

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Helicopter Landing Site – Temporary Relocation

Why is the helipad being relocated?

The Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) at RPA Hospital will be relocated due to the upcoming construction activities that will take place on the east campus to deliver the \$750m RPA Hospital Redevelopment. Once redevelopment works are underway on RPA's east campus, the required construction tower cranes for these works will interfere with the safe access to the existing helipad. The relocation will ensure the safety of patients, staff, locals, and construction workers.

Why is the continued helipad service needed?

The continued operation of a Helicopter Landing Site during the RPA redevelopment is crucial to RPA's role as a tertiary and quaternary referral hospital providing life-saving specialised ICU, Surgical and Interventional care to patients from the Sydney Metropolitan area and other parts of NSW, especially Western NSW.

Transfer to RPA by helicopter is the safest transport method for patients referred to RPA for time-critical care including specialised cardio-thoracic support, complex levels of intensive care and the advanced surgical and interventional treatment available at RPA. The rapid transfer of newborn babies requiring Neonatal Intensive care (NICU) is another important reason for maintaining access to RPA by the Newborn & Paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) helicopter service.

As the NSW centre for liver transplantation, one of the largest obstetric and NICU services and a major referral centre for cardio-thoracic, neurosurgical, orthopaedic, renal transplantation and advanced gastrointestinal surgery, RPA needs to retain the capacity to receive patients for whom transfer by helicopter provides the safest and most effective option.

Is it temporary?

The relocation of the helipad is temporary and will operate for the duration of construction that limits access to the existing helipad. The lifts that will be built to support this change will remain part of the car park once the landing site moves to the east campus, improving the accessibility of the car park for future use.

Where is the helipad being relocated to?

The helipad will be temporarily relocated to the roof of a multi-storey carpark located off Hospital Road and Grose Street, to the south of the Queen Mary Building.

Why this location for the Temporary HLS?

Health Infrastructure worked closely with representatives from the Sydney Local Health District, NSW Ambulance and Avipro (Aviation Management and Safety Advisors) to ensure the proposed relocation site was safe, appropriate, fit for purpose and caused minimal impact on the local community and environment.

The proposed location is deemed to be the only feasible alternate location on or near the RPA campus. The temporary HLS location was selected after considering multiple options during the preliminary design stage. Three locations were considered in the site selection process. The alternate locations were not feasible for a number of reasons.

Did you consider other locations for the Temporary HLS?

The existing HLS located in the east campus is situated unacceptably close to the construction zones for the proposed works, creating multiple hazards to helicopter flight and preventing continued and safe Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) operations to that site.

The final location of the temporary HLS was determined following consideration of 3 (three) options:

- Option 1: The South-West vacant site on West campus;
- Option 2 (Preferred): The roof of the multi-deck carpark to the north of the South-West site;
- Option 3: St John's sports fields.

Option 2 was selected as the preferred option. Option 1 was noted by Avipro, the aviation consultant, as unviable as the two aircraft approach and departure paths greatly exceeded the desired maximum angle required for aviation safety requirements even with a necessary removal of vegetation. Option 3 was deemed unfeasible as it would require the establishment of helicopter hardstanding within the playing area including sealed road ambulance access to it. This option would also result in longer patient transfer times, would pose substantial difficulties in managing the public during helicopter operations, and would be too disruptive to games played at St John's College. Due to the tall surrounding obstructions, the playing fields may have had to be closed altogether to make the HLS viable. It was noted that some of the matches played on the oval are televised, top grade events e.g. Shute Shield Rugby.

How long will the temporary helipad be in place?

Once the tower cranes used for construction works start to impact the current landing site, the temporary helipad landing site will be activated and operational for approximately 24 months.

Will there be many car spaces temporarily closed?

Due to the relocation of the helipad, a number of car spaces will be closed on the top floor of the car park. However, as planning progresses strategies are being reviewed to reduce the impact on car parking. Active management will be in place across the RPA campus to ensure ease of access for those driving to the site through the period of construction of the RPA Redevelopment.

When operational, how noisy will it be for nearby residents?

There will be noise associated with helicopter transport of patients at times for nearby residents. Noise impacts of the temporary helipad landing site are likely to have an impact on residents at 106-112 Church Street (Queen Mary Building) and the Naamuru Parent and Baby Unit, including some noise impacts to those nearby.

The operation of the helipad is critical and all other feasible alternative options were explored to find a location that would have the least impact on residential receivers. Implementing monitoring and a complaints process for residents to communicate any issues during the operation of the temporary HLS will be put into place.

Will this impact local plants, trees, and animals?

The helipad relocation will cause little disturbance to animals in the area, but will require several trees to be removed, and others trimmed.

How often will helicopters land at the temporary helipad?

Based on previous activity, there will be around 10 landings each month.

Will there be lighting for movements at night?

Yes, there will be helicopter arrivals during the night and lighting will be required. SLHD will prioritise helicopter arrivals and departures during daytime hours where feasible.

Will the temporary helipad relocation impact patient care?

Significant planning and consultation is taking place to make sure that RPA Hospital's high standards for delivery of patient care will not be affected by the relocation.

When will work to establish the temporary helipad start?

Works will start in approximately mid-2023 to have the helipad relocated and operational by mid 2024.

What work will be done to establish the temporary helipad?

Establishing the temporary helipad will involve structural works on top of the carpark, installation of lights and a patient transfer elevator, and removal of obstructions at the site.

How are stakeholders and the community kept informed about the helipad relocation?

Stakeholders and the community will be kept informed about the RPA helipad relocation:

- Via the project website
- Emailing information through our distribution list
- Doorknocks
- Letterbox drops
- Community and staff information sessions

Where can I find out more information?

You can check the RPA Redevelopment website for further information or email the Redevelopment team at rparedevelopment@health.nsw.gov.au

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 | **Website:** www.rparedevelopment.health.nsw.gov.au