We all use the internet to answer our burning questions.

Now parents with queries about their child’s emotional and social development can do the same using the District’s new Love, Talk, Sing, Read, Play website.

The website gives parents tips on how to engage with their children from birth to six years.

Love, Talk, Sing, Read, Play started as a Families NSW printed resource for parents.

Thanks to a joint effort by Sydney, South Western and South Eastern local health districts, it is now available as a mobile phone app and a website.

The District’s Parenting Coordinator and project lead, Belinda Power, said the website was designed to help parents promote their child’s development.

“We wanted something that stayed true to the evidence base and incorporated anything new about child development, attachment and brain development, but also something that appealed to the everyday parent.”

The Love, Talk, Sing, Read, Play website follows the stories of seven children at five development stages.

Its principal feature allows parents to add the ages and names of their own children.

The site also includes a blog written by parents who are also health workers.

The Love, Talk, Sing, Read, Play website can be found on the Resourcing Parents website and at lovetalksingsingreadplay.com.au.
Message from the Chair, District Board

I am proud to report Sydney Local Health District took out three awards at the 2015 NSW Health Awards including the Minister for Health Award for Innovation for Concord Hospital’s electronic medication management.

The eMeds project was selected by Health Minister Jillian Skinner from 48 finalists in 11 categories as the state’s top honour for innovation.

The electronic system, which replaces paper records and has proved a big success at Concord, will be rolled out at RPA in the coming year. The project was also the winner of my Chairman’s Award for Excellence in Innovation presented at the District’s Annual General Meeting.

Sydney Local Health District was also joint winners of the Harry Collins Award for Canterbury Hospital’s Australian-first pilot project on catheter-associated urinary tract infections.

At the conclusion of the NSW Health Innovation Symposium, we were named winners of the People’s Choice award for our Missenden Short Stay Unit for mental health and drug health patients on the RPA campus.

My congratulations to all those involved for their fantastic examples of innovative work underway across the District.

Finally, I would like say a heartfelt thank you to all for your hard work and dedication over the past 12 months. It has been a very busy year across all of our hospitals and services, and again, you all rose to the challenge and delivered the very best healthcare possible.

May you all have a wonderful Christmas.

The Hon. Ron Phillips
Sydney Local Health District Board Chairman

Message from the Chief Executive

As the year draws to an end, I am pleased to be able to highlight some great new projects happening around Sydney Local Health District.

For more than two decades, Stanford House in Stanmore has been a safe haven for people with HIV who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and in need of accommodation, food, support, and health check-ups.

I was pleased to announce on World AIDS Day that following the closure of the Stanmore premises, Sydney Local Health District is partnering with St Vincent’s Hospital to provide a new home for Stanford House in Darlinghurst.

The partnership will also provide outreach services for clients and past residents and is another way are striving to meet the needs of people living with HIV in our community.

The Concord Cancer Centre is starting a bus transfer service for patients needing assistance. The bus was donated to the cancer centre by the Member for Drummoyne, John Sidoti, and will be driven by hospital volunteers.

It was also pleasing that a number of Sydney Local Health District researchers have received more than $15 million in National Health and Medical Research Council grants which will continue to showcase the advanced healthcare we provide.

I am incredibly proud of everything the District and our wonderful staff have achieved this year, may you all have a very merry Christmas.

Stay healthy and I hope you all have the opportunity to enjoy time with your loved ones.

Dr Teresa Anderson
Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive

DECEMBER 2015/ JANUARY 2016

District Highlights
In Richard Allen’s own words, it’s time for regeneration.

The Director of Transplantation Services at RPA will hang up his scalpel on December 18 to make room for new blood in what he calls “a young man’s game”.

Professor Allen studied at Melbourne University before heading to Oxford for two years of post-graduate training in transplantation surgery with a mission to “bring home something brand new”.

And he did – in spades.

After returning in 1986, he set up Sydney’s first kidney transplantation unit west of RPA at Westmead Hospital, and then established Australia’s biggest pancreas transplantation program the following year.

