

#19 Summer 2024

South West

THRIVE

Leading care, healthier communities

Technology

Innovation

Collaborative

Health care

Global

Strategic partnerships

More news inside!



South Western Sydney Local Health District

Chief Executive message



While it is our District's responsibility to provide safe and high-quality healthcare to the region, we know we can't do it alone.

Strategically partnering with a range of organisations from local community groups to state-wide networks amplifies and enables the work of our public health services.

Local community organisations connect us with the people of south western Sydney, supporting engagement and providing health information.

Research and technology partners with international reach ensure we have access to the latest information and resources, support us to apply these to services locally and promote our research projects globally.

Education and training partners elevate the skills of our workforce, supporting not only the development of our staff but medical professions, enhancing care.

Thank you to all of our partners for their continued support.

Sonia Marshall
Chief Executive
South Western Sydney Local Health District

The specialised services we provide supporting the health and wellbeing of our community are due to true collaboration with our partners.

We all share one goal: healthy, well people.

In this edition of Thrive we acknowledge just some of the many partners who play a role in south western Sydney's health ecosystem.

Our health ecosystem

As we meet the distinct needs of the many communities of the south west, we partner with a myriad of local, national and international organisations to design and deliver innovative and high-quality healthcare.



Partners in care

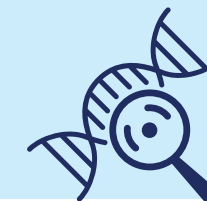
South Western Sydney Local Health District recognises the diversity and footprint of our region requires different approaches to care. We work with a range of local organisations to ensure our services reflect and meet the unique needs of the region. These include local community groups and other healthcare providers including affiliated health and non-government organisations.



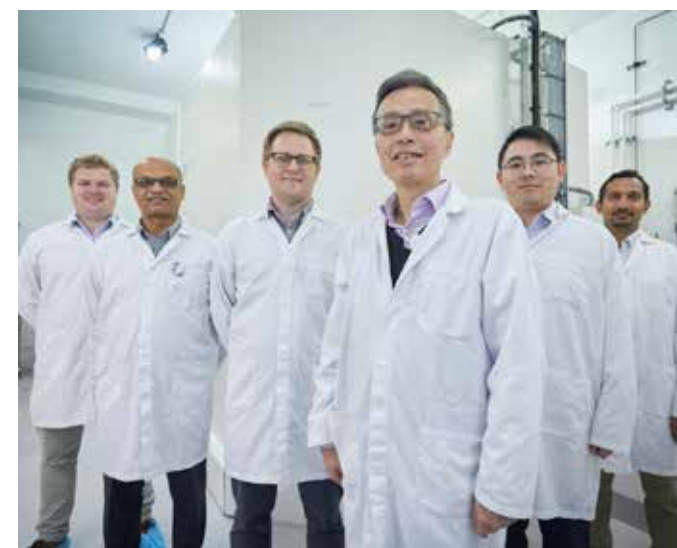
Page 4

Accelerating health

Our District's strong commitment to research and innovation spans decades and is embedded throughout our entire organisation. Partnerships with a range of technology companies, universities and the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research puts the District at the forefront of global health and medical advancements and supports the professional and academic development of our clinicians.



Page 10



Shaping south west

Good health is only possible when communities are thriving. Knowledge about the health ecosystem, a strong education, thriving economies, participation in physical activity, access to green space and sustainably built environments all contribute to long-term health, wellbeing and developmental outcomes. As well as providing public health services and information, the District is the largest employer in the region and connects with various training and education providers.



Page 14



South Western Sydney Local Health District

Strategic Communications and Media Unit

Cover: Occupational therapist Cesca Azarcon and Pamela Johnson from the Residential Transitional Care Program

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Sue Colley,
Executive Director
Allied Health and
Community Services

Partners in care

“South western Sydney is an incredibly diverse region made up of many communities.

“By partnering with local community organisations that reflect their diversity, we leverage each other’s knowledge and expertise to enhance the healthcare services available, creating a more considered, targeted experience.

“We also work closely with local groups to ensure consumers have access to the latest health information and know how to navigate the health ecosystem. In doing so, we build knowledge about important health issues and support them to develop healthier habits that can make a difference to their long-term health and wellbeing.”

Wheels For Life



Wheels for life donates equipment to Bowral & District Hospital in 2023.

Funding partners support the work of the public health service through sponsorships, grants and donations.

Wakeling Automotive’s Wheels For Life program is one of south western Sydney’s finest community partnerships.

For more than 25 years, Wakeling Automotive’s Wheels For Life program has provided Campbelltown, Camden and Bowral & District Hospitals with medical equipment valued at more than \$1.8 million.

