

The Font

*Celebrating
125 years*



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Message from the CEO

I am constantly inspired by the St Vincent's community – our patients, staff, volunteers, and supporters – and the way in which they strive for something greater.

Our people work together to improve how we care for our patients, help each other out in times of great need, and form lasting friendships. Generations of families have worked at St Vincent's, and even the occasional marriage has had its beginnings here, as you'll learn on page 11.

I am also inspired by the people who dedicate their working lives to St Vincent's. In September, we acknowledged over 170 staff who collectively have served over 2,500 years. We also recognised four staff members who have served St Vincent's for 40 years – congratulations to Sue Cowling, Giota Papadimitriou, Anna Sich and Ranka Zabic, for your dedication and loyalty.

St Vincent's Melbourne recently won five categories at this year's SVHA Innovation and Excellence Awards, including the Chairman's Award for Excellence and the Individual Award for Excellence. The winning entries are diverse but they share a clear commitment to our patients and to St Vincent's values – compassion, justice, integrity, and excellence.

Our people work together to improve how we care for our patients, help each other out in times of great need, and form lasting friendships.

I would like to personally congratulate each of the people involved in all of these projects, and to acknowledging their willingness to challenge our traditional way of doing things. These projects were outstanding in their field, and most importantly, contribute to significant improvement in patient care and experience. You can read more about the winners on page 4–5.

Generosity is another defining characteristic of the St Vincent's community. We see it in the way that enthusiastic crafters rallied together to knit over 250 tea cosies for the Cosiest Morning Tea (see page 6), and in the support for our Gala Ball (see page 12), which raised over \$140,000 to benefit patients now and into the future.

The St Vincent's community will come together for a Celebratory Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral on 1 November to celebrate 125 years of caring. You're invited to join us for this very special occasion.

I look forward to seeing you at the mass and I hope you enjoy this edition of the Font.

Angela Nolan
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

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St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne is proud to be part of the St Vincent's Health Australia group, which is the second largest health and aged care provider in the country. SVHA's mission is to bring God's love to those in need through the healing ministry of Jesus. We are guided by the values of compassion, justice, integrity, and excellence.

Dr Google can help patients talk to their doctors



The St Vincent's researchers who led the study, from left, Rachel Zordan, Dr Anthony Cocco and Dr Jennie Hutton.

As technology continues to infiltrate all aspects of our lives, a growing number of patients are turning to the internet for answers to their health concerns.

A survey of 400 Emergency Department patients at St Vincent's and Austin Health has found that half of participants regularly use the internet for health information, and that one in three searched for information on the problem for which they had presented to Emergency.

However, far from being a bad idea, the group of St Vincent's researchers that conducted the study has discovered that for most patients, searching for symptoms online before presenting to Emergency improves interactions with their treating doctor. These findings have been published in the Medical Journal of Australia.

'The perception might have been that patients were googling in the waiting room and telling clinicians they had some diagnosis that they didn't have,'

says St Vincent's Emergency Physician Dr Jennie Hutton. 'However it was found that searching for online health information had a positive impact on the doctor-patient relationship, particularly for patients with greater health literacy.'

'We found that searching online was unlikely to cause patients to doubt the diagnosis by a practitioner or to affect adherence to treatment,' says St Vincent's intern Dr Anthony Cocco. 'We therefore suggest that doctors acknowledge and be prepared to discuss with patients the results of their online searches.'

Patients who have previously googled their symptoms are unlikely to veer from the treatment prescribed by their doctor, with over three quarters saying their online search never or rarely led them to doubt their diagnosis or treatment. Nine out of ten had never or rarely changed a treatment plan advised by a doctor because of what they had read on the internet.

'We found that searching online was unlikely to cause patients to doubt the diagnosis by a practitioner or to affect adherence to treatment'

However, Dr Google isn't without its drawbacks. 40% agreed or strongly agreed that gathering information from the internet made them worried or anxious.