It was only 20 years since RPA had transplanted its first deceased donor kidney and 14 years since its first live kidney transplant, and competition among the two units was fierce.

“We always felt the RPA didn’t like us and, as a result, the feeling was mutual.”

But by 2003, he was appointed to the Chair of Transplantation Surgery at The University of Sydney and RPA (the only one of its kind in Australia) and saw an opportunity to close the chasm between the two units.

“I felt the separation was holding back transplantation in NSW and I saw an opportunity to combine the major surgical services in NSW into one team, sharing our knowledge and skills. It’s now an incredible healthy situation with both hospitals sharing responsibility for donor surgery.”

In 2004, he established the NSW Deceased Donor Organ Procurement Service for the statewide retrieval of all abdominal organs, further strengthening the working relationship between RPA and Westmead. He served on the executive of The Transplantation Society and continues to be involved in teaching programs to promote deceased organ donation – including making several trips a year to Vietnam and Pakistan to help grow their donor and transplantation programs.

He was a founding member of the Section of Transplantation Surgery within the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and was instrumental in introducing guidelines to credential transplant surgeons.

But he hasn’t forgotten what it felt like to be the new kid on the block, and can still recall his first nervous week in Sydney.

“So here I was, four days into working in a transplant unit that had never done a transplant before, no one knew me and we got a phone to say ‘we’ve got a kidney’. That kidney is still working 30 years later, by the way.”

And he hasn’t forgotten the faces behind the work, marked by the myriad messages of gratitude scrawled across holiday postcards and photos from patients pinned to the corkboard in his office.

“For me, this has always been more to transplantation than the technicalities. It’s important to be involved in all aspects of care of recipients – because that’s where the excitement comes, in seeing the amazing effect it has on people’s lives. This morning, I saw a patient who received a liver and two kidneys in one operation. He’d been in bed at home for four months, then in hospital for four months. To see him walk in here today was extraordinary.”

For now, he will spend his spare time teaching medical students at The University of Sydney and sailing.

“And perhaps going for holidays that last longer than two weeks. Although, my wife is a very busy nurse so maybe that’s still off the cards for now.”
Lucky number comes up

11 is definitely Reg Newsome’s lucky number.

On the 11th of the 11th this year, the 74-year-old became only the 11th person in the world to undergo breakthrough keyhole surgery to replace a valve in his heart.

“When the mitral valve leaks, blood flows back into the heart and lungs making it extremely difficult to breathe or have any real quality of life,” says RPA interventional cardiologist Martin Ng (pictured with Reg).

“The traditional surgery involves breaking open the sternum, but because these patients are usually so unwell, only about 50 per cent them can undergo surgery that significant. “The rest, like Reg who was in ICU with heart failure only a few weeks ago and is too high risk for major surgery, are usually left with no options.”

During the procedure, a small incision was made near Reg’s left nipple. A replacement valve was inserted through a catheter and fed into his heart at its apex.

“Mitral valves have never been replaceable without open heart surgery so this is the very cutting edge of cardiovascular medicine,” says Professor Ng.

“It’s early days with this technology but we are very excited for our patients of the future – and for Reg.

“He’s the sole carer for his wife, Shirley, who has dementia. He does all the cooking and cleaning, and is the key to them maintaining their independence in the community. That made him the perfect candidate for this.”

And Reg, a retiree from Nowra, agrees.

“I haven’t been able to do the shopping without stopping six times around the supermarket. I can’t talk, I can’t breathe. And some days I have to lay down at home for hour after hour after hour because I have no energy.”

But Reg remains optimistic.

“Shirley doesn’t think we are very lucky people, but we are. Once I get through this, I’ll be able to breathe properly again and get back to looking after both of us. I’ll even be able to take Shirley out for a drive.”

Heads up on stroke research

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is involved in two ground-breaking clinical trials with the potential to change the way stroke patients are treated around the world.