“This is a wonderful partnership and we greatly appreciate Wakeling Automotive’s decades-long commitment to our hospitals and our community,”
Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals General Manager Grant Isedale said.

Through the partnership, \$25 from every new or used car sold through

the program is used to purchase medical equipment for the hospitals.

Over the years a myriad of equipment has been purchased including high-definition x-ray technology, ventilation machines, defibrillation monitors and a digital weighing chair.

In early 2023, Wakeling Automotive Managing Director Scott Wakeling donated \$202,000 to Campbelltown Hospital to purchase an array of new equipment, including ultrasound systems and echocardiographs. **T**

Empowering families

A young family is enjoying a more peaceful night’s sleep thanks to the expert staff at the new state-of-the-art Karitane Early Parenting Service at Campbelltown Hospital.

Mother-of-three Alynta Reid said her “amazing” residential stay at the new service empowered her family to help their children settle into a calm night-time routine.

“One nurse created a sticker chart for my girls to reward them when they slept in their own bed,” Ms Martin said.

“For the first night in over a year, the girls slept by themselves in their own bed in their own room and I truly believe we would not have reached this point without our sticker chart, probably the one thing that I hadn’t thought to try at home.

“I thank everyone for such an amazing, positive stay at the new centre.”

The new centre is co-located at Campbelltown Hospital, offering easy access to services and specialist care including expanded paediatric and maternity units.

“With 52 per cent of admissions for Karitane’s residential services coming from within South Western Sydney Local Health District, our new centre is strategically located to serve this fast-growing population,” Karitane Chief Executive Officer Grainne O’Loughlin said.

“The opening of our centre is an exciting new era in supporting families and children from birth to five years of age, so they receive the very best start and foundations for life.”

Developed in partnership between Karitane and South Western Sydney Local Health District, the early parenting service offers 19 rooms to families from across NSW, with multiple rooms accommodating families with more than one child and a culturally welcoming room for First Nations families.

Ms O’Loughlin said Karitane, a registered charity and not-for-

profit early parenting organisation, had supported families and young children experiencing parenting challenges for more than 100 years.

“With the wonderful partnership between Karitane and the Health District, our new centre will ensure new generations of families receive the care and support they need for many years to come,” Ms O’Loughlin said. **T**



Alynta Reid and her children at the new Karitane Early Parenting Service.



Pamela Johnson and Cesca Azarcon

Home comfort

As people age their health needs become more specialised. Our Aged Care and Rehabilitation Services provides high-quality care in a setting to support older people's recovery as much as possible, including in their own home.

When Pamela Johnson experienced a fall at home that left her with a neck fracture, one of the big questions was what support she would have once she was back home. After assessing her situation and gaining approval by the Aged Care Assessment Team, the team at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital referred Pamela to the Residential Transitional Care (RTC) Program.

"I had a brace around my neck and couldn't move fully, I also had limited vision. I was ready to leave the hospital but wasn't quite ready to be back home alone," Pamela said.

The RTC program can be for a period of up to 12 weeks and split into two intervals. Each person's individual needs are

comprehensively assessed, and a plan is developed which is tailored to support them at home and in the community.

"We connect clients to a residential aged care facility where they can stay and recover for the first few weeks", Azarcon said.

During this time, a team of allied health professionals including occupational therapists, dieticians, speech pathologists, social workers and physiotherapists regularly visit the patient to assist with their recovery.

Clients then return home and the community arm of the program continues to support them for the remainder of the program.

"Most of the time treatment and recovery doesn't end when you leave the hospital, in fact that's when the real work starts," Occupational Therapist Cesca Azarcon said.

"We're able to come in and support patients with understanding the current limitations of their body, what they can do to minimise further risks and rebuild their strength."

Pamela said having a team of specialists including Cesca regularly come in to assist her made a world of difference.

"They helped me come back home and live independently," she said. **T**



Oran Park's first day surgery

Expressions of Interest now open

Brand new state-of-the-art facility with both turn-key and custom fit-out opportunities available.

Oran Park, South West Sydney's new international gateway is proud to announce LPC House, our latest commercial building is almost complete and is ideally positioned for health practitioners wanting to significantly capitalise on a proposed whole floor day surgery of over 1,500sqm.

LPC House is a premium, six-storey building with sweeping open atrium foyer, rooftop garden and entertaining area with stunning views, located in the heart of Oran Park Town Centre.

As a masterplanned town, Oran Park's tremendous growth acts as a catalyst for the need for more health practitioners to support the local community.