'Patients have a vested interest in their own wellbeing, and they are going to spend time doing their own research, which creates background information that we can then build on,' says Dr Hutton. 'We recommend that patients go to clinically appropriate websites, and that clinicians should be aware and embrace it, especially with younger patients.'

Leading the way in innovation and excellence



SVHA Innovation & Excellence Award winners

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne has excelled in the St Vincent's Health Australia Innovation & Excellence Awards, claiming five awards, including the Chairman's Award for Excellence.

The Awards were announced at gala dinner on 24 September, with representatives from across SVHA's 27 facilities and 18,000 staff. St Vincent's Melbourne was well represented, having the most finalists of any of the SVHA facilities, with 14 finalists in the six Award categories.

CEO Angela Nolan was full of praise for the award winners. 'It was a great source of pride to see the acknowledgement of all the great work that is being done here,' she said. 'I would like to congratulate each of the people involved in these projects and acknowledge their willingness to challenge our traditional way of doing things.'



Leaders in Catholic healthcare and service to the poor and vulnerable

The Good Samaritan Fund Committee

Inspired by the countless acts of personal generosity offered by our staff, the Good Samaritan Fund (GSF) offers direct and immediate assistance to patients facing hardship and disadvantage. Managed by a diligent committee chaired by Dr Anthony Dowling, and with operational support from Abbey Luckhurst, the GSF Committee has overseen the distribution of more than \$140,000 to vulnerable patients and their families.



Excellent care for our patients and residents - Clinical innovation

Simulation training to improve code stroke performance

In response to an identified sub-optimal performance in hyperacute stroke care, a multidisciplinary team developed simulation training to improve our response to stroke patients at St Vincent's. The project identified and improved processes in areas such as emergency, radiology, anaesthetic, nursing, and clerical; introducing changes that resulted in a 70 minute reduction in median treatment times.



Excellent care for our patients and residents - Person centred care

Avoiding deterioration in Parkinson's disease

This project educated clinicians about the risk of delayed or interacting medications for patients with Parkinson's disease. The project also introduced clinical handover prompts to improve timely, appropriate care. As a result, average length of stay for these patients reduced from 4.5 to 3.7 days, and emergency admission length of stay reduced from 5.4 to 3.8 days.



CEO's Award for Individual Excellence

Fiona McKinnon

This award is for an individual who influences leadership, excellence or the mission and values of our organisation. Fiona was recognised as an inspiring leader who leads by example and brings our values alive, with her use of positive reinforcement, her ability to make everyone feel important as well as her amazing memory. The nomination also mentioned Fiona's authentic personal interest in all of her staff. It was recognised that Fiona recently stepped up to the Acting Executive Director of Mission, and that she has championed the Continuous Improvement framework to her area of influence within St Vincent's.



Chairman's Award for Excellence

High Risk Foot Clinic

This clinic, implemented in February 2017, has successfully provided an integrated, person-centred approach to patients presenting with complex foot conditions. Results from the clinic have shown a 10% reduction in hospital admissions and a 15% reduction in Emergency Department presentations. The service has improved patient outcomes and is forecast to significantly improve long term patient outcomes.

Quirky crafts to celebrate our Mission



Over the last few months, St Vincent's has been on a Mission to acquire 125 tea cosies for the quirkiest morning tea imaginable.

Generous and crafty supporters answered the call, busily making and donating over 200 beautifully knitted creations for the Cosiest Morning Tea, which launched Mission Week in September.

Tea cosies were donated from across Australia, and even from the other side of the world. There were cats, owls, pineapples, unicorns, nurses and even the Good Samaritan and his Donkey.

There was a silent auction of all of the tea cosies, with all funds raised directly helping some of St Vincent's most vulnerable and disadvantaged patients through the Good Samaritan Fund.

Executive Director of Mission, Margaret Stewart, said a tea themed event was a perfect way to launch Mission Week, as it reminded her of an iconic image from early last century, of the Sisters of Charity serving tea to the needy.

