Concord Repatriation General Hospital celebrated its 75th anniversary with a Diamond Jubilee gala dinner.

More than 500 people came together to help celebrate this significant milestone, which was complete with fantastic food and entertainment featuring the Three Waiters and the Royal Australian Navy band. One of the many highlights of the evening was the donation of $50,000 to the ANZAC Research Institute by the Rotary Club of Concord, the Concordians Association and Concord Hospital volunteers.
I was delighted to attend the Balmain Ball earlier this month which reflected the good standing Balmain Hospital has in the community. There was a fantastic showing of support and it was great to see so many people there. The money raised will help purchase invaluable equipment for the hospital helping it deliver the best care for patients and I thank the community for its wonderful support.

I was also excited to attend the fourth annual Yaralla Festival on 11 September. It was lovely to see so many people attend this important event and once again, it was a fantastic community day full of fun and entertainment. It also showcased the beautiful and historic Yaralla Estate at Concord, of which we are very proud.

Last month, we said goodbye to two long-standing and valued staff members. The head of the Centre for Workplace and Education in Rozelle, Mira Haramis, retired after an extensive history in the health sector. Mira’s leadership has ensured the centre continues to be one of the most progressive and innovative health and education training services in NSW. Meanwhile, the formidable Les Hillier bid farewell to Balmain Hospital after an impressive career. Les, who has worked in healthcare for more than 50 years, will be remembered for his spirit and passion for his role as finance manager and the community as a whole.

Last but not least, the transition of ICT services across South Western and Sydney is progressing. It was confirmed at the second staff forum last month that phase one of the separation will include web services, desktop and communications as well as the business and finance units. It is anticipated that this phase will take between three and six months.

The Hon. Ron Phillips  
Sydney Local Health District  
Board Chairman

Last month, Royal Prince Alfred and Concord hospitals were involved in some major celebrations.

RPA celebrated its 82nd Annual Clinical Week Symposia with guest lecturers and keynote presentations focused around the theme of metabolic health, including a special appearance by fitness expert Michelle Bridges to discuss how we can manage obesity.

Concord Hospital held services for Victory in the Pacific Day and Vietnam Veterans Day at the nearby Kokoda Track and marked the hospital’s 75 year diamond jubilee. The anniversary was celebrated with the launch of a hall of fame and a gala dinner which was enjoyed by staff, veterans and community members who shared stories of the past and present and celebrated the great history of Concord from an army hospital to the major teaching hospital we know it as today.

October will once again be a busy month across the District. We will partner with the Lebanese Muslim Association to host a health expo for the Canterbury community, the Lantern Club in Roselands will once again turn pink in support of BreastScreen and Mental Health will hold a photography competition to celebrate Mental Health Month and promote positive messages for those living with mental illness around the theme ‘the best part of my day’.

I’m looking forward to the District’s Annual General Meeting which will be held on 17 November at the Centre for Workforce and Education in Rozelle.

The AGM is a great chance for the Board and staff to come together and celebrate a year of achievements and delivering excellent health services. The AGM will feature special presentations from staff on some very exciting projects and will launch the Year in Review 2015/16 publication. I hope to see many of you there.
Podcast hits number one

It started out as a way of helping junior doctors at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital learn the ropes – and is now the number one medical podcast in Australia, helping doctors, nurses and medical students access world renowned specialists.

Last month, onthewards.org chalked up 100 podcasts and to mark the occasion, founder Dr James Edwards interviewed Professor Nick Talley (pictured at left with James), an inspirational leader in health.

“Not only has he been dean of many clinical schools, he’s even written a textbook that nearly every junior doctor uses.”

So what has been the secret behind the success of onthewards.org?

“We use a simple approach by getting a junior doctor to come up with the questions they’d like asked of an expert,” says James, the acting director or RPA’s emergency department.

“And we get out to a large group of people. For example, medical staff based in rural or regional areas might not have access to many specialists. This way they can listen to some of the best medical experts in the world.