Naming rights are currently available, so you can make your mark on both the building and the Oran Park community.



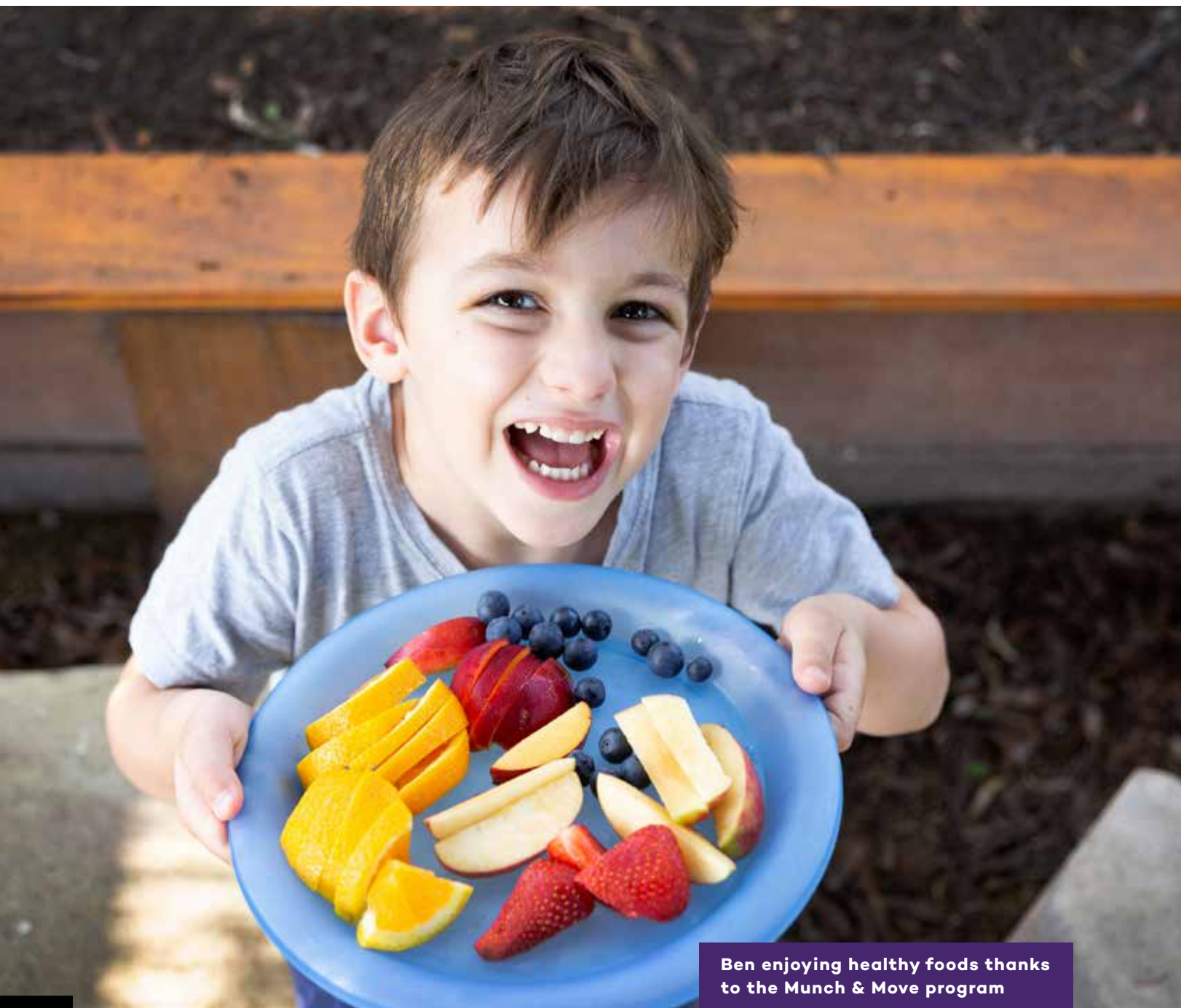
Contact the Oran Park Sales Office for full details and a comprehensive report on healthcare in South West Sydney.

oranpark.com.au
9043 7500



Healthy habits from the start

The first 2000 days, or five years, of a child's life are a crucial time, where the habits children form can have a long-term impact on their health and wellbeing.



Ben enjoying healthy foods thanks to the Munch & Move program

Many teams contribute to those formative early years in a child's life.

Teams across our District such as allied health, health promotion, Aboriginal health, and child and family health work together to provide multidisciplinary support to young children and their families. They also work with local community organisations such as early childhood centres and other government agencies to promote the importance of the First 2000 days.

