

CAPTURING THE HEART OF ST VINCENT'S

PULSE

December 2021



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

VOLUNTEER

PATIENT-CENTRED SUPPORT 17

New purpose-built Caritas
Christi Palliative Care
facility opens in Kew

BEYOND THE HOSPITAL WALLS 4

Broadening our healthcare
reach with innovative
programs and services

Little HEROES

The healing
benefits of pet therapy



Message from the CEO

One thing we pride ourselves on at St Vincent's is our commitment to compassionate care.

Each day our dedicated staff go all out to deliver the best in healthcare, but importantly, they do so with lots of heart. Underpinning their every action and every thought are incredibly supportive layers of understanding and kindness.

You'll notice compassion expressed in different ways around our hospital and to the wider community through a growing number of services that extends our care beyond our hospital walls, from the very successful Hospital in the Home program to our innovative GEM@Home, Residential In-Reach, Rehab@Home and Health Monitor services.

Even our St Vincent's Pet Therapy Program is helping provide support to our patients in the gentlest of ways and clearly demonstrates the power of the unspoken word. These volunteer dogs not only bring smiles to patients' faces and laughter to our wards, but their calming presence has been shown to help with patient recovery.

As we all know, the past couple of years have been exceptionally challenging for everyone, but even as the COVID-19 pandemic took a new and more aggressive turn in 2021, St Vincent's continued to have everyone's back.

In addition to our in-hospital support, we offered assistance with various programs to keep the community safe. This included our ongoing efforts at the Royal

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Cover image:
Josie Hayden Photography/Newspix

Exhibition Building vaccination hub; operating one of Victoria's first drive-through vaccination centres at Campbellfield; being part of a mobile service to vaccinate the poor and vulnerable; and playing a key role in establishing and running a COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Facility for Melbourne's needy.

Opening the doors to our new Caritas Christi Palliative Care facility in Kew was another big highlight. As the largest provider of palliative and supportive care in the state, we are thankful to the families of past patients and the community who helped generously fund the redevelopment project, which enabled us to build on the care that started at this site more than 80 years ago.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue of *Pulse*, where each story really does capture the heart of St Vincent's.

Angela Nolan

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and water where we live and work. We respect their spiritual connections to country and community and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Pet therapy gain

How patients are benefitting from a popular volunteer program

Meet Macca – a long-standing member of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Pet Therapy Program, and an all-round cute pooch.

The three-year-old Yorkshire terrier takes his role as one of the hospital's pet therapy dogs very seriously, happily visiting wards around the Fitzroy campus each week to lift spirits, while also posing for a selfie or two along the way with patients and staff.

"Macca is a good example of how beneficial pets can be for patients during their healing process in an acute setting, especially with those recovering from surgery," says Macca's owner, Judy Clover, Manager of Volunteer Services at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

Macca's work was nationally recognised when he won the Top Dog in a Job category out of more than 500 nominees vying for the title at the OZ Top Dog 2021 competition.

He has been volunteering at St Vincent's since he was about four months, joining his brothers, Bertie and Wal, who are also pet therapy dogs at the hospital, and owner Judy, who oversees St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's pet therapy program.

"I think one of the greatest values is that the dogs help

bring the barriers down and put people at ease – they stimulate conversation and allow patients to open up a little and forget about their health worries for a time," says Judy.

Macca (pictured below) is one of 12 volunteer dogs at St Vincent's, who are managed on-site by trained volunteer pet handlers. He has become a familiar and very welcome face around the hospital, including the Neurosurgery ward where Nurse Unit Manager, Kathryn Connor, describes his presence as uplifting.

"Macca has an innate ability to bring a sense of peace and tranquillity in times of uncertainty and unconditional love to those who are far from home," says Kathryn. "He has been instrumental in helping with our stroke and brain tumour patients. I have watched patients in quiet solitude light up when they see Macca and observed one of our patients moving a hemiplegic arm for the first time to pat him."

Both Judy and Kathryn remember with joy when Macca brought great comfort to a patient who had not spoken since having a brain haemorrhage.

"The patient spoke her first word to him – it's moments like this you really see the benefits; the unspoken work these dogs do is real; tangible and so significant," says Judy.



"Macca has an innate ability to bring a sense of peace and tranquillity in times of uncertainty."

– Kathryn Connor



Nurse, Claire Angus, from the Neurosurgery ward with Macca (above)



Extending our care

A unique approach sees medical support delivered in new ways

Care Beyond the Hospital Walls (CBHW) is a crucial part of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's 2021-2023 strategy that is seeing us expand our health services to provide person-centred care outside our hospital sites and broaden our reach in the community.

During the latest COVID-19 surge, this capability has proved even more critical.

The strategy centres around preventing avoidable hospital admissions by keeping at-risk patients well at home, diverting admissions to a care setting more

appropriate for the patient's needs, and substituting admissions for home-based care.

St Vincent's has a number of programs that form part of this approach, including Hospital in the Home (HITH), Rehab@Home, GEM@Home, Residential In-Reach and the HealthMonitor program. An increase in the delivery of home-based cancer care is also in the planning.

"Care Beyond the Hospital Walls offers St Vincent's the opportunity to become the leader in home-based care, delivering better outcomes and experiences for our community," says Dean Jones, General Manager, Subacute, Home & Community Services.

"This is a collective effort by so many people and what has been implemented is resulting in positive change, as we continue to plan and move onto our next steps."