The first is a study assesses a minimally invasive intervention for patients suffering intracerebral haemorrhage, where a blood vessel within the brain bursts.

Clinical nurse consultant Kylie Tastula is the coordinator for the trial at RPA, and responsible for screening and recruiting trial participants.

“The intervention seeks to remove blood from the brain through minimally invasive surgery and intermittent dosing of thrombolysis (clot busting medication),” Ms Tastula said.

“Historically, thrombolysis is only used to treat ischaemic stroke, but the premise of this study is that by removing the blood clot faster, injury to the brain will be reduced and the patient’s long term outcome will be better.

“It’s very exciting because there is currently no treatment for intracerebral haemorrhage and, if successful, the trial could lead to the first change to practice in 30 years.”

The second trial, named HeadPoST, was presented by RPA stroke clinical nurse consultant Nadia Burkholder at Sydney Local Health District’s recent Neurosciences Think Tank event.

“HeadPoST aims to establish the comparative effectiveness of different head positions for patients with acute stroke,” Ms Burkholder said.

“Currently, there is no international consensus regarding whether it is best to have the patient laying down or sitting up following a stroke, but hopefully this study will provide one.”
Pioneer remembered

He was known as the humble trailblazer. A man who went down in medical history as a pioneer in the treatment of cancer for patients with incurable tumours. And a man who never gave up.

Surgical oncologist Professor Fred Stephens, who died late last month, was the former head of the Department of Surgery at the University of Sydney, and a consultant surgeon at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

He pioneered a “last resort” treatment for cancer patients with incurable tumours that channelled chemotherapy directly into the artery supplying blood to the affected area.

For 20 years after his retirement in 1995, he continued to push to re-establish a university chair in surgical oncology to continue that ground-breaking cancer treatment. Earlier this year, at the age of 87, he saw that vision come true, telling the media he was “thrilled” to know surgical oncology had “finally returned to the map in this country” with a chair at Macquarie University.

“We were worried it would never happen,” he said. “What is even more exciting is the chair will be appointed at a university in my home town and in my lifetime. To know the procedure will be distributed and that research will continue, that is my life’s work completed. I’m just delighted.”

Professor Stephens is survived by his wife Sheilagh and their five children.

Spreading the spirit

Thank you to the students at Al-Faisal College in Auburn who paid a visit to sick little ones of Canterbury Hospital recently.

The students delivered gifts and spread some cheer and heartfelt community spirit to children on the Gumnut Ward.

Professor Fred Stephens
Diabetes team among the best

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital has been named one of four centres of excellence in Australia by the National Association of Diabetes Centres.

“Our centre was selected from 104 across Australia for this significant accolade,” said director Dr Ted Wu.

“This follows our designation as an International Diabetes Federation Centre of Excellence, making us the only diabetes centre in Australia to hold both of these esteemed titles.”

The award acknowledged the centre’s significant contribution to health professional education and support of PhD and Master’s students.

It also acknowledged the centre’s commitment to outreach services, consumer engagement, research and influence nationally and internationally, said Assistant Director Associate Professor Marg McGill.

“Our centre is unique as it takes a multidisciplinary approach to fully examine the most promising ways to prevent, treat and cure type 1 and type 2 diabetes and their complications, from multiple perspectives.

“Our researchers benefit from strong relationships with their colleagues in the RPA Endocrine Research Laboratory, the Charles Perkins Centre, obesity and nutrition, cardiology, hepatology, ophthalmology, obstetrics, genetics, epidemiology, biochemistry and cell biology.”

For more information on the RPA Diabetes Centre visit www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/research/r_rpa_endodiab.html.

Sweet ride for cancer patients

Patients will soon have better access to cancer services at Concord Hospital, thanks to a new bus donated by the Member for Drummoyne, John Sidoti.

The bus will help patients with transfers between home and hospital for those living within Sydney Local Health District, and between train stations and the hospital for those living outside the catchment.