The District's Health Promotion team manages the Munch & Move program, part of a state-wide initiative, helping early childhood educators find exciting ways to teach healthy habits.

“Children need encouragement, support and fun activities to foster habits like healthy eating and physical activity including fundamental movement skills,” Health Promotion Officer Amber Hall said.

Amber works closely with Guardian Angel Preschool, and Director Amanda Bain said the program has been incredibly useful in finding innovative ways to encourage healthy behaviours in children and families.

“We found a lot of our families had trouble adopting healthier habits because either children are resistant to change or it's just easier to keep doing what they've always done,” she said.

“But with Amber's support, we've been able to learn new ways of doing things and take some of the pressure off of these families to try figure it out themselves”.

Amber helped Amanda and the team implement a 'colour of



Amber Hall and Amanda Bain

the month' activity plan to make eating fruits and vegetables more enjoyable.

Each month had a particular colour theme which shaped healthy eating learning experiences and activities like painting, with a day at the end of the month celebrating the colour and achievements.

Orange was the first colour featured, and initially one of Amanda's students Ben wasn't too excited about the idea of eating orange-coloured fruits like mandarin.

“Ben actually had a really strong aversion to eating mandarins at first, he wasn't a fan of not just the

taste but the texture,” Amanda said.

“So we took it day by day, I told him we had the whole month and he didn't have to rush it. Each day we just spent some time getting him comfortable with the idea of touching and eating it and then one day he decided to try it. Over time he came to really enjoy them and now they're always included in his lunch.”

Ben's mother Ruth said it was wonderful to see him find the joy in healthy habits.

“Ben usually has a very limited palette so seeing him willing to try new foods was exciting”, Ruth said. **1**



Michael Dickinson,
Director Digital Health

Accelerating health

“When people think about high-quality health care, they often first think about the doctors, nurses and other health professionals providing that care and for good reason. However, technology also has its place in health, providing streamlined processes, access to and analysis of data and new treatments. It allows us to develop new models of care and improve communication between staff and patients.

“We partner with leading technology companies to elevate the already fantastic work of our teams and utilise technology to connect with other healthcare providers to ensure patients are receiving the best care possible.”

Artificial Intelligence with a personal touch

In recent years, there’s been a shift from using digital technologies for short-term solutions to finding ways to develop new models of care with technology embedded.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Josephine Chow, former District Director Strategy & Partnerships, identified a critical bottleneck around patient check-in calls. She took the opportunity and engaged one of her strategy partners, Curious Thing AI, a conversational voice assistant technology.

Working together, Curious Thing AI and Professor Chow’s team created ‘Sam’, a care bot who spoke to isolated patients every day while at home.

“Sam made nearly 40,000 calls in less than two months, supporting more than 6,300 low to medium risk patients at home” Professor Chow said.



The South Western Sydney Nursing & Midwifery Research Alliance won a SWSLHD Board Award for its AI technology.

While the pandemic workload has reduced, what health researchers and innovators like Professor Chow are recognising is there is still a place for Sam in health.

“Long research projects where we need to regularly touch base with participants are an ideal application for technology like Sam,” Professor Chow explains.

Curious Thing AI has been supporting the District and Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research in their long COVID

research. Together, they developed a tailored voice-based support AI to reach out to survivors with consistent questioning, which also allows survivors to call back to complete their check-in at a more suitable time if needed.

“Studying the long-term impacts on COVID survivors is key to understanding treatment and support. AI’s value is not just scalability but accessibility, it allows patients and participants to interact when it suits them.” **T**



Associate Professor Richard Cracknell with registered nurse Ronita Sharma and paramedic Samantha Harris in a simulation activity

A picture is worth a thousand words

A high-powered camera on the ceiling in the Campbelltown Hospital Emergency Department (ED) is helping clinicians save the lives of critically ill or injured babies and children.

The cutting-edge video technology in the children’s resuscitation bay provides real-time vision of young patients fighting for their lives which is beamed to paediatric specialists and nurses off-site.

ED Director Associate Professor Richard Cracknell explained the vision was provided to the Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) as the child was receiving emergency care at the hospital.

The NETS service is hosted by the Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network and provides expert clinical advice, clinical co-ordination, emergency treatment and stabilisation and interhospital transport for critically ill or injured babies and children up to 16 years of age.

“The NETS clinicians provide expert feedback for the team

at Campbelltown on the care of the child and may also patch in specialist consultants at other hospitals,” Associate Professor Cracknell said.

“A decision will be made on whether to dispatch emergency transport to move the child to a specialist children’s hospital or the patient may continue to receive care at Campbelltown.