Home front

Pat Halliwell (left) is an 88-year-old who loves to garden and play the piano.

The former nurse and devoted mother of three daughters, six grandchildren and one great-grandson, was initially referred to St Vincent's GEM@Home service by a local clinician.

Thanks to the GEM@Home care service Pat was able to avoid coming into the hospital altogether.

Her primary goals in the program were to improve her mobility and function in her home environment, so she can continue to live independently.

"The GEM@Home program gives me something to look forward to, 'what's going to happen today', or 'I'll be getting a visit today'. It has really helped me continue to live my life the way I want to," says Pat.

GEM@Home expansion

A key component of the CBHW strategy is Gem@Home, which is a seven-day-a-week service that allows patients to receive subacute care in their homes. It enables earlier discharge from the hospital setting and, in some cases, diversion from hospital altogether. The program was expanded to service 22 beds in July this year.

The primary focus is to help patients achieve their best level of health and function while recovering in their home. Like the hospital-based equivalent, GEM@Home provides care for an average of two to three weeks, before handing care back to the patient's GP and other community services.

This interdisciplinary model of care includes medical, pharmacy and allied health staff.



Nicole Watt



Soupoura Charles (AHLO)



Rhys Radcliffe (AHLO)



Ava Jarrett (AHLO)

Making a difference

Prioritising culturally safe healthcare for our Indigenous patients

A reimagined seven-day service with clearer referral pathways is improving cultural safety and access to healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

Four Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers now form part of a strong support team at St Vincent's that individually and collectively offer advocacy and cultural support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families as they navigate the health and social services they need.

Part of their work is focused on helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients feel safe and comfortable asking medical staff questions, because traditionally, many of them have expressed they feel scared or weak doing this.

"We are like bridges between the hospital and the people in our community. We provide care, too, with compassion and respect for who they are and their culture, and provide someone non-clinical they can turn to for that support," says Rhys Radcliffe, an Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer (AHLO) at St Vincent's.

Our clinical staff also now have access to a new digital prioritisation pathway tool which supports referrals to the

AHLO service by setting out the scope of the service and target time frames for care.

"This prioritisation pathway tool will assist us in identifying the priority order of each referral so that we support those in immediate need first," explains Nicole Watt, Aboriginal Health Care Co-ordinator and Team Leader of the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Service at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

"It has allowed our Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers greater opportunity to provide uninterrupted and inclusive support and cultural companionship to the patients in our care."

The AHLO team also provides cultural advice and support to clinicians and staff responsible for the healthcare needs of the hospital's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

"St Vincent's Aboriginal Health Unit is working collaboratively to provide a more accessible Aboriginal Liaison service that meets the unique cultural needs of all our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients," says Nicole.

What impact do you hope to make?

As a team, we have cultural knowledge. We know our identity; our history with healthcare and our mob – that is what helps make us great Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers. We want to make a change in the hospital for our Aboriginal patients – to make them feel like St Vincent's is a home away from home.

— **Soupoura Charles, St Vincent's Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer**



Navigating new stages
of the COVID-19 pandemic

ON THE FRONTLINE



While recent months have felt like a sprint to the finish line for many Victorians, our staff are turning yet another corner of the COVID-19 marathon. And while this major haul has presented many hurdles, recent changes have spurred on a new burst of determination.

COVID Surge Plan, activated

In October, our key role in the fight against COVID-19 took on new meaning when we were called on to become a COVID streaming hospital.

As part of our COVID Surge Plan, teams across the board have been instrumental in helping to care for COVID patients while ensuring others can continue to receive the care they need.

Our response has included standing up three COVID wards and a SCOVID ward, a satellite Intensive Care Unit within our recovery space in theatre, transferring urgent elective surgery to St Vincent's Private Hospital to create capacity, adjusting workflows within our emergency department, and the installation of marquees to increase space for patient triage and ambulance offload. This has been a monumental effort by all involved, especially when

the 'business as usual' demands have not decreased during this period.

Helping to maintain this well-oiled machine have been our Safety, Contact Tracing, Microbiology and Fever Clinic teams, among others, who have worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of our patients and staff.

"Our teams have been on the frontline for almost two years, and still come together each and every day to care for our patients," says Nicole Tweddle, Executive Director of Acute Services.

"It's because of you that we have been able to respond so quickly and so well to this immense challenge."

Taking care to our community

Our inpatients aren't the only ones who have needed our support throughout this latest surge. In September, our teams stood up a COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Facility (CIRF) to provide a safe place for vulnerable Melburnians to isolate. CIRF has welcomed hundreds of residents, many of whom are experiencing homelessness.

More recently, a Sotrovimab Clinic was established so that COVID-positive patients could also receive infusion



Our community vaccination hub relocated temporarily to Melbourne Museum (above)
Image: Eugene Hyland/supplied by Museums Victoria

Clare Dyer (right) with St Vincent's Chief Nursing Officer Kathryn Riddell



Helping hands

When Clare Dyer, President of St Vincent's Alumni, put out a call for support through Victoria's latest COVID-19 wave, she was inundated with responses from the alumni community.

They were ready to lend their hand – providing generous cash donations to purchase meals and delivering care packages for our staff.

Some alumni nurses have also volunteered their time to help on wards and join our COVID-19 pathways team, which offers support to COVID-19 positive patients in our community.

"In adversity, the good come forward. We feel such a commitment to the nurses that have followed on from us and we want our fellow nurses to know that we're there for them," says Clare.



treatment on-site. Our work to increase community-based care has also helped to reduce preventable hospital demand during this time.

