Junior doctor David Coker knows a thing or two about saving lives. In 2008, he saved his girlfriend during the Mumbai terrorist attacks, and was honoured for his actions with an Australian Bravery Decoration from the Governor General.

The humble hero said it was an instant reaction and the couple were extremely lucky given the circumstances around them.

The newlyweds will one day return to Mumbai to thank hospital staff for their help and see all those parts of India they had originally planned.

In the meantime, David is one step closer to becoming a doctor where saving lives will become the norm. He joins more than 100 junior doctors starting their internship at Sydney Local Health District.

Fifty-eight interns will rotate across a network of hospitals, including Royal Prince Alfred and Balmain hospitals. Another 45 will rotate across a network including Concord and Canterbury hospitals.

The director of prevocational education and training at Concord Repatriation General Hospital, Dr Probal Roy, said these early years of training were an exciting and formative time for the new interns.

“Importantly the internship provides an invaluable foundation for their futures providing the skills and knowledge to see through them through their careers,” Dr Probal said.

“It is also a highly rewarding experience to work with these young doctors to help their transition from being medical students to practising doctors,” he said.

The District welcomes its junior doctors and wishes them a successful future in medicine.
The start of 2013 has seen some new faces join our District. Sydney Local Health District welcomed its junior doctors to Royal Prince Alfred, Balmain, Concord and Canterbury hospitals.

The interns are undertaking their first placements, and will be exposed to different specialties, cases and environments, including regional hospitals in Dubbo and Broken Hill.

The District is fortunate to have some of the best and brightest talent beginning their careers with us. The interns will benefit from the support and guidance of our dedicated clinical training and medical administration staff. This is sure to help them on their way to a successful future in medicine. Please join me in welcoming our new recruits.

We also welcomed the new General Manager of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Deb Wilcox.

Deb comes to us from HealthShare NSW where she was the Director of Customer Service and Corporate Governance. She has extensive clinical experience and has worked on the frontline, training and working as a nurse at RPA for 16 years. Following this, she worked in senior roles for the Ministry and as an adviser to government. She has also worked in the not-for-profit sector in mental health research and has been admitted as a legal practitioner in NSW.

I encourage all staff to welcome Deb to this important role.

As part of an ongoing consultation process, the District held a community meeting on 29 January to finalise plans to install an Automatic Dispensing Machine at Redfern. Redfern has one of the highest rates of HIV and hepatitis C in Australia due to high levels of injecting drug activity. ADMs are a proven health strategy, which have helped to reduce these infection rates within the community.

The new state-wide uniform is being rolled out this month, and the new human resources and payroll system, StaffLink, will also soon be available for staff use. Please check the SLHD intranet for more information on both the uniforms and StaffLink.

2013 is going to be a busy and challenging year for the District as we bed down the new funding reform and progress actions against our strategic plan. With your assistance and commitment to our patients and community, I am sure 2013 will be another successful year for the District in achieving excellence in healthcare for all.

It is with great pleasure that Sydney Local Health District welcomes two new Board members, Associate Professor Christine Giles and Danny Lester.

Associate Professor Giles brings a strong background in health policy and strategy, and has held a number of leadership and advisory roles in the public and private sectors. Her strategic thinking and extensive knowledge of the health sector will be an asset to the delivery of the District’s strategic goals and vision for the future.

With a passion to improve the social and economic well-being of Aboriginal people, Danny Lester will make an invaluable contribution to the delivery of health equity, education, training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal communities across our District. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience in senior management, and is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

I look forward to continuing to work with our Board and the District Executive throughout the year as we continue to achieve our strategic goals and deliver plans that guide the future of our services.

One such plan is the inaugural five-year strategic plan for Sexual Health Services, which has been launched this month. The plan is based on national and state-wide policies and will provide direction and strategies to reduce the spread of sexually transmissible infections including HIV and hepatitis B and C.

I will keep you updated throughout the year of our progress towards delivering on all our strategic plans.
A personal and professional dream has become a reality for Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’s new General Manager – Deborah Willcox.

Her affiliation with the hospital runs deep. She was born at RPA’s former maternity hospital, King George V, and returned years later to train and work as a nurse in the neurology ward and intensive care unit.

Her exposure and awareness of healthcare came at an early age as she witnessed her grandmother battling illness for some time. The very tragic passing of her father led her to pursue a nursing career in the hospital and she was fortunate to present her uniform and cape to him the week before he died.

Some of her fondest memories in her 16 years of nursing at RPA include the relationships forged with patients and their families who share their lives at the most difficult of times, and the camaraderie experienced with her colleagues especially in those early days living in the Queen Mary Nurses’ home.