The vehicle will be managed by Concord Cancer Centre staff and operated by Concord Hospital volunteers from Monday to Friday. Bookings can be made via the Concord Cancer Centre.
My day starts with a good cup of coffee as I am of the belief that a good coffee can solve any problem (or at least most). I leave a long wish list of chores for my two lovely grown-up children with the hope that at least 10 per cent will be complete when I get back.

I take the train and this allows me to do my ‘to do’ list for work. I get off at Redfern and thoroughly enjoy the walk through Sydney University admiring the Jacaranda blossoms on the way.

I do a quick assessment of my roster and check for any unplanned absences or any technical or computer issues. This can really impact on the throughput, and I work closely with external agencies to ensure appropriate staffing. I also spend time organising retrieval of records for billing of private health fund patients requested by the department of Finance.

By mid-morning, I run a report on backlogs and organising follow-up of missing admission records from various departments. Most departments do the right thing and send through their admissions notes in a timely manner, however, every now and then we encounter issues in tracking the notes down and it becomes critical for me or my coding assistant to follow up on these notes to meet our ABF deadlines. While I am dealing with these issues, my coding knowledge is constantly tested by my lovely team. I am proud to say we have established a good team of new coders who are proactively working alongside our more senior coders in achieving the department’s targets.

Around 11am, I conduct audits to ensure that coders are assigning correct codes as per treatment performed and according to coding standards. This is important to derive the correct DRG (Diagnosis Related Group) and to get appropriate funding from the Ministry of Health.

My afternoons are usually taken up by meetings with other coding managers. I also meet with NUMs to ensure timely return of medical records for coding, and I use the opportunity to educate clinical staff on the importance of correct clinical documentation, without which, coding can be very difficult and not receive appropriate funding. It’s a great feeling to be able to offer the patients so much support after they leave hospital.

By 3pm, I am usually making my second cuppa before tackling the various administrative duties such as timesheets, stats, accounts payable, rosters, etc.

By 5pm, I am ready to go home and tackle my next shift as a mother and a wife of a busy household.
**World AIDS Day**

Former Olympic diver Matthew Mitcham joined our Sexual Health team on the streets of Newtown handing out gerberas and safe sex packs in the lead up to World Aids Day to encourage people to get tested for HIV.

HIV testing leads to early detection and allows early uptake of treatment, which improves individual health and prevents transmission to others. For information on testing locations and sexual health clinic bookings visit slhd.nsw.gov.au/Communityhealth.

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**Pozhet marks 20 year milestone**

Charlie Sheen’s recent HIV announcement has opened the dialogue for the often invisible heterosexual HIV community.

Sydney Local Health District hosts the statewide service for heterosexual people living with HIV, Pozhet, which held its 20th annual workshop last month.

“When the service first started in the 90s, it was a small peer support group which met fortnightly in Surry Hills,” said Pene Manolas, the District’s Manager for Community HIV Services.

“More than 20 years later, Pozhet now caters for the specific needs of heterosexual HIV positive men and women and delivers its programs to more than 360 clients.”

“The annual workshop is a great opportunity for heterosexual people with HIV, their families and partners to come together and meet others in a safe and confidential environment,” Ms Manolas said.

For clients like Colin Smide, 53, who has been living with HIV for more than 10 years, the Pozhet network has been a vital resource.

“I’m from Wollongong and sometimes it can be quite isolating. I’ve attended the annual workshop and a number of weekend retreats. It’s good to meet new people, as well as catch up with those from previous Pozhet activities. I always aim to let new attendees know there are people around they can talk to and meet up with,” Mr Smide said.

A father of four, he now sees himself as an advocate for heterosexual people living with HIV and is working on a YouTube video project to educate the community on the common myths and misconceptions about HIV.

For Ms Manolas and her team, it is rewarding to see long-term clients become more open and willing to disclose their status.