“This network of specialist care supporting critically ill babies and children saves lives. It is a highly valuable part of our care.”

Pioneered at Liverpool Hospital ED around 15 years ago, the cameras are now operating at many hospitals across NSW and South Western Sydney Local Health District.

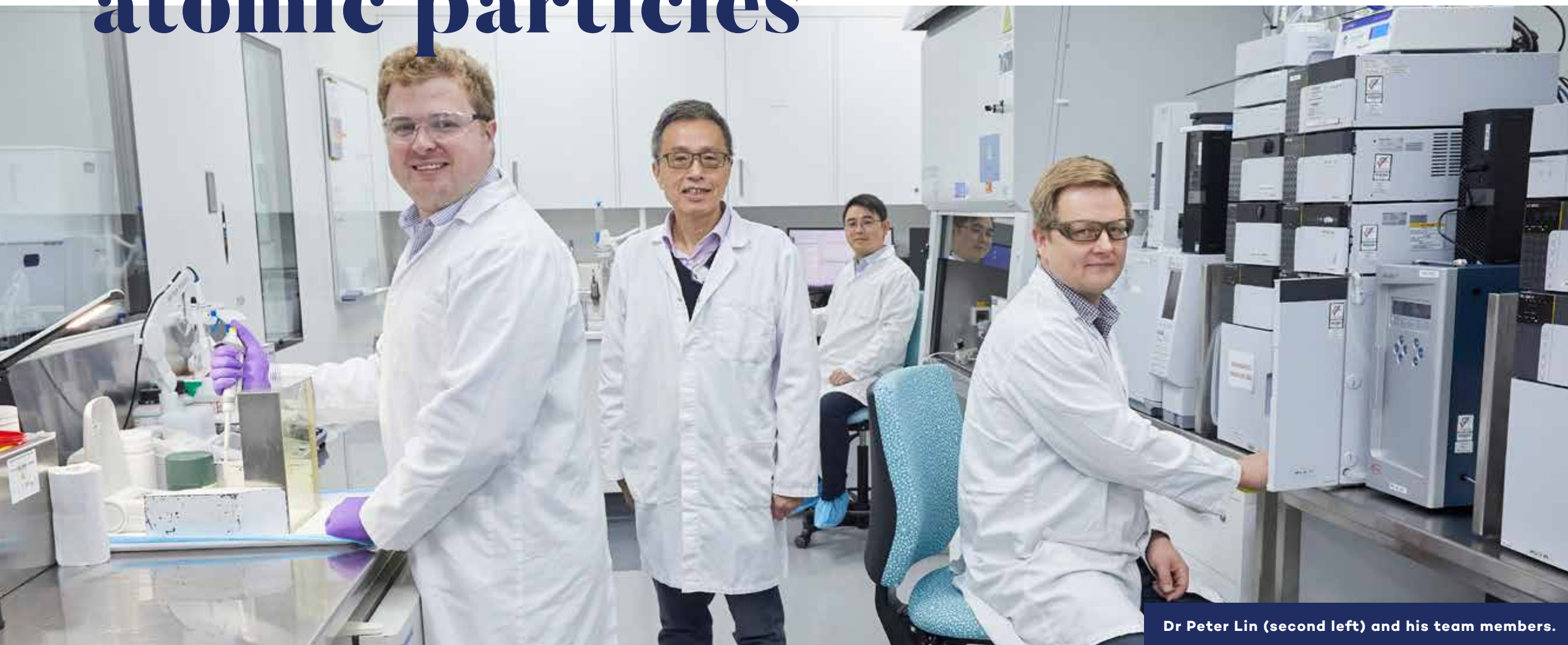
Associate Professor Cracknell said resuscitation bays in the children’s ward were also equipped with the video cameras for fast communication with NETS specialists.

“Our clinicians do not have to spend time describing the symptoms, such as laboured breathing for example, the NETS doctors and nurses can see for themselves, so feedback, decision-making and co-ordination are faster,” he said.

“These critical minutes can make a lot of difference for the patient. The cameras are our vision for life.” **T**



Saving lives with atomic particles



Dr Peter Lin (second left) and his team members.


“The benefits of radiopharmaceuticals in diagnosis and therapy are enormous and life-saving and often eliminate the need for invasive procedures or surgery. They have great value in the early detection of cancer.”

The cyclotron produces radioisotopes which are injected into patients before they undergo a PET scan medical imaging procedure, lighting up hidden tumours and making them easier to detect.

Associate Professor Lin said Liverpool Hospital was a world leader in the molecular science technology, which was transforming the study and treatment of various cancers and also other conditions such as dementia, various neurological and mental health conditions, and cardiac disease.