Thanks to our COVID-positive community pathway HealthMonitor, we have been able to manage hundreds of Melburnians from the comfort of their own homes, and daily contact from our friendly team has helped to ease loneliness.

A jab well done

Victoria's impressive vaccination rates have been a state-wide effort, but our teams have played a pivotal role in

reaching important milestones. In July we launched our first drive-through clinic at the former Ford Factory at Campbellfield (pictured left). Within days, a vacant lot was transformed into a streamlined open-air operation, with a walk-in clinic on-site coming to life weeks later.

No less impressive has been our continued strength in numbers at the Royal Exhibition Building and the Melbourne Museum, where our team spent four weeks administering more than 40,000 jabs amongst some of the city's most iconic treasures.

Because not all Victorians can access mainstream vaccination services, our outreach and in-reach efforts have also helped to make sure that no-one gets left behind.

An opportunistic vaccination service in our Emergency Department has provided protection to some of our most vulnerable patients, including those affected by homelessness, substance misuse and family violence.

"We're able to chat about how the vaccine could save someone's life, and give them the jab then and there with other support which has been really successful," says Sarah Simons, Emergency Department Registrar.



Mobile vaccination

Helping Melbourne's homeless stay safe during the pandemic

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne is leading a mobile outreach initiative to ensure that vulnerable Melburnians can overcome barriers to vaccination.

As part of this initiative, nurses travel with a drug and alcohol harm-minimisation worker in a COVID-safe mobile van to sites across metropolitan Melbourne every week to bring healthcare directly to at-risk groups. This has included people experiencing homelessness and people seeking asylum.

"We know that these communities suffer from more chronic and acute health conditions than others, and on top of that, often live in unstable housing with limited access to food and medicine," says Andrew Chan, Project Lead and Psychosocial Stream Manager of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Health Independence Program.

St Vincent's has a long history of taking care to the community, and in a challenging and rapidly evolving landscape, the need to make healthcare accessible is more important than ever.

"There are many people sitting on the fence when it comes to vaccination. This model ensures that our nurses are there to have crucial conversations with them," says Andrew.

Being able to vaccinate on the van itself also allows greater scope for sites that don't have the facilities to allow an on-site operation.

"It was quick and easy, I got the jab, answered some questions, and now I'm ready for my second one," says

Jamie (pictured below), who received a vaccination from our team in September.

In partnership with the Burnet Institute, Salvation Army and Bolton Clarke Homeless Persons Program, the mobile COVID-19 vaccination initiative began in July 2021.

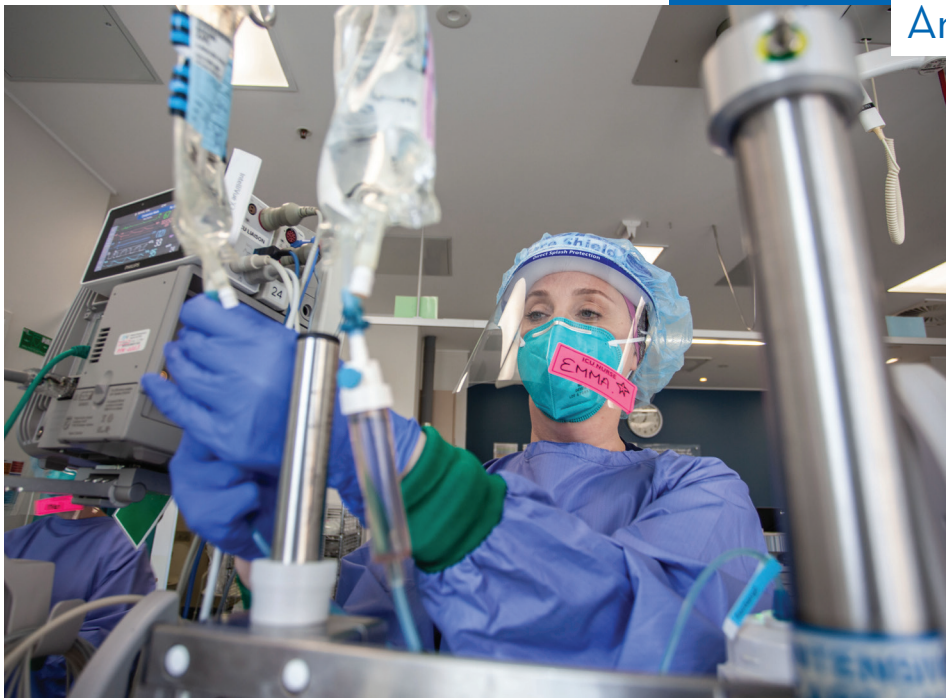
As part of St Vincent's COVID-19 vaccination program, it operates alongside high-volume vaccination centres, and builds on an outreach program that last year delivered healthcare during the pandemic.

As of November, more than 1000 vaccinations were administered as part of the initiative, with the mobile van also set to provide an in-home service to people with disabilities or who are frail-aged.



AAP Image

Leading with excellence



And the winners are ...

Graduate of the Year

Michelle Wang

Early Career Nurse Leader

Sophie Wallace

Post Graduate of the Year

Esther Fulton-Grigg

Researcher of the Year

Leslie Coo

**Chief Nursing Officer
Leadership and Excellence
Award**

Nicola Gorwell

**Chief Nursing Officer
Leadership and Excellence
Award, Highly Commended**

Donna Davie, Clynt
Bernhardt, Barbara
Stevens, Alana White,
Alyson Ross

St Vincent's launches inaugural Nursing Excellence Awards

On International Nurses Day in March, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne launched its inaugural Nursing Excellence Awards, celebrating the remarkable service and contribution its nurses make for the hospital.