“We also wanted the website, which features the podcasts and blogs, to be available free to everyone regardless of where they work. We have people from Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland contributing.”

And the future looks bright.

“I am humbled by the success of it so far and the opportunities in the future are endless.”

Professor Nick Talley with Dr James Edwards.

New home for hospital beds

A mass rollout of new state-of-the art beds is underway across Canterbury, Concord, Balmain and RPA hospitals including 10 intensive care beds and four purpose-built for maternity.

The District’s Director of Nursing and Midwifery Services, Katharine Duffy, said it was wonderful to help those less fortunate.

“These beds will make a significant difference to people who are sick and vulnerable. It is a great feeling to help provide comfort to people who live so far away.”

The 700 beds being replaced have been given a new life in developing countries, and have been installed in hospitals and clinics in remote areas of Sri Lanka, Fiji and the Philippines.
A step in the right direction

For the past six years, Otto Stichter has been living with a leg that feels as if weights are strapped to it.

For Otto, the treatment has been successful. “I have not had any cellulitis since I started getting treatment. But having lymphoedema is quite annoying because my leg is so heavy. Even something as simple as choosing socks can be difficult. I have to get special socks that do not have elastic at the top.”

Early diagnosis can save lives. “A lot of people are unaware they have the condition, so by the time they seek treatment the condition is often irreversible,” says Robyn.

“Cancer patients are particularly susceptible if they have had their lymph nodes removed. However, because they are getting other medical treatment, often it is picked up early and is not permanent.”

“The challenge is getting the message out there to others who are just living with the condition, not knowing what it is.”

For the past six years, Otto Stichter has been living with a leg that feels as if weights are strapped to it.

Every few weeks, the 65-year-old, who suffers from lymphoedema – a condition that causes fluid retention and tissue swelling – attends Royal Prince Alfred Hospital to have his left leg assessed and bandaged.

“I did not know I had lymphoedema for years until I was admitted to RPA with an infection and septicaemia,” he says.

Senior occupational therapist at RPA’s lymphoedema service, Robyn Sierla, said some patients developed recurrent cellulitis, an infection of the skin that can cause serious complications.

“Cellulitis is the most common preventable cause of hospitalisation. Through research, we found that by treating lymphoedema patients we could prevent cellulitis from developing and therefore reduce the rate of hospitalisations.”

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A dynasty for the ages

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital has always felt like one big family, but now there is a story to prove it.

When Margaret Pike and her husband Grant Bowman retired this month, after notching up 59 years’ service between them, they left a dynasty of eight relatives walking the halls of the hospital. With a collective 225 years’ service under their belts, nobody can accuse any of them of being fickle.

Margaret’s son Rob is our relocation manager (with 32 years chalked up), his brother Shane works in engineering (30 years), while Col is in transport (32 years). Granddaughter Juanita is an admin officer in Intensive Care (four years), and grandson Kurt is a ward assistant (six years). Son Ron works in security (20 years), granddaughter Shelby is a ward clerk (six years), and a second Shane – a nephew – works with Rob in relocation (26 years).

“At one stage, my five sons and two daughters were on staff along with their spouses,” Margaret said.

“They then kids started working here. RPA has been in the family for a long time and will always be in my heart. Once you've been here, you never forget it.”

The general manager of RPA, Deborah Willcox, said people like Margaret didn’t come along every day.

“It's so wonderful to have so many Pikes working for us. It's a reflection on how Margaret, the matriarch of the family, feels about RPA. She loves the hospital so much that she wants her whole family to be a part of it. They all have the same love and respect for the hospital and she has engendered that in all of them.”

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IN BRIEF

New bilingual community support
The District now has four new bilingual community educators. The group comes from diverse backgrounds – Bangladesh, China and Syria – and will play an important role in helping to provide education programs for the District’s multicultural community.

Inaugural award for long-standing nurse
Long-time nurse Sue Schasser has been endorsed as the District’s inaugural Nurse Practitioner in Aged Health. Sue recently completed a Master of Nursing/Nurse Practitioner and brings with her a wealth of knowledge. She continues to work passionately as part of the District’s residential outreach service.

