

## Heritage interpretation for RPA Hospital Redevelopment

The NSW Government has committed \$940 million to the redevelopment of Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital which is the most significant investment in RPA's 140-year history.

When complete, the RPA Redevelopment will deliver:



Expanded and enhanced Emergency Department and Intensive Care Units



State-of-the-art operating theatres



Expanded and improved adult inpatient ward accommodation



Increased interventional and imaging services



Expanded neonatology services



Improved public domain and services including roads, wayfinding, landscaping and information and communications technology infrastructure



A new open garden courtyard

### Celebration of the history and heritage of the RPA Hospital

Since opening in 1882, the RPA Hospital has evolved significantly, expanding on the original buildings and landscaping to meet the needs of the growing community. Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA) was named after Queen Victoria's second son, His Royal Highness Prince Alfred, later Duke of Edinburgh. During a visit to Australia in 1868, Prince Alfred was the victim of an assassination attempt while on a picnic in the northern Sydney suburb of Clontarf.

Australians opened a public subscription fund to build a hospital as a memorial to his safe recovery. The prince authorised his coat of arms to be used as the new hospital's crest. King Edward VII granted the hospital its Royal prefix in 1902.

The RPA Hospital campus is one of the oldest in Australia and possesses significant heritage value both physically in the form of buildings, courtyards and landscape, as well as culturally, through the history and stories of place.

A key objective of the RPA Redevelopment is to retain, celebrate and minimise impacts on the most significant heritage buildings on the campus. In particular, the team has worked to ensure the oldest buildings along Missenden Road, which are State-heritage listed buildings, are retained and reused in the hospital expansion.

To preserve the heritage significance of the site, the project team has engaged heritage consultants to help inform the planning, design and layout of the future RPA campus.

The new building has been designed to be sensitive to the heritage significance of the site, with heritage values preserved and interpreted throughout, to ensure that the history of RPA can continue to be celebrated and enjoyed by all.



## Removal of buildings

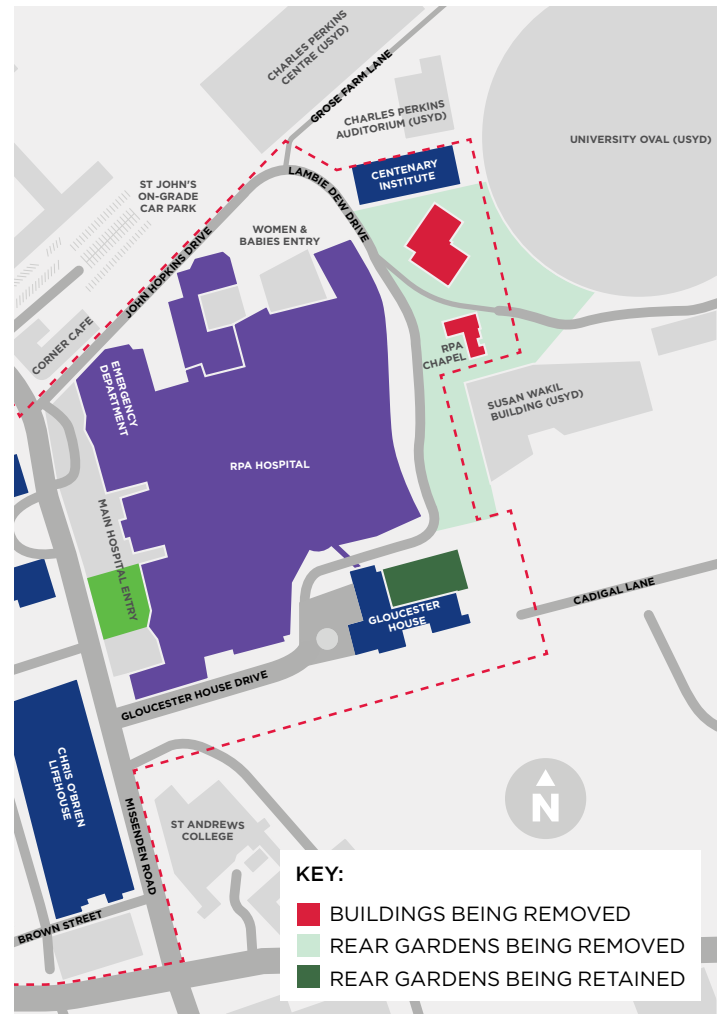
Early planning considered alternative options to expand the hospital. However, after careful consideration it was confirmed that the least disruptive way to meet the future healthcare needs of the community is via a new 15-storey building on the eastern side of the hospital campus.