Forty five nurses were nominated for an award across five different categories including Graduate of the Year, Early Career Nurse Leader, Post Graduate of the Year, Researcher of the Year, and the Chief Nursing Officer Leadership and Excellence Award.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Chief Nursing Officer, Kathryn Riddell, says that all nominees were worthy of recognition for leading the way in their respective areas and making their mark on the future of healthcare at the hospital.

"As we found ourselves at the epicentre of the Australian COVID-19 pandemic, our nurses have faced the challenges head on and have worked with conviction and humility through turbulent times. Their passion is caring for our community and caring for our St Vincent's team," she says.

A special mention was also given to five nurses nominated for the Chief Nursing Officer Leadership and Excellence Award who demonstrate compassionate care to their patients and support their team members to thrive at every level.

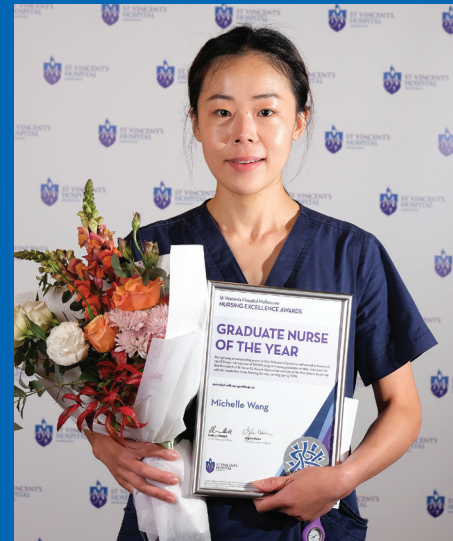
Top honours

Taking out the highly esteemed Graduate of the Year award for 2020 was Michelle Wang (pictured right).

During her graduate year she rotated through three units, including the COVID-19 floor, and never faltered in maintaining a high standard of work and commitment despite being faced with plenty of high-level challenges.

Michelle continues to consistently exceed expectations, going above and beyond to ensure her patients and their families are comfortable and well-cared for. A valued member of the St Vincent's team, she is often the first to offer assistance to others when needed.

"This award is not only a great honour for me, but also inspires me to achieve more. I'm looking forward to growing and developing further over the next few years in nursing at St Vincent's," says Michelle.



World-first research

This tiny implant could change the way pancreatic cancer is treated

Pancreatic cancer is tipped to be the second leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide by 2030, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. It also has one of the lowest survival rates.

But a tiny implant that delivers chemotherapy directly into the tumour of a patient with pancreatic cancer could change all that. This implant offers the potential to improve the surgical outcome by shrinking the tumour size so it can be safely removed.

The proposed implant is part of a world-first project being developed by researchers from Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Wollongong Australia in partnership with ACMD – Australia's first collaborative, hospital-based biomedical engineering research centre, located at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

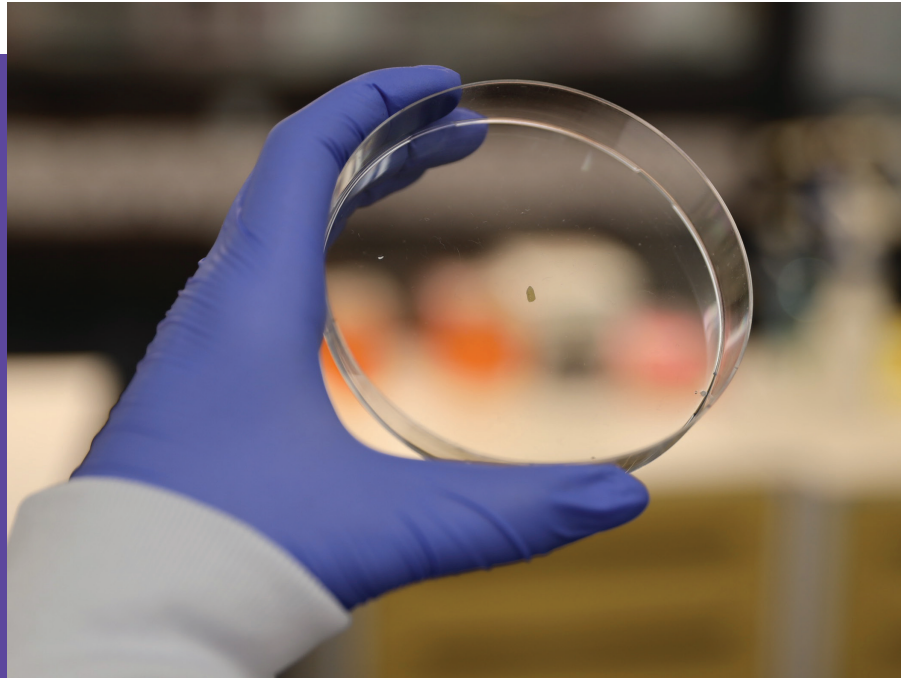
Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute is also part of the cross-disciplinary research team involved in this ground-breaking ACMD partner-led project.

"The challenge with some pancreatic tumours is the size prohibits any surgical removal because the tumour may be encroaching on other areas of the pancreas and also may have metastasized to other parts of the body, which then makes surgery very challenging and risky," says Simon Moulton, ACMD Project Lead and Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Swinburne.