“Our collaborations with researchers, scientists, clinicians and universities, both nationally and internationally, are shaping future models of care,” he said.

“The co-location of the cyclotron with a tertiary teaching hospital brings tremendous benefits in research, teaching and strategic partnerships. The future is incredibly exciting.”

*** A crane was needed to install the cyclotron and its 80-tonne protective radiation shield, made up of lead and boronated water. **

It's 3am and deep within Liverpool Hospital an unassuming bunker is already full of activity.

A team of highly qualified engineers and radiochemists are working on the production of radioisotopes and radiopharmaceuticals in the state-of-the-art Liverpool Hospital Cyclotron Facility, one of only two such facilities operating in NSW public hospitals.

By 5am, the next shift of specialists arrives to conduct rigorous quality control testing on the radiopharmaceuticals, a special group of drugs containing

radioactive isotopes, to ensure they are safe and ready for clinical use in the hospital at 7am.

Unlike other drugs, radiopharmaceuticals have an extremely short half-life of just two hours, so time is critical in their production and use in the identification and treatment of a range of cancers and other conditions.

South Western Sydney Local Health District Clinical Director of Medical

Imaging, Associate Professor Peter Lin, said projects had begun to increase the production of essential radiopharmaceuticals by 40 per cent to meet growing clinical demand.

“The cyclotron opened in 2017 to supply Liverpool Hospital, but we are now planning to increase production to supply other hospitals in south western Sydney, and eventually beyond our District,” Associate Professor Lin said.





Simone Proft,
Director Partnerships
and Strategy

Shaping the south west

“Preventing and treating ill health and injury is the main priority of our District, and this work extends beyond the care we provide in clinical settings.

“A range of factors influence health from lifestyle and socioeconomic to environmental factors. As a health service, we need to do our part to influence each of these. We partner with a range of organisations to address the policies and settings that influence health and environments.”



All smiles for trainees

Campbelltown Hospital’s Dental Centre is helping shape the next generation of oral health clinicians, doubling as a clinical training site for University of Sydney dentistry students.



University of Sydney dentistry students



Dr Matthew White (left) and Associate Professor Ravi Srinivas

Dr Matthew White, Clinical Educator for the University of Sydney, has been managing the program at Campbelltown Hospital since it started in February 2023. He works closely with the District’s Oral Health Services to identify suitable patients for appointments with his students, supervising them once the patients are in the chair.

“The students are in three days a week and as they’re in their final year, they’re qualified to perform most procedures,” Dr White said.

“They need to complete a certain number of hours and procedures to finish their studies and doing so in an actual clinic like Campbelltown’s gives them fantastic experience.”

The student cohort consists of 12 local and international students, who are paired up and take turns acting as the clinician or the assistant to better understand and gain experience in both roles.

The program came to fruition after Associate Professor Ravi Srinivas, District Director of Oral Health, identified the opportunity through ongoing discussions with Professor Heiko Spallek, Dean of Sydney Dental School, University of Sydney.

“We’re always looking for new ways to collaborate with our university partners and after speaking to the team at the university, we saw there was an opportunity to share our new state-of-the-art site with their students,” Associate Professor Srinivas said.

“It’s been a win-win situation, as we’ve been able to share our expertise and guide these future clinicians alongside Dr White. In turn, they’ve supported us with providing our patients efficient, high-quality care in a timely manner.”

For the students, the experience has been incredibly worthwhile and they look back on their time positively.

“It’s been great getting to learn from the team here at Campbelltown. When I think of where I was at the start of the year to now, I’ve grown so much,” local student Joy Wang said.

With the 2023 program complete, plans are in place to continue the partnership in 2024 and the Oral Health team is hoping to recruit graduates into the service.

“We’ve found great success in our first year so we want to continue building on that, there’s so much potential,” A/Professor Srinivas said.

Cardiac hub opens

Conducting tailored research projects that consider the needs of the people of south west Sydney is a core focus of the District, and partnering with like-minded organisations to develop a strategic integrated approach means we are developing innovative solutions for the long-term health of the community.

With the south western Sydney region currently holding the highest heart-related hospital admissions in the state, a need for more heart disease research in the region was identified. In response, the District has partnered with the University of New South Wales Sydney (UNSW Sydney), the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research and the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute to develop a new cardiovascular research hub.

Based at Liverpool Hospital, the innovative hub will significantly boost heart disease research and accelerate future scientific breakthroughs.