“Visibility and sharing knowledge of HIV as a heterosexual is invaluable to newer clients and helps decrease the stigma experienced by many who tell us they have never disclosed their HIV status to anyone,” she said.
Blue wrens win premier place on Missenden Road

A mural featuring superb blue wrens has taken out first prize in Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’s Muralogy 2015 competition and will be painted onto a large wall at the corner of Missenden Rd and Carillon Avenue in Camperdown.

The mural was one of 17 entries received by the Muralogy committee in an Australian first collaboration between a public hospital and street artists. It will be painted on the main wall of the new Institute of Academic Surgery building facing Missenden Road.

Artist Janne Birkner said the superb blue wren was a local bird which had increased in numbers on the RPA campus in the past four years, and its hue matched the colour of staff uniforms.

The three runners up were Cameron Scott with his entry “Camouflage Bones”; Alexander Edema with his entry “Surgeon’s Scalpel; and Team PMBC, a collaboration of staff from the Professor Marie Bashir Centre and their entry “Petri Dishes”.

The People’s Choice award was given to Steven Nuttall with his entry “Human Form” while Andrew Mills was awarded an honourable mention for his moving mural called “Sorry”.

The submissions were judged by:

- Mark Nelson, the Vice-President of the Art Gallery of NSW Board of Trustees and a judge for the Archibald Competition.
- Associate Professor Michael Esson, the former Director, International Drawing Research Initiative, UNSW Art and Design and our Art in Surgery Workshop co-ordinator.
- Tina Donnelly, a benefactor and strong supporter of the Institute of Academic Surgery.
- Professor Michael Solomon, the Co-Chair of the RPA Institute of Academic Surgery.
- Professor Richard Allen, the Director of the RPA Transplant Institute.
- Mae Rafraf, RPA patient/consumer representative.
- Josephine Bennett, the Manager of Culture and Recreation at Marrickville Council.
- Jimmy Pizarro, the Managing Director of Montana Australia who sponsored the competition.

The Chief Executive of Sydney Local Health District, Dr Teresa Anderson, said the competition was “a great opportunity to engage with our local community and to portray the innovative and collaborative nature of both the Institute of Academic Surgery and the Transplant Institute”.

“We also wanted to give the building an iconic presence on the greater RPA campus that is in keeping with the local area,” she said.

“There are so many fantastic murals around the inner west, and we wanted to add our building to that wonderful group.”

The murals will be painted in January.
District Confidential

DECEMBER 2015/JANUARY 2016

HealthMatters • Sydney – it’s your local health district
Employee awards

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Employee of the Month – Sponsored by Medirest

**August**
Rob Pike, Relocation Manager, Transport Department
Recognised for his promptness in actioning requests to relocate goods and furniture and for being a great team worker.

**September**
Patrick Tang, Data Manager, Department of Neurosurgery
Recognised for his diligence, professionalism and efficient and effective service in helping staff with computer and data issues.

**October**
Maria Spinola, Registered Nurse, Newborn Care Unit
Recognised for her positivity and friendliness to staff and patients and the outstanding care she provides to the babies and in all her clinical duties.

**November**
Sasha Siljanoski, Operating Assistant, J.L. Operating Theatres
Recognised for his respectful manner, reliability and his contribution and mentorship he provides the team.

Concord Hospital Employee of the Month – Sponsored by Medirest

**July**
Tawk Thawng, hospital assistant, Environmental Services
Recognised for his positive attitude, efficiency in doing all his duties and assisting the flow of patients.

**August**
Raul Alzamora, storesperson, Supply Distribution Centre
Recognised for his task to rearrange the stores and for being friendly, approachable and a valuable ED team member.

**Team of the Quarter**
Perioperative managers and educators
Recognised for their team work, planning and cooperation for the theatre renovations.

District Employee of the Month
Sponsored by St George Bank

**August**
Tony Tarchichi, Finance
Recognised for his customer service ethic, patience and willingness to help in all financial matters.

Balmain Hospital Employee Excellence Award
Sponsored by HESTA

**Annie Costello**, AIN, Lever Ward
Recognised for her respectful patient focus, good communication skills and going above and beyond on the Lever Ward.