'In the image the tea is being served in fine crockery with pressed white tablecloth and beautifully prepared food,' Margaret says. 'It perfectly encapsulates the Mission of the Sisters and their appreciation of the dignity of every person, so I think there are beautiful parallels in the St Vincent's Mission, that drives us every day to do what we do, and with the simple ceremony of a cup of tea, served from a traditional teapot, with a tea cosy of course!'

The Cosiest Morning Tea was a colourful celebration of creativity, and generosity of spirit.



Peer support group helps recovery

As a consumer of St Vincent's Mental Health services, former teacher Paul Pollard has been an inpatient on the Mental Health ward many times. He even believes that the staff there have saved his life at least twice last year.

During this time he has been able to rebuild his self-worth and confidence. But out in the 'real world', the thing that inspires him is supporting peers who are going through something similar.

12 months year ago Paul was asked to be a peer facilitator in the St Vincent's Voice Hearers group, a role which

has provided him with a purpose, and helped his recovery immensely.

'No matter how dark a place my mind is, the people in that group understand,' Paul says. 'These people have been on the ward the same time as me so they trust me and they keep coming back. They know I understand what it is like to have challenges of voices and hallucinations. That trust is very hard to build. I think that's why the group has become very self-sustaining.'

Paul believes that the group provides him the opportunity to give something back.

'I had been off the ward for less than two months when they asked me to be a peer facilitator and I was very nervous,' Paul says. 'But slowly that responsibility helped my mental health enormously.'

'In the end it kept me from going back to the ward. I get so much more back in self-confidence, self-worth, and feeling that there are people I can talk to who know what it's like and that makes a huge difference.'



Recognising a commitment to caring

St Vincent's has a tradition of formally recognising staff members who have served our hospital for 10 years or more.

This year's Service Recognition Ceremony was held at the Hotel Windsor where CEO Angela Nolan presented 300 staff members with a certificate thanking them for their service to St Vincent's. The 300 staff members are those who have worked at St Vincent's for 10, 20, 30 and 40 years. St Vincent's is very grateful for the dedication and service of each one of them.

Congratulations to the four staff members who were acknowledged for dedicating their careers to St Vincent's, giving 40 years of service!



Sue Cowling



Giota Papadimitriou



Anna Sich



Ranka Zabic

Improving the patient experience for Aboriginal women

St Vincent's is collaborating with BreastScreen Victoria and Aboriginal health organisations to increase breast cancer screening rates among Indigenous Victorians.

BreastScreen is trialling two screening sessions for Aboriginal women, who will receive a shawl to wear during the session. Featuring colourful artwork by Aboriginal artist Aunty Lynette Briggs, the silk shawl is designed to make Aboriginal women more comfortable during a breast screen.

The trial project is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and is run by

BreastScreen Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS).

'St Vincent's has been good enough to allow us to conduct the trial onsite and we have trained the clinic staff to deliver the two trial screening days,' Annie Cooper from BreastScreen Victoria says.

Anne Barton, Operations Manager at St Vincent's BreastScreen, says the first trial session held in mid-September was very successful.

'When I walked through our reception, there was lots of chatting and laughing, Anne says. 'The women appear relaxed and comfortable.'

'The radiographer found the shawls a great resource in assisting women to feel comfortable and safe.'

'I appreciate the willingness of the staff to learn and treat women with respect,' said one of the participants.

Aunty Lynette Briggs says the piece was her first attempt at silk painting and was inspired by the many stories of women and their personal journeys shared in their yarning circles.

'Our journeys are many but our travelling path leads us back to Mother Earth, connecting us to Her Spiritual Being,' says Aunty Lynette.

The second and final trial session will be held in late October.



Kazz's Creation

St Vincent's patient Karen believed she had no creative talent whatsoever, until a diagnosis of Lupus, a life-threatening autoimmune disease, provided her an unlikely opportunity to pursue artistic endeavours.

'I never used to draw at all. Stick figures were my best effort!', Kazz explains.