In 1995, Ms Willcox shifted from the clinical side to policy. While studying law, she was approached to work for the then NSW Minister for Health as a nursing adviser. There she was able to use her frontline experience to influence changes to the public health system.

As the former deputy Premiers’ chief of staff in the portfolios of planning, housing and Aboriginal affairs, she gained exposure to fields that are intrinsically linked to improving health outcomes in the community. Her role at the Schizophrenia Research Institute equipped her with an understanding of research and mental illness. She has also held a number of executive roles at Health NSW, the latest being Director of Customer Service and Corporate Governance, HealthShare NSW.

She now returns to where it all began. Using her extensive clinical, policy and management experience, Ms Willcox will work closely with staff at the hospital and across the District to build on RPA’s leading national and international reputation in the areas of research, education and high quality patient care.

“Coming back to RPA is like coming home. I am honoured to take on this role but also mindful of the immense responsibility that comes with it. I also know I am surrounded by some of the brightest minds and most dedicated staff in the public health care system. I look forward to working with them to care for our community and ensuring the patients in our care receive the very best we can provide,” Ms Willcox said.

New Board members

Sydney Local Health District has welcomed two new Board members, Associate Professor Christine Giles and Danny Lester. Together with the existing members, Associate Professor Giles and Mr Lester bring a wealth of experience and local knowledge to the management of our District.

Associate Professor Christine Giles

Associate Professor Christine Giles brings a wealth of experience in health policy, governance and management in the health and aged care sectors. Associate Professor Giles is a current Board member of the Menzies Centre for Health Policy and Executive Director and Head of Policy and Strategy at Cancer Australia. Her experience spans the public and private sectors in Australia, and overseas where she was an advisor to the World Bank in health policy reform. She is a strategic thinker and accomplished leader in delivering health reform and creating a positive culture that delivers organisational goals.

Danny Lester

Danny Lester has a passion to improve social and economic well-being for Aboriginal people. For over 15 years he has held senior management roles, excelling in leadership, financial management, business planning and developing high performance teams that achieve outstanding service delivery. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Aboriginal Employment Strategy Ltd and has overseen major innovation and change in the education, training and employment of Aboriginal communities.
Promising study in skin cancer prevention

A study involving almost 400 people may provide the breakthrough in the prevention of skin cancer.

Professor Diona Damian and Professor Gary Halliday of the Department of Dermatology at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital are part of a team researching the prevention of skin cancer through the use of vitamin B3 (Nicotinamide).

The team was awarded a National Health and Medical Research Council grant for its 'Ontrac study: Oral Nicotinamide to reduce actinic cancer.'

Professor Diona Damian said a key focus of the research was to prevent skin cancer by harnessing the skin’s own immune defences.

“We know that UV radiation causes skin cancer in two main ways – it causes mutations in skin cells, and it suppresses the immune system that would normally seek and destroy abnormal cells,” Professor Damian said.

“Preliminary studies have found that vitamin B3 provides the energy needed to strengthen skin immunity and to boost skin repair.

“A clinical trial with 75 heavily sun-damaged volunteers found that taking 500mg vitamin B3 tablets over a few months reduced the number of precancerous ‘sunspots’ by more than a third. There was also an early finding that new skin cancers were dramatically reduced in these patients,” Professor Damian said.

These findings now need to be confirmed in a larger number of patients.

The ‘Ontrac study’ involves close to 400 people taking vitamin B3 tablets for 12 months. The volunteers in the trial are those who have had at least two non-melanoma skin cancers, such as basal cell or squamous cell carcinomas, biopsied or cut out in the past five years. These patients are at a very high risk of developing additional skin cancers.

“Through this study we will explore whether vitamin B3 can reduce skin cancers in 400 of our most sun-damaged, skin cancer-prone patients.

“We hope to find safe, affordable and accessible approaches that could improve quality of life for people with skin cancer,” Professor Damian said.

The study is currently underway, and should be completed within the next two years.

Missenden Mental Health Unit

The existing buildings of the Missenden Mental Health Unit are almost all demolished, and service diversion works are also nearly finished.

The tender for the main construction contractor closes this month. The contractor will then be appointed. Until that time, the detailed design of the facility is on hold.

For more information, please visit the project website: http://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/rpa/redevelop
December was a leadership packed month for Leaders of the Future participants and the Centre for Education and Workforce Development.