**Pascale Van Der Baken Pastel**, Registered Nurse, GPC
Recognised for her innovative ideas, respectful manner and exceptional team work.

Community Health Employee Excellence Award

**Gloria Pavey**, Clinical Nurse Educator, Palliative Care, Sydney District Nursing (Croydon)
Recognised for her high level of professionalism, communication skills and for the respect and collaborative approach she brings to her work with palliative clients and their carers.

Oral Health Services Employee of the Month
Sponsored by HESTA

**September**
Dr Jonathan Mahon, periodontics resident, Specialist Services Department
Recognised for his dedicated, approachable and friendly nature, always being willing to take on extra appointments and his great communication with patients.

**October**
Sonia Manevska, Dental Assistant, Community Oral Health Clinic
Recognised for her teamwork, positive attitude and efficiency, providing great assistance to all on the floor.

Canterbury Hospital Employee Excellence Award
Sponsored by HESTA

**Lindy Collins**, NUM, Emergency Department
Recognised for her calm and organised approach and the high morale and culture she has created in ED, to excellent results.
Mark Halliday
Senior Physiotherapist, Concord Hospital

Mark Halliday has low vision – but he’s never let it get in the way of his 25 year career as a physiotherapist.

“I enjoy what I do, and I just get on with life. I have software on my computer to enhance the text and have a special device to write my notes up.”

His manager and head of physiotherapy, Gavin Robertson, rates Mark as a highly valuable team member.

“Mark does a lot around the unit. He gets involved in everything, including supervising younger physios and undergraduates on clinical placements.

“He doesn’t let his low vision be an impediment. He has the tools to ensure he can use the computer and make his notes, and it definitely doesn’t get in the way of his patient interactions. All his patients think he’s great.”

Mark’s focus is musculoskeletal physiotherapy and he has a particular interest in lower back pain, which is the basis of his PhD.

“I started the PhD part-time in 2010, so I am on track to finish within a few years. I’m looking at treatment methods for patients with chronic lower back pain who have a directional preference with movement. I’ve completed the data collection and had one paper published already.

“I suppose I have an academic interest in investigating things. It makes things more interesting for me. Being a clinician is great, but research gives me more of a focus.”

UPDATE

Allied Health Research Forum

More than 130 clinicians and academics came together to explore the value of clinical research, showcase local work and launch a partnership with the University of Sydney at this year’s Allied Health Research forum.

A great debate asked if research as workplace learning is core business for all allied health staff and RPA General Manager Deborah Willcox presented awards to allied health staff including the highly commended project for translation of the Malnutrition Screening Tool and the inaugural Allied Health Research Seeding Grants to support clinicians to commence a research project with the support of a research mentor.

Giving to the needy

Balmain Hospital and BreastScreen have joined forces to donate gifts and tinned food to the Exodus Foundation. Each year, the Exodus Foundation collects toys to distribute to underprivileged children who would otherwise not receive a gift at Christmas. They also provide a feast on Christmas Day for more than 2500 homeless and disadvantaged people. A big thank you to our staff for providing hams, custard, fruit mince pies and toys for the day.

Aboriginal Health Plan launched

The Sydney Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Health Partnership officially launched its Aboriginal Health Priorities document in December.

The partnership is an alliance between Sydney Local Health District, Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern, Northern Sydney Local Health District, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, St Vincent’s Hospital and the Sydney Children’s Hospital Network.

The six health priorities identified in the plan are chronic care, cancer, illicit drugs, alcohol, smoking and gambling, Aboriginal workforce and research.

NHMRC grants

Sydney Local Health District was awarded more than $15 million and Sydney Research $61 million in the most recent grant announcements by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Some of the grants will fund research into alcohol dependence, the genetic basis of childhood cardiomyopathy, therapeutic challenges in sleep disorders and development of a new specific immunosuppressive monoclonal antibody to advance transplantation. For full details of the grant announcements see nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/outcomes-funding-rounds.