A biopsy in 2007 provided the answer to Kazz's lethargy and why working a full day was increasingly a struggle. Kazz suffered from crippling fatigue, skin lesions, headaches and fever.

'My world crumbled around me,' Kazz says. 'I couldn't work and had to wait three years to get the pension. I spiralled into depression.'

Kazz's days were spent at the pub or stuck at home watching TV and listening to the radio, lonely and bored.

'Art therapy has been my lifesaver – it's how I stay positive,' Kazz shares. 'It gives me self-confidence and helps me meet people. I could be six feet under otherwise. My mum passed away at 54 and I was heading that way.'



Karen was encouraged to explore the contents of the art cupboard during a hospital visit in 2011. With only paper and crayons available, she soon found she was channelling her addictive personality towards a more positive pursuit.

Karen has come a long way from drawing stick figures to creating stunning hand-made swans out of hundreds of pieces of intricately folded coloured paper.

'Each swan takes me 100 hours to make. When I can't sleep, in the early hours, I pick up where I left off and get lost in the craft. When I am in the Cancer Day Centre for my weekly four hour appointment, time flies by as I concentrate on the piece and the smile on the face of the person I've promised it to.'

Now we're talking – app developed at St Vincent's wins award

A St Vincent's developed smartphone app that makes communication easier between our staff and patients from a non-English speaking background has won a Catholic Health Australia Digital Innovation in Health Award.

'Talk to Me' facilitates brief, sentence based, one-directional, low-risk information, with over 30 topics with 420 phrases translated from Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Arabic.

Cultural Diversity Program Coordinator Monita Mascitti-Meuter says the app makes a difference in moments between the points of critical care.

'20 per cent of our patients require an interpreter,' says Monita. 'Talk to me' does not replace the need for an interpreter, but it does address the gaps where patients in 24/7 care could benefit from knowing about their routine care.'

In this setting, it is common that in the absence of an interpreter, clinicians may resort to the use of Google translate as well as other mobile language applications to bridge the gap.

However, these translation tools pose serious risks in the health care setting as they only are about 60% accurate.

'For instance, in Polish, "your husband has the opportunity to donate his organs" translates to "your husband can donate his tools",' Monita says.

Talk to Me avoids these risks as the phrases and closed questions are pre-selected to ensure they pose no risk in the healthcare setting. Translations and voice overs have been completed by certified medical interpreters and translators.

With an audio component and large easy to read script, 'Talk to me' can assist staff in safely extending culturally responsive routine care to patients and residents of non-English speaking backgrounds, reducing anxiety, stress and misunderstanding.

Talk to Me was developed thanks to SVHM 'Catalyst' funding and donations by the cultural diversity program coordinator in collaboration with health professionals, medical interpreters and other experts.

Generations of caring



Associate Professor Andrew Maclsaac, like many other staff members, has a long association with St Vincent's. In fact, the Maclsaac name is synonymous with medicine at St Vincent's.

'St Vincent's has always been a place of families, and fortunately my family is one that has had a long association with the hospital,' says A/Prof Maclsaac, Director of Cardiology and Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

'My family's connection with St Vincent's started in the 1950s when my mother joined the nursing school. The Aikenhead Building had just opened and all the nurses lived in that building, for very little salary, in return for their education and board.

'The sisters were very strict, keeping a close eye on nurses coming and going. There was a midnight curfew, but twice a year they got a pass to stay out a bit later. If they broke these rules, their wages were docked. However it built a great spirit of camaraderie and my mother had a wonderful experience, making many lifelong friends.'

A/Prof Maclsaac's father moved to Melbourne from country Victoria, where he was educated by the Sisters of Charity at the local Catholic school. His father arrived at St Vincent's as a resident, during the days when a resident was so named because they lived onsite as well.

'You could imagine having a group of young doctors living on one corner of the campus, and all the nurses living on the other corner of the campus, it was a pretty lively place, and there was a lot of interactions going on. Inevitably, my father asked my mother out to a ball, as you did in those days. A romance blossomed and they eventually married.'