Prof Moulton says the technique they are exploring has the potential to make a huge difference to the way pancreatic cancer is treated.

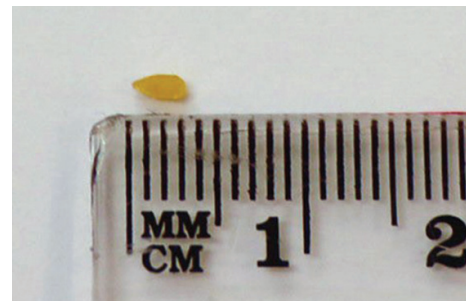
The implant would be loaded with a required dose of the chemotherapy drug and inserted directly into the tumour through a minimally invasive endoscopic ultrasound. Once inserted, the medication can slowly leach out and work to shrink the tumour.

This site-specific approach could also potentially help eliminate some of the side effects patients experience when taking



"This technique would enable us to remove pancreatic cancer tumours from patients that previously may not have been possible."

— Simon Moulton



This prototype was developed at ACMD and is no bigger than a grain of rice (top and above)

chemotherapy drugs, such as hair loss and nausea.

Prototypes of the implant have been developed through ACMD and the University of Wollongong Australia, with initial lab testing trials currently underway and showing promising results.

"This technique would enable us to remove pancreatic cancer tumours from patients that previously may not have been possible and potentially improve survival rates," says Prof Moulton.

To learn more about ACMD, visit www.acmd.org.au.

Specialised cancer service

Our newly established Onco-Geriatric service opened in August offering specialised care to older Victorians with cancer.

Led by Dr Richard Kane, Clinical Director of Geriatric Medicine, Home & Community Services in partnership with Associate Professor Sue-Anne McLachlan, Director of Cancer Services, and Goulburn Valley Health's Head of Oncology, Dr Javier Torres, the service is one of the first of its kind in Victoria, delivering comprehensive assessment directly to patients in the Goulburn Valley.

"Previously, Goulburn Valley residents had no access to this service locally and would either need to travel long distances or miss out altogether. Through telehealth appointments, we can ensure they can access critical care much closer to home," says Dr Kane.

Operating out of St Vincent's Cancer Centre, the clinic also offers face-to-face and telehealth consults for patients in Melbourne.

The team aims to improve outcomes by optimising patients' general health and assisting the patient and their oncologist with decisions about their cancer treatment.



Dr James McMahon in a telehealth consult with a Goulburn Valley Health patient (above)

Dr Kane says this model of care is now recognised as best practice internationally.

"Research shows there are many improvements in patient care, including better prediction of treatment side effects and the detection and management of problems that may not previously have been identified in routine cancer care," he adds.

Ultimate act of love

Jeanette Caldwell and her husband, John (both pictured below), are the perfect pair in more ways than one. This year they celebrated 38 years of marriage and Jeanette's kidney transplant anniversary – which John lovingly donated to her 30 years ago.

The ground-breaking surgery was performed at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and was the first non-related kidney transplant to take place in Victoria, and the second in Australia. After Jeanette's mother and sister

were found not to match, Jeanette says that a chance glance led to John being tested.

"I had my blood card in my hand one day and John snatched it off me and said, 'that's my blood group'," says Jeanette.

"We laughingly asked my nephrologist if we should get John tested, and he replied, 'well, why not?'"

Not only was John's blood type a match, but tests showed they both carried two rare, but essential, antigens.

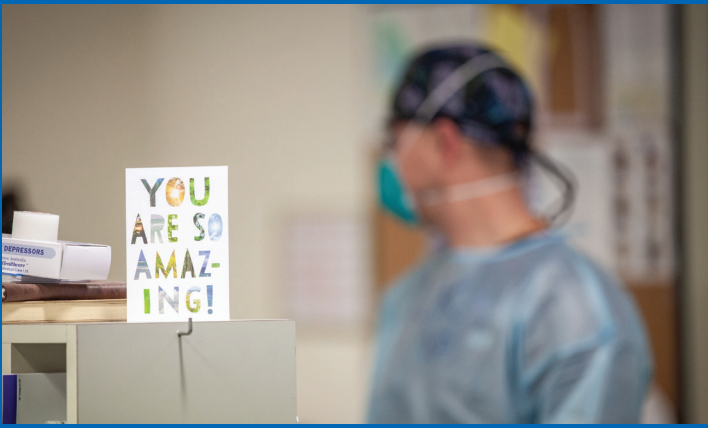
Associate Professor Hilton Gock has been Jeanette's nephrologist at St Vincent's for the past 15 years and says there's been some challenges along the way.

"Jeanette continued to break ground after her donation, being one of the first people to successfully use new anti-rejection medications to better preserve her transplant," says A/Prof Gock.

Jeanette continues to keep a positive outlook and says the care she receives at St Vincent's has been excellent and encouraging.