Every effort has been made to minimise impacts on existing buildings, however the former Tissue Pathology and Diagnostic Oncology building, the RPA Chapel, and the rear gardens on Lambie Dew Drive will be removed to establish the site for the new 15-storey building. Importantly, the more significant heritage buildings along Missenden Road will remain as part of the hospital.

Extensive consultation and a heritage impact assessment have been conducted to understand the significance and history of the buildings, and a framework has been adopted to preserve and document the history of key elements.

The below works are being carried out to ensure proper documentation of the decommissioned buildings:

- Engagement of a suitably qualified and experienced heritage consultant to support the process
- Photographic archival recording
- Measured drawings of Buildings 94 and Building 95
- Salvage methodology, to identify how the most significant elements of the buildings' fabric will be carefully removed and retained
- Heritage Interpretation Plan
- Use of skilled tradespeople in relation to works to heritage fabric
- Archaeological monitoring



## Building 94 – Tissue Pathology and Diagnostic Oncology

The former pathology building was erected in 1880 as the first mortuary for the hospital. The building has gone through a range of refurbishments and expansions which altered its original state. Due to its history, retention or reinstatement of sections of the building within the operating hospital is not desirable.

Building 94 will be visually recorded for posterity and then demolished. There is opportunity for elements of the building fabric to be recycled and interpreted in the new design. It is intended that the building interpretation project forms part of the public art strategy. This might include landscaped elements such as brick and stone use in paving on pedestrian walkways, through to engraved art installations and images in the new building.



FAÇADE OF THE FORMER TISSUE PATHOLOGY AND DIAGNOSTIC ONCOLOGY DEPARTMENT



## Building 95 - RPA Chapel

The RPA Chapel was designed by Stephenson and Turner in c.1938 and contains numerous stained-glass windows. The stained-glass windows will be removed and retained for future use.

The RPA Redevelopment Arts Curatorium will explore opportunities to repurpose the stained-glass windows where appropriate. Additionally, salvaged fabric such as brick masonry can be reused elsewhere on site as landscaping elements and pavements.



EXISTING RPA CHAPEL ON LAMBIE DEW DRIVE WITH LONG INTERNAL STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

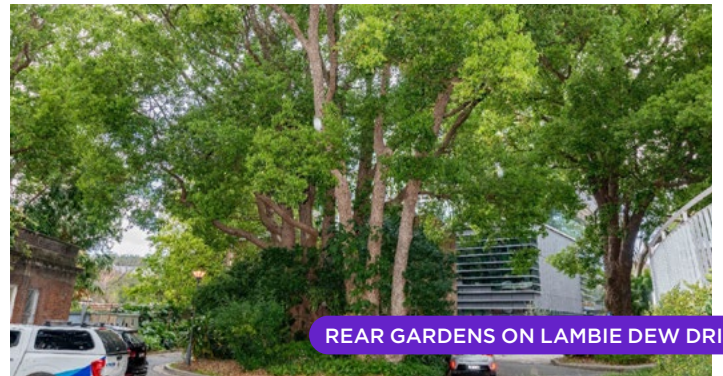
## Rear gardens

Since the planning stages of the original RPA Hospital in the late 1880s, the landscaped setting and gardens were significant inclusions. The rear gardens were once a highly accessible, well-visited part of the campus.

The project proposes a reinterpretation of the rear gardens in the centralised public areas of the hospital. This will be designed as a planted corridor within the public areas of the hospital extending from the existing cultural garden on John Hopkins Drive, into the northern arrival and through to the central courtyard. There will also be a significant number of trees replanted along the eastern side of the new 15-storey building.