A new Chair in Cardiovascular Research will be established to provide academic and clinical leadership, foster excellence in collaborative cardiovascular research, innovative teaching, and clinical care. The Chair will be a world-class academic clinician-researcher based at Liverpool Hospital, and drive new research to improve the substantial burden of cardiovascular disease in south western Sydney.

A team of researchers will also be formed and based at the Ingham Institute, a world-class centre for clinical trials. The research team will have direct access to the expertise and cutting-edge technology of the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute. **T**



Big appetite for tiny gut device

When digital health start-up Atmo Biosciences needed a site to conduct a clinical trial of its ingestible medical device, it soon found a place within the District through the Liverpool Innovation Precinct (LIP).

Atmo aims to improve the diagnosis of common functional gut disorders achieve more personalised treatments and earlier relief of symptoms. It developed a game-changing medical device the size of a vitamin pill that, once swallowed, can detect, identify and measure the different gases the digestive system produces.

However, developing the device was only the first step, Atmo needed the right site for a pilot trial and contacted the LIP for support.

A partnership within the Liverpool area, LIP brings together key stakeholders from across government, education, and business sectors.

As the major healthcare provider in the area, South Western Sydney Local Health District is a key partner of LIP, which is anchored around Liverpool Hospital.

"Atmo Biosciences originally came to the Commercialisation Advisory Group at LIP for support securing a clinical trial site. They were

interested in the Liverpool area but weren't sure where to begin," said Lance Chia, Director of Investment & Innovation at LIP.

Atmo was introduced to the team at Campbelltown Hospital and its research partners at Western Sydney University (WSU). They discussed the potential to use the Macarthur Clinical School at Campbelltown Hospital as a trial site.

From there, the hospital's gastroenterology team identified suitable patients for the trial. Once the trial began the WSU research team, led by Dr Jerry Zhou and Associate Professor Vincent Ho, managed the day-to-day activities including data collection and interpretation.

"The investigators outperformed what was expected in terms of their recruitment rate; they just got on with it. They underpromised and overdelivered and it was all done during COVID," said Malcolm Hebblewhite, Chief Executive Officer, Atmo Biosciences.

"For anyone looking to do a clinical trial for early-stage technology, I'd say talk to the team at the LIP. They'll identify the clinicians and investigators in their network and it'll be done quickly, efficiently, inexpensively and successfully. That's been my experience," Mr Hebblewhite said.

Atmo Biosciences is now conducting pivotal trials of the device across 12 sites globally, with the Macarthur Clinical School at Campbelltown Hospital the only Australian site. **T**



Malcolm Hebblewhite, Chief Executive Officer at Atmo Biosciences



Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital's staff attend the training

Meet the champions who are leading a new program to embed inclusive healthcare at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital.

The hospital's disability champions are among the first in NSW to complete specialised training, led by the Get Skilled Access organisation, as part of a NSW Health pilot program promoting inclusive health care.

Sanjay Lele, a representative of the hospital's Consumer Participation Network and who cares for his daughter who has an intellectual disability, said the Inclusive Healthcare Program training was a wonderful step forward for the hospital.

"It is a golden opportunity for staff to really understand how to support and communicate with patients with a disability and their families and carers," Mr Lele said.



Izabella Lecce and Sanjay Lele

Inclusive interaction

The training included useful simulated experiences to help participants understand some of the practical issues and barriers experienced by people with disabilities.

Mr Lele demonstrated how to manoeuvre a wheelchair through a narrow doorway while the hospital's Records Control and Processing Manager Izabella Lecce wore weights on her foot so she could better understand some of the difficulties faced by people with cerebral palsy when walking.

"Although my role is not patient-facing, the Inclusive Healthcare training has helped me to better

understand how I can support people with disability around the hospital and in my life," Ms Lecce said.

"I feel excited to promote healthcare inclusion to my team and other staff."

The hospital's Director of Allied Health Kathryn Vickers is leading the implementation of this program. She reiterated that the training went beyond physical access, with communication and interaction with patients with disability as key focus areas.

"All our staff will have the opportunity to take part in the training, enhancing the experience of patients with disability in our care," she said. **T**



United voice shaping health care

While South Western Sydney Local Health District specifically serves the needs of local communities, harnessing the collective power of health districts is proving powerful in addressing shared barriers to health and emerging opportunities.

The Greater Western Sydney Future Health Forum brings together South Western Sydney, Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health Districts and the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue to understand and address the particular health needs that Greater Western Sydney communities have in common.

“Our networked health service and local, on-the-ground relationships allow our health services to flex and respond as needed in the delivery of high-quality health care to the communities of Greater Western Sydney,” said Sonia Marshall, South Western Sydney Local Health District’s Acting Chief Executive.