The development program available to nurses and midwives includes 10 months of learning a host of leadership and management concepts. The inaugural class had the opportunity to develop a well-rounded vision of management styles and practices, and was inspired and encouraged by a wonderful group of presenters including Sydney Local Health District’s director of nursing and midwifery Katharine Szitniak.

The course coordinator from CEWD, Jess Crause, said she really enjoyed working with the group. They constantly raised thought-provoking questions.

“I think the lifelong relationships they built with each other are so valuable and the concepts they learnt will be heavily used along their leadership journey. I will certainly miss their happy faces and enthusiasm in the classroom,” Ms Crause said.

Many participants have already secured leadership positions within their facilities, including nursing unit manager from Concord Hospital Rebecca Hibbard.

“The Leaders of the Future program was an excellent introduction into leadership, management and continued learning. It gave me the basic knowledge and confidence I needed to apply for and accept an acting NUM role,” Ms Hibbard said.

CEWD is now working with the second intake of nurses and midwives.

“We look forward to sharing the leadership journey with our new class, and we welcome our future 27 leaders of the health system,” Ms Crause said.

Bright future for nurse leaders

Technical ability, excellent communication, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, complex problem solving and decision making abilities. These are the characteristics of a nurse practitioner and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’s first group of neonatal nurse practitioners fit the bill perfectly.

In 2008, RPA Newborn Care embarked on a new model of nursing with the implementation of a Newborn Care Advanced Neonatal Nursing Practice course. The unit is now fortunate to have three registered nurses who have completed the 18 month course. Sara Kenny and Lisa Shenton have been endorsed as nurse practitioners, and Sara Brown is continuing her masters degree in preparation for endorsement in early 2014.

The nurse practitioner model is designed to expand the responsibilities, contribution and influence of nurses. From the outset, RPA’s newborn nurse practitioners were trained to perform procedures typically undertaken by doctors, such as prescribing medication and ordering tests. This allows for greater autonomy and responsibility when caring for patients.

RPA Newborn Care’s clinical nurse consultant Associate Professor Sandie Bredemeyer and the head of the department, Associate Professor Nick Evans, were instrumental in securing funding for this program. Sandie also worked closely with our three candidates during the course of their studies.

“I am so proud of Sara, Lisa and Sarah. Observing their courage and determination to meet the challenges of the role, their growing confidence and expanding professional responsibilities are an excellent example of what committed registered nurses can achieve,” Associate Professor Bredemeyer said.

“These nurses are also excellent role models for our young nursing colleagues. Two registered nurses will this month start RPA’s next nurse practitioner program, and with guidance and support from Sarah Kenny (NP) and Lisa Shenton (NP), I am sure they too will succeed in this significant role change,” Sandie said.

Congratulations to RPA’s new neonatal nurse practitioners, and best of luck to our new candidates.
In April 2013, Sydney Local Health District will be introducing a new human resources and payroll system, known as StaffLink. All SLHD staff will receive a new printed payslip and will have access to online payslips via Employee Self Service.

While most information on the payslips will not change, it will be presented in a new format and contain more information. The system allows employees to view, print and save payslips as soon as pay is processed. They can also select payslip delivery preferences — email (work and personal email accounts) or online viewing.

ESS will allow all staff to view and update personal human resource and payroll information online, anytime, through a secure site. While HR and the HealthShare Service Centre staff will still be available for assistance, and all current staff will initially receive a printed payslip, ESS adds another layer of service, allowing staff to access and change their details at a time that best suits.

For further information on how to read your printed payslip, please refer to the Payslip Guide: http://intranet.hss.health.nsw.gov.au/insidehss/operations/corporateit/stafflink_video_training

For any questions, please email info.CorporateITProgram@hss.health.nsw.gov.au

For further information on StaffLink ESS and MSS training modules please visit: http://intranet.hss.health.nsw.gov.au/insidehss/operations/corporateit/stafflink_video_training

Megan Doyle showing StaffLink to Therese Gharsa. StaffLink training starts this month for Employee Self Service and Manager Self Service. Professional user interface computer training will start in March for staff with specialised access to StaffLink.

ADO balances

As of April 2013, Allocated Days Off will automatically accrue through StaffLink, the new HR information system. Staff will be able to view ADO balances online once logged into their StaffLink account through Employee Self Service.

Staff are encouraged to keep ADO balances within the award maximum as excess ADOs will not be transferred into StaffLink. Staff members with more than the maximum accrued ADOs need to make arrangements with their manager to use these as soon as possible, or seek urgent advice from their facility HR department.