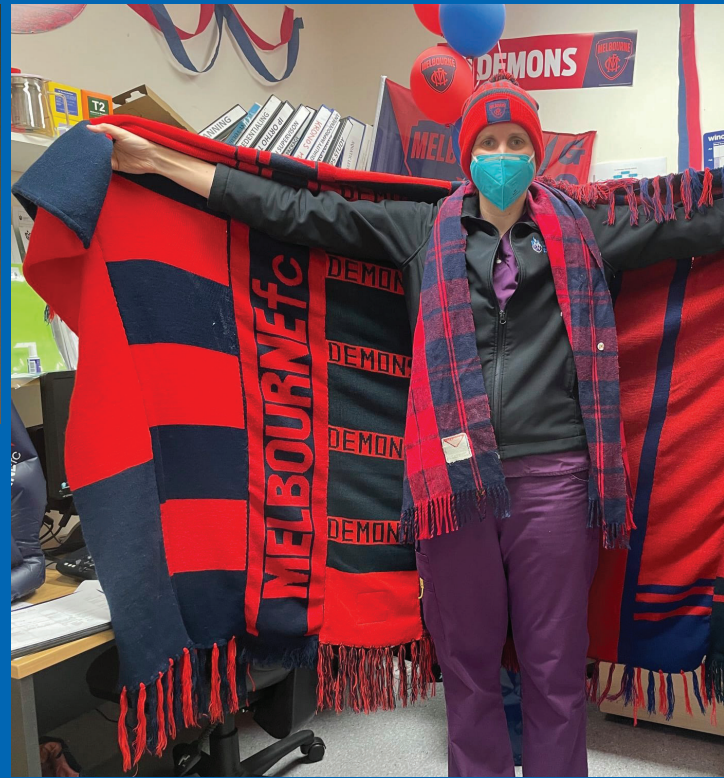
She remains eternally grateful to her husband, adding: "How do you repay someone who's given you the gift of life?"





Above: Messages of support from the community have helped get our staff through some of the toughest times this year. This thoughtful card was displayed in the Emergency Department at our Fitzroy campus.

Right: Physiotherapist, Stephanie Hawkins, showed her true colours when celebrating the 2021 AFL Grand Final. Not only did her beloved Dees win, Stephanie also won our St Vincent's staff Footy Week competition after giving her workspace this footy-inspired makeover.



Back in July we hit a proud milestone – our St Vincent's team helped administer 100,000 COVID-19 vaccinations across the community.

OUT & ABOUT

Celebrating life
across our
different sites





Right: Our temperature testers work hard to keep our hospital safe. Anjana Copparam has been part of this dedicated team since Victoria's second wave.

Below: Auburn House Lifestyle Assistant, Rose Guaragna (centre), loves that her job includes organising activities to keep residents engaged and active. Here, residents Julia and Rosemarie show off the snowmen creations they made with Rose.

Bottom: Staff at St Vincent's were happy to slip on a fun pair of socks to raise awareness around the mental health of doctors and health practitioners as part of Crazy Socks 4 Docs Day. Each year this event focuses on tackling stigma and building a safe space to seek help. Huge thanks to Mitch Dowd for donating 600 pairs of socks for our doctors this year.



Second from top: Our occupational therapists play a big part in supporting our patients during the recovery process to maximise their safety and independence as they go about daily tasks.

Above: Staff at St Vincent's on the Park and our Mental Health Acute Inpatient Service were treated to a delicious feast donated by Nandos during one of Victoria's lockdowns. This was just one of several generous donations our hospital has received from local businesses during the pandemic.



Celebrating our nurses



Dame Quentin Bryce (above)

The challenges that our health service staff faced during 2020 provided us with a reminder of just how important our nurses are and to recognise and celebrate these true heroes.

During the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, a spotlight was shone on the vital role nurses play in our community. We depend on them for so much and our admiration for them has never been greater.

Over the past 12 months, the community has demonstrated an impressive level of support for St Vincent's nurses by helping to raise vital funds to purchase essential equipment to ease the burden on nurses and to support their work.

Notably, St Vincent's Breast Health Services received an outpouring of generous support to enable St Vincent's exceptional surgical and breast care team to treat thousands of women with breast cancer.

We were extremely proud to announce the introduction this year of the Dame Quentin Bryce Palliative Care Nursing Postgraduate Scholarship – a very fitting recognition for the great work of our nurses. The scholarship will support the recipient to undertake studies in palliative care.

"I'd like to congratulate the nursing staff at St Vincent's for their exceptional contribution and for their demonstration of true courage and commitment in the Hospital's proud tradition of compassionate care," says Dame Quentin Bryce.

Neo-Bionica facility opens

A state-of-the-art manufacturing facility has opened at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

Neo-Bionica – a joint initiative of the Bionics Institute and University of Melbourne – is equipped with the latest cleanrooms and manufacturing technology to make medical device prototypes and implants for human clinical trials.

The Bionics Institute, The University of Melbourne and St Vincent's are partners in ACMD – Australia's first collaborative, hospital-based biomedical engineering research centre, also located at St Vincent's Fitzroy campus.

"Neo-Bionica is a bold initiative of two of our ACMD partners and presents a whole new way of encouraging our brightest minds to tackle the biggest health challenges," says Dr Erol Harvey, CEO of ACMD. "It's something that strongly aligns with our vision at ACMD, which is to create a vibrant medtech ecosystem with active engagement of scientists, engineers and clinicians."

Among the devices that will be prototyped at Neo-Bionica is a potential treatment for type 2 diabetes under

Image: supplied by Alchemy Construct



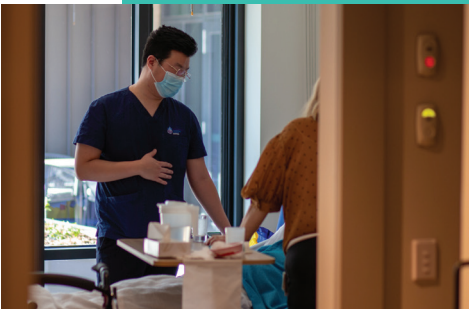
development at the Bionics Institute, where collaborators include Professor Richard Maclsaac, Director of Endocrinology at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

"I am excited to be collaborating with this team to develop a nerve stimulation treatment that amplifies natural processes in the body to help patients control their blood sugar levels," says Prof Maclsaac.

