine children, 19 grandchildren, and 21 great grandchildren.

We need to ensure we have a highly skilled, adaptable, culturally sensitive workforce ready to take on the challenges we face in the healthcare now and those we know are coming in the future,”

Dr Teresa Anderson.