ADOs can only be taken as whole days. If a staff member takes a half-day ADO, it will be recorded as a full day in StaffLink. The taking of ADOs should also be determined in agreement between the employee and the manager, with regard to service requirements.

For further information, click on the new StaffLink button on the SLHD intranet and go to the ‘ADO Fact Sheet’.

Sexual Health Plan

This month, Sydney Local Health District launched its inaugural five year strategic plan for Sexual Health Services.

The plan, which is based on national and state-wide policies, will provide strategic direction and strategies to reduce the spread of sexually transmissible infections, including HIV and hepatitis B and C.

Within the District, infection rates of HIV and hepatitis B and C are above state average. At the core of the plan is the message that increasing community awareness is the key to reducing infection rates and therefore, improving public and population health.

The importance of actively engaging affected groups including those who may be marginalised is also recognised and is another key focus of the strategy.

Royal Prince Alfred’s Sexual Health clinic provides services including STI testing and treatment, counselling, sexual health check-ups and offers advice on contraception and safe sex practices.
When everything seems to be spiralling out of control, when faced with overwhelming health conditions that lead to depression, it helps to know places like the Gender Centre exist to lend a helping hand.

Through dedicated case work and outreach staff, the Gender Centre supports transgender people navigate an array of complex issues to bring about positive change in their lives.

The Centre is faced with a range of health concerns from mental health to long term physical problems that are at times a result of long term homelessness and rough sleeping. HIV and AIDS related conditions are also encountered, which pose significant challenges to the person with the illness, their family and friends.

A client of the centre who has HIV was recently diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy – a condition that damages the nerves that carry information to and from the brain. This has meant she has to change a lot about her life and her care needs as the damage is spreading rapidly. The case work team has helped the patient navigate issues and regain independence, such as finding suitable accommodation and supporting a friend to become her full time carer. The case workers also encouraged the client to seek counselling through the Centre, which is helping her address depression brought on by the change in her condition.

The Manager of the Gender Centre, Phinn Borg, said the client’s willingness to engage in her case plan and use services indicated that the Centre was meeting her very unique and complex needs.

“We provide a holistic service to ensure continuity in care and case plans. This means clients do not need to re-tell their story to multiple services to achieve desired outcomes,” Mr Borg said.

The Gender Centre is one of 30 non-government organisations that benefit from funding under the Sydney Local Health District NGO Program. The funding allows the case work team and the counselling program to provide invaluable early intervention initiatives and help clients take proactive steps to maintain their wellbeing, dignity and independence.

To have your NGO featured, please email sydneymedia@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

Providing care and support at the darkest of times… the Gender Centre’s senior case manager, Elizabeth Ceissman, and outreach worker Michelle Wood.
In the spotlight

Phil Coote – Staff specialist, Paediatrics, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

The best thing about my job is… Seeing sick children get better.

A typical day at work for me involves… Seeing acutely unwell children, supervising resident medical officers, liaising between the children’s ward and the emergency department and trying to improve the system to make the RPA experience better for children and their families.

When I’m not at work I like to… Run ridiculously long distances.

When I was a child I wanted to be… Older.

A little-known fact about me is… I got married two months ago and my wife is also a paediatrician.

The last book I read was… Tim Keller’s Every Good Endeavour about how to do work better.

My top three movies are… Inception, Cinema Paradiso, and The General.

If I had to describe myself in three words or less they would be… Calm, focused and eccentric.

My colleagues would describe me as… Relaxed and reliable.

If I won the lottery I would… Know that it must be a mistake.

It’s not fashionable but I love… Classical music.

I’m at my happiest when… I’m walking in the mountains, away from cars, crowds and mobile phones.

My guilty pleasure is… Dessert and more dessert. Chocolate and cheesecake are good, but I’m always open to other possibilities.

I’d love to learn… Better diplomatic skills – a vital part of work that doesn’t get taught.

The best advice I’ve ever been given is… Never lose your temper.

Uniform roll out

Soon, identifying the NUMs from the caterers, and the allied health staff from administration, will be a whole lot easier.

A new state-wide uniform is being rolled out this month. This means that staff across all districts will be in the same uniform making it easier to identify who is who.

The new look offers more choice for staff and is a fresh update on the current attire. All items are made from high quality fabrics that are comfortable to wear.

Staff are encouraged to attend implementation sessions being held at each facility. Session times are available here: http://intranet.sswahs.nsw.gov.au/slnh/default.cfm?noticeld=20450

Clinical nurse educator, Josephine Sequeira, registered nurse Robert Maxwell and physiotherapist Cassandra Nielsen… trying out the new uniforms.