While the reinterpreted gardens are not intended to replicate the mainly European original plantings, they will aim to pay homage to the experimental planting often observed in Victorian period gardens. The proposed plantings will introduce native and medicinal species to not only provide a connection to history but also a connection with Country.

Continuing the long history of experimental planting within the RPA site and its immediate context, the proposed new tree plantings for the rear gardens provide an eclectic mix of warm climate species native to north-eastern Australia, which are expected to thrive in Sydney with predicted climate change.



REAR GARDENS ON LAMBIE DEW DRIVE

## Where to next?

Further consultation with key stakeholders will help develop the Detailed Heritage Interpretation Strategy. This will include locations and scope of heritage interpretation works across the redevelopment campus.

The **Arts Curatorium** will propose ways that heritage and Connecting with Country can continue to be celebrated at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

## Want to find out more?

You can find out more about the redevelopment at: [rpadevelopment.health.nsw.gov.au](http://rpadevelopment.health.nsw.gov.au).

You are also invited to send any feedback, suggestions or comments you would like to raise with the redevelopment team via the contact form on our website or by emailing: [rpadevelopment@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rpadevelopment@health.nsw.gov.au)



## Meet the Team

**Emily McSkimming,  
Lead Heritage Consultant,  
RPA Hospital Redevelopment**

### **What is the role of a heritage consultant?**

A heritage consultant has the privilege of providing guidance on the best practice management and conservation of our heritage assets for posterity. To do so, heritage professionals must mindfully consider and respond to both the opportunities and limitations embodied within a site, continuously balancing contemporary functionality with significance imperatives.

### **What makes the RPA Hospital unique from a heritage lens?**

The RPA Hospital is a recognisable site within Sydney's cultural built heritage landscape and possesses a rich social significance. Since its opening in 1882, the site has been used continually as a leading medical, surgical and research institution, and it was the first hospital in Australia to be established as a training facility. Materially, the hospital comprises several exemplary examples of Victorian and Federation architecture - namely the Victorian & Albert Pavilions and the Administration Building, which collectively present a landmark façade to Missenden Road.

Interestingly, the site also acts as a memorial, erected by Sydney residents, following the attempted assassination of H.R.H Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria. During a Royal tour in Sydney in 1868, an armed assailant attempted to assassinate the prince at a charity picnic at Clontarf Beach. This event caused public outrage and collective national embarrassment, triggering a sequence of events that would ultimately result in the construction of a hospital dedicated in the Prince's honour.

### **What makes you excited to do the work you do?**

I am one of those lucky people who get to do their favourite hobby as a job. I am excited by the mystery of historical buildings. I love the process of uncovering or deciphering heritage fabric to understand a building's construction, unravel its history and situate its significance. From there, I love to find practical and meaningful solutions for its long-term use and conservation. Ensuring the continued significance of a heritage place is the best means of safeguarding its future.

### **How will the rich history of RPA be realised in the redevelopment?**

A historical building or site is not a static monument trapped in time. It is a living document which changes, expands, contracts or adapts to new requirements and historical contexts. This redevelopment project, which aims to ensure the ongoing utility and future relevance of the hospital, will create a new meaningful architectural layer of history to the site. Further, we are involved in developing ways to communicate the meaning of the hospital to the public through graph displays, art displays and other interpretative media.

### **What is the importance of heritage conservation?**

Built heritage and places of cultural significance enrich our everyday experience and the wellbeing of communities, anchoring our identity and connecting past with present. Heritage conservation ensures that the buildings and monuments that we have inherited and consider valuable may be protected for generations to come. Ultimately, heritage listed assets belong to the community and we have a responsibility to protect them.

### **What are three words your family would use to describe you?**

From my 7 year old daughter - "enjoyable", loving and sassy.

### **What's your favourite song to get you pumped for work?**

Edge of Seventeen - Stevie Nicks

### **Last great TV show or movie you watched?**

Just rewatched the Office (British version of course) for the thousandth time.

### **If you're cooking dinner, what will everyone be eating?**

Lasagna

## How can I contact the project team?

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact our project team at the details below.

**Email:** [rparedevelopment@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rparedevelopment@health.nsw.gov.au) | **Website:** [www.rparedevelopment.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rparedevelopment.health.nsw.gov.au)