Celebrating Christmas at
Cambridge House (right)

A statue of St Vincent
de Paul at our Fitzroy
campus (below)

Staff providing care at
Caritas Christi (bottom)



A special exhibition that celebrates
our St Vincent's spirit

From the HEART

Each year around the time of the feast of St Vincent de Paul on 27 September, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne celebrates Mission Week.

It's the time when we showcase to the community what inspires us to do what we do each and every day.

This year our theme *Mission Is...* looked deeply into what our Mission's values of compassion, integrity, justice and excellence look like in practice on the ground.

"It offered a chance for an insightful look at the different ways each of us interprets our Mission's values," says Margaret Stewart, St Vincent's Executive Director Mission.

A highlight of Mission Week 2021 was the photo exhibition. Hanging in the tunnels that run under our Fitzroy campus and shared online, it captured moments of our Mission in action right across our health service and across our many sites.

Among the 25 images displayed was this one of Pastoral and Spiritual Care Practitioner, Shaun Dowling (pictured inset), sitting by a patient's bedside, providing a compassionate ear as she talked to him about the highs and lows of her day, including missing her son's birthday while in hospital.



"Like this one of Shaun, each photo displays significant human encounters and gets us thinking about what Mission is to each of us in our work," Margaret explains.

"For me, every morning as I'm driving towards St Vincent's, I consciously embrace what I'm about to do. I wouldn't feel like this if I didn't see the people around me making the same conscious commitment."



Pictured (from left)
Jenna Nguyen and
Lydia Sims from St
Vincent's Contact
Tracing Team

ACTION STATIONS

Working together to keep
COVID-19 at bay

As wave two of the COVID-19 pandemic gripped Melbourne – our state's first big surge – St Vincent's established a special team to manage contact tracing across its hospital sites.

More than 30 staff including nurses, nurse educators, scientists, researchers, medical students and members of the administration team were redeployed to form St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Contact Tracing Team and assist the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control service.

"The Contact Tracing Team has played an instrumental part in keeping our hospital – including our staff, patients and visitors – safe during pandemic times. We had to develop programs and processes from scratch as we were dealing with something we'd never experienced before – it was certainly a time of firsts," says Sam Palmby, Infection and Control Manager and Head of the Contact Tracing Team.

Jenna Nguyen and Lydia Sims, have both been part of the hospital's Contact Tracing Team since its inception in July. Here they share what a typical day as a contact tracer involves.

A day in the life

First thing you do when you start the day in the Contact Tracing Team.

Jenna: I complete the COVID-safe attestation and temperature checks when I first come on-site and disinfect my desk.

Lydia: Same as Jenna, plus I get a coffee and then join our morning team meeting to find out the first call of action.

What is something people don't realise about the contact tracing process?

Lydia: Contact tracing guidelines from the Department of Health change frequently as the pandemic situation changes, so we are kept very busy keeping our policies up-to-date.

Jenna: A big part of what we do is creating policy and procedures from scratch but also creating standard operating procedures to improve these policies and procedures as the situation evolves.

Time is of the essence in this role. How do you maintain a calm approach?

Lydia: Prioritising tasks is definitely the way to go. It helps me manage my work in an organised way, especially given the fast pace and immediate response required.

Jenna: Debriefing and discussing scenarios with the team is key.

Most challenging moment?

Jenna: When work volumes peaked, we simply could not stop, we had to push through and this meant, at times, pulling some pretty long hours. But we worked together as a team to get through it.

Lydia: We sometimes take some pretty emotional calls from staff who may be feeling stressed about being COVID-positive or being exposed to COVID-19. We handle this with empathy and compassion and just try to talk them through this tough time and help them the best we can.

A new chapter

Caritas Christi facility opens its doors with renewed strength

Our Caritas Christi Palliative Care Service has returned to Kew in a new purpose-built facility that will provide palliative and end-of-life support for our patients and their families.

Founded in 1938 by the Sisters of Charity, Caritas Christi has offered palliative care to the Victorian community for more than 80 years and is the largest and best-known provider of palliative and supportive care in the state.

An increased demand for this service and the ageing infrastructure saw a pressing need to rebuild the existing facility.

Co-located with the St Vincent's Care Services Residential Aged Care facility, our new and expanded 26-bed inpatient palliative care unit was opened in September and offers 24-hour specialist palliative care, consultancy services, an ambulatory care hub, as well as education, training and research areas.

The facility is staffed by a dedicated team of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, music and art therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, pastoral care workers and a strong network of volunteers.

Each of our in-patient rooms has direct access to either the facility's beautifully landscaped gardens or a balcony area – a very relaxed setting for loved ones to spend this precious time together.

There are a number of patient/family lounge areas including a creative arts space and a dedicated dining space where families can share a meal together, as well as a chapel featuring stained-glass windows from the convent that was originally on the site – a special link to our hospital's heritage.

"The new facility allows our patients to receive the specialist care provided by our clinicians in a beautiful, respectful and peaceful environment, where the patient is at the centre of all we do," says Michael Bramwell, Operations Manager of Palliative Care Services.