Culturally stepping up
The Multicultural Health Service at Marrickville Health Centre received very positive feedback after taking part in the Women in the Workforce Expo held at Burwood Library on 12 August. Our staff provided important multilingual health information to about 90 women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Expo comes to Canterbury
The Lebanese Muslim Association and Sydney Local Health District will hold a health expo in October to support the Muslim community of Canterbury access better healthcare. The expo will feature information sessions and stalls from a range of District health services as well as health checks and appearances by community leaders. The BreastScreen van will provide free on-site mammograms and food and children’s activities will also be available. The expo will be held at the LMA Grand Function Hall in Lakemba on Saturday 15 October, from 10am-4pm. Families and community members of all ages are welcome.

Canterbury Hospital became the first in the District to go live with the eMR2 in August, the next step in reducing paperwork through the use of electronic records on the wards.

The eMR2 allows nursing, medical and allied health staff better access to real-time patient records from anywhere in the hospital at the same time as allowing clinicians to record patient vital signs and progress notes from mobile workstations.

The District’s eMR2 Project Manager, Chanelle Stowers, said the system had a great impact on all clinicians.

“Instead of a nurse recording patient observations on the paper record at the bedside, they can now take the eMR2 cart to the patient, and record and save the observations electronically,” Ms Stowers said.

Canterbury Hospital’s Director of Nursing, Frances O’Brien, said the eMR2 was the way of the future.

“Your patient’s information is at your fingertips, anywhere, anytime. It is a step forward in excellent patient care. The information entered is secure, allows greater accuracy than handwritten notes, and increased communication between all clinicians caring for a single patient.”

eMR2 also brings together a number of online systems, gives clinical prompts and alerts and a record of when alerts are seen.

The eMR2 project team will move to Concord and RPA for rollout next year.

Dr Tom Finn using the eMR2 technology.
Winning response

In May, staff across the District were called on to complete the People Matter survey, a new survey from the Public Service Commission that builds on previous YourSay surveys.

The survey gave staff the chance to share their opinion and provide feedback on what it is like to work in Sydney Local Health District.

With more than 3,000 staff participating, Sydney Local Health District had a 30.9 per cent response rate to the survey, and has received an overall engagement score of 69 per cent.

The results of the survey, which will help each hospital and service to look at ways to enhance workplace culture and understand the impact of workplace initiatives, reflected the District had the second highest engagement score across NSW Health.

Sydney Dental Hospital, Population Health and Concord Hospital were among the services with the highest staff response rates.

Congratulations to the winners of the major prizes of an iWatch and Fitbit, which were presented by the District’s Chief Executive, Teresa Anderson to Imelda Brewster of AudioVisual Services, Linsay Anderson from Balmain Hospital and Josh Callaghan from RPA Cardiology.

EVENTS CALENDAR

The Pitch
See the latest round of innovative ideas from across the District pitch for funding.

Friday, 23 September, 4pm
Concord Medical Education Centre, Concord Hospital

RPA Newborn Care ‘Little Wonder’ fundraiser
Annual movie night fundraiser by Little Wonder parent group supporting RPA Newborn Care.

Wednesday, 21 September, 6.30pm for 7pm
Hoyts Broadway – Bridget Jones’s Baby
Get your tickets at www.facebook.com/LittleWonderRPA

Living Well Photography Competition
A competition open to mental health carers, consumers and anyone with lived experience of mental illness in NSW to celebrate Mental Health Week

9-15 October
Submit a photograph that captures that special part of your day for the chance to win prizes.
To enter and for more information see www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/MentalHealth/photocompetition.html

Lebanese Muslim Association Health Expo
Supporting the local Muslim community in accessing better healthcare.

Saturday, 15 October, 10am - 4pm
LMA Grand Function Hall
71-75 Wangee Road, Lakemba
Families and community members of all ages are welcome.

HealthMatters is all about you. We would love to hear your stories. Simply email sydneymedia@sswhs.nsw.gov.au