“Our Districts share many commonalities, working together to address these commonalities will result in healthier communities.

“It is vital that we continue to take a holistic approach to health, understanding that it sits at the heart of all the major planning and investment decisions in our growing region,” she said.



Local Health District Executives at the Greater Western Sydney Future Health Forum

Bringing together decision-makers from health, academia, different tiers of Government, not-for-profits, sport and industry, the 2023 GWS Future Health Forum examined a number of areas:

- The role of planning, design, transport and amenity in improving health outcomes
- Community sport and community health
- Infrastructure and services needed to help safeguard communities from the effects of extreme heat
- Untapped opportunities within the care economy to

spark productivity, improve efficiencies and address cost-of-living pressures

- Attracting investment, supporting research and innovation in health and retaining talent in Greater Western Sydney.

“Close collaboration across local health districts and the primary care sector enables us to develop new ways to improve patient experiences and ensure everyone in the community receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time,” Ms Marshall said.

“The forum allows us to examine and apply our collective learnings to

continue to innovate, ensuring the health and wellbeing of our local communities.

“By forging partnerships, attracting investment and providing platforms for world-leading medical research, we can contribute to the social and economic fabric of our communities, and help shape our future cities.

“This is an opportunity to build on the region’s increasing health and medical research expertise to create jobs, fuel industry growth and attract and nurture the talent we need to build tomorrow’s health networks,” Ms Marshall said. **T**

Collaborative pathway

Supporting people in the community often means working with other organisations and government agencies to help people in their time of need.

This is particularly true with mental health services, where people experiencing a mental health crisis may feel the only option is a hospital.

community also reduces transport and admissions to Emergency Departments, ensuring those services are available for other patients.” **T**

“We often have many people presenting to Emergency Departments when they’re having trouble with their mental health because they aren’t aware of the other options available,” said District Director of Mental Health Dr Claire Jones.

“But often, the right support is already out in the community.”

In October 2022, the District began working with NSW Ambulance on its new state-wide phone service, the 1800 011 511 Mental Health Line. The 24/7 state-wide service connects callers to mental health clinicians who complete a triage to determine the urgency of the response and provide recommendations on follow-up care, including referrals to local mental health services.

“This collaboration provides paramedics access to an easy referral pathway to specialist mental health services. It has the dual benefit of providing clinically appropriate care to consumers in a setting where they feel more comfortable and assists in keeping people at home and connected with community-based services that are more appropriate for their mental health needs.”

“Supporting consumers in the

Paramedic Despina Boyiziasis attended a 23-year-old female who recently ended an abusive relationship with her boyfriend.

“This caused an exacerbation of her already diagnosed depression and anxiety,” Ms Boyiziasis explained.

“She had good insight into her mental health decline and agreed that she needed help. We discussed what she was looking for and it included a medication review and an appointment with a mental health clinician. After all red flags were ruled out, we concluded that transport to hospital would not be required, and that a referral to the Mental Health Line would be more appropriate, while still meeting the patient’s request.

“I initially called the MHL and provided a handover. The MHL provided my patient with a Community Mental Health Emergency Team (CoMHET) referral for that week, which is exactly what our patient wanted and needed. She was also provided a referral letter by us to provide to her own GP.”



Get to know our staff...

Full name: Dr Jay Ramanathan

Position: Staff Specialist Physician at Liverpool Hospital

What is your role: My role is quite varied, I work in general/acute medicine, ambulatory care, clinical pharmacology, toxicology & lipids. I also focus a lot on patient safety and the safe use of medicines.

Why is your role important? My role is important as I cover various aspects of acute and chronic disease and work across the life spectrum.

What do you love most about your job? The diversity, both in the work I do and the patients I get to see. No two days are the same and it keeps it interesting.

What is a normal day like for you? A regular day involves managing inpatient and outpatient work across multiple hospitals.

Why did you choose your career? I was really interested in having the ability to make an impact both at the individual level with patients, and at the broader systems level.

Greatest career achievement? None as yet! But I was named as a finalist in the 2023 NSW Premier's Awards for NSW Public Servant of the Year which was exciting.

Really get to know our staff...

Interests or hobbies: Ancient History

Who inspires you? Gandhi and Mandela

Talent you wish you had: Financial intelligence, it's a very useful skill to have in your day-to-day life.

What did you think you were going to be when you grew up? Medic, of course.

Tell us something about you that would surprise people: Nil surprises, I am afraid. What you see is what you get.

Favourite quote: "Salus populi suprema lex esto" (let the welfare of the people be the supreme law).