This redevelopment project has been generously funded by families of past patients and the community. Please contact St Vincent's Foundation on (03) 9231 3365 if you would like to support the ongoing work of this Victorian institution or secure naming rights to areas within the facility.





Reach for the stars

Spotlight on the 2021 St Vincent's Staff Awards

Over the past year, our staff have gone above and beyond, showing impressive strength and resilience in all they do.

Their focus on continuous improvement is guided by the St Vincent's Mission values of Compassion, Justice, Integrity and Excellence.

Our St Vincent's Staff Awards is an annual celebration of the extraordinary work of those who go that extra step to make a difference in the everyday care of our patients and residents.

COVID-19 meant we had to do things a little differently this time, which included holding our own virtual local awards.

This year's theme – Go beyond – underpins what we strive for here at St Vincent's, and is even more relevant in our work today as our staff navigated another year of ongoing pandemic challenges.

Go beyond sits at the heart of the hospital's future direction. Key to this strategy is a focus to express our healing ministry beyond our hospital and aged care walls to provide digitally-enabled, person-centred care to the wider community.

This year saw a high calibre of award submissions that clearly demonstrates St Vincent's is filled with people

Dr Ahrathy Selathurai with an ICU patient doing resistance exercises a day after surgery, as part of the HIIT Project (above)

Go beyond

The 2021 St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Staff Award winners are:

Mission, People and Culture

COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Facilities; also SVHA Group award winner

Clinical Excellence and Leadership

Ortho-Geriatric Service

Consumer Needs and Expectations

HealthMonitor

Life Changing Research

HIIT Cancer Project

Digital, Technology and Sustainability

\$5 EMR: Electronic Medical Records

CEO Excellence Award – Individual

Dr Richard Kane; also SVHA Group award winner

CEO Excellence Award – Team

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Contact Tracing Team; also SVHA Group award winner

dedicated to achieving incredible things together. Award recipients included the HIIT Cancer Project that won The Life Changing Research category. This innovative project introduces patients to in-hospital high intensity interval training following major foregut cancer surgery as part of their recovery process to improve physical and overall wellbeing.

"There's emerging evidence that exercise is a really important therapy for cancer patients and that it improves their outcomes irrespective of where they are on the treatment journey," says Michael Hii, Oesophago Gastric Surgeon at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

The winners of the St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) awards qualified as finalists in our St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) Group awards where SVHM took out top honours in four categories, including the Deadly Award that was presented to Christopher Delamont, SVHM's Indigenous Recruitment Co-ordinator.

This award recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who go beyond in their commitment to our Mission values, while displaying strong cultural identity and leadership within our St Vincent's community.

We wish to thank the 2021 Staff Award sponsors

Support from our valued partners recognises the importance of our 6,000+ staff and helps us to celebrate the outstanding care they provide every single day.

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THROUGH MY EYES



Director of Palliative Medicine, Mark Boughey, shares his lived experience of palliative care

A few weeks shy of 20 years together, my partner, Leonard, unexpectedly became unwell. What followed over the ensuing seven weeks, until his death, was unknown and unrelenting. What mattered most to Len, and for us as a gay couple, was having a space and place where he could feel genuinely safe and valued.

He needed palliative care from the get-go and, as his caregiver, I had high expectations of what the palliative care service could provide. For you see, the palliative care team we placed our trust in, at this most challenging of times, was the team I lead as Medical Director.

From the beginning of his illness, the probability of dying was front and centre, and every day was a bad news

“People giving of themselves gave to us that feeling of safety and truly opened the door to the acceptance of Len dying.”

– Mark Boughey (pictured)

day – hospitalised with severe pain, threatened spinal cord compression and a diagnosis of an advanced metastatic lung cancer.

We had no hesitation in engaging the medical, surgical and rehabilitation teams at St Vincent’s, but saw the immediate necessity of my colleagues in palliative care initially to help manage the pain.

So, what did palliative care bring to the table? For me, witnessing it and now being part of it, there was the expected attention to good symptom management and a robust focus on discussing treatment plans and the appropriateness of care offered.

What stood out was the absolute authenticity in which palliative care staff connected with you. They presented themselves with consistency and openness to communicate, but communicating in a way that always seemed to signal an understanding and a valuing of the person in front of them, no matter how trivial or how difficult that conversation needed to be for Len or myself.

People giving of themselves gave to us that feeling of safety and truly opened the door to the acceptance of Len dying.

My first inkling of acceptance came when Len told me his life was a tapestry, and it was now complete, although he still had a few threads to tidy up before he went.

To me, this was the mystery of good palliative care practice in action. His acceptance of dying opened channels for meaningful conversations, allowed us to experience times of real shared intimacy and gave us the ability to really say goodbye. To feel safe gave Len those precious moments to shine and, in retrospect, for us to really live our best lives together until his end.

Dr Leonard Scicutella, GP & Victorian Palliative Medicine Training Program Medical Coordinator, died at Caritas Christi Palliative Care Unit, October, 2014.



Love Your St Vincent's

Many people wish to express their gratitude for the exceptional care they've received. If you or your loved one have been treated at St Vincent's Hospital, you'll know how committed we are to providing the best clinical treatment and most compassionate care for our patients.

You can call us on (03) 9231 3365 or email us at foundation@svha.org.au



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to say thank you**

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If you would like to find out more please contact the St Vincent's Foundation team. We would love to talk to you.



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