Half the hospital was invited to the wedding. His father's best man was a resident at the hospital and his mother was attended by bridesmaids who were St Vincent's nurses.

'St Vincent's has always been a place of families, and fortunately my family is one that has had a long association with the hospital'

In a forgotten tradition, when the bride left her home to go to the ceremony, she stopped in her bridal gown at the hospital and was presented to Mother Superior and the sisters.

'At home I have a photo of her kneeling in front of Mother Superior in her wedding gown receiving a blessing. The hospital really was an integral part of people's lives back in those days.'

Growing up, A/Prof Maclsaac often accompanied his father attending ward rounds and was very familiar with the hospital.

'When I graduated, I naturally wanted to come here as I had been inspired by stories of father, as were both my brothers, who both trained at St Vincent's. One got away somehow, but my brother Richard remains as Director of Endocrinology.

'I also lived on campus and met my wife, a fellow resident. I now have a son who is a doctor here, and it's needless to say where his fiancé works.'

'It's wonderful to have that family environment. I still see interns arrive because their mother or father, or in some cases both, have worked here and they are inspired by the same stories as I was.'

Do you have a St Vincent's story? We want to hear it. Share yours at svhm.org.au/125years



The Young Doctors



From left, Dr Anna Bendall, Dr Jonathan Hall and Dr Rinky Giri

Hospitals can be places of sadness and suffering, but three rays of sunshine at St Vincent's are giving their all to patient care.

Doctors Rinky Giri, Anna Bendall and Jonathan Hall began their St V's careers as nurses before deciding to become doctors, committing to further years of study and continuing at the hospital as medical interns and now registrars.

The number of nurses-turned-doctors is low, but the trio agree their time nursing has given them the confidence, compassion and communication skills to become better doctors.

'We're doctors because we really wanted to be one,' Dr Giri says. 'A four year degree in our mid to late twenties shows we wanted this.'

'The biggest help having been a nurse previously is on a team level. Having been on the other side, we see things from a different perspective.'

'Communication is one of our strengths coming from nursing, and working with patients' families. And just knowing how hospitals work and having that experience.'

'We're used to looking after very sick patients as nurses, so coming into an internship, we're already used to dealing with sick, deteriorating patients, so it gives you some confidence on the job in those early days.'

Dr Bendall agrees confidence was a key factor in the transition from nurse to doctor.

'The biggest thing coming from med school to an internship was that I wasn't nervous about starting,' she says. 'I was really looking forward to it, probably because I knew how the hospital worked. I'd met people, and knew what was expected, so it was much more enjoyable.'

'You go into nursing because you love working with people and you want to be part of a big team. And certainly knowing how to talk to families is a big thing.'

The medicos believe TV hospital dramas glamorise a doctor's role. With long hours and many departments working together for the best outcome for the patient, the reality is a little different.

'It's not so much like Grey's Anatomy,' Dr Bendall says. 'There's a misconception that doctors are at the forefront of the treating team, which isn't the case.'

'It's very much a broad team with the allied health, the medical team, the pharmacy – we all work together to look after patients as a whole. St Vincent's is very good in that way, that broad holistic approach, and everyone puts in equally to the patient care.'

'Hospitals are portrayed as being so life and death,' Dr Hall says. 'It's a much more slow and thoughtful process.'

'You can spend hours with patients, think about them for hours after you see them, and you're organising so much stuff behind the scenes. People don't realise that sometimes.'

You see them for 10 minutes but then there's hours when they might think nothing is happening, but there are multiple teams involved spending hours caring for them.'



'I live near Bendigo and came here with a severe brain injury that required immediate surgery. After a meticulous operation by the amazing surgeons, I am now without pain and am going home soon. I must say that I am over the moon with gratitude of this place. They are looking after me so well – the nurses are just excellent. They do so many things to try and make me comfortable. This place saves lives and I'm here today because of them. It's a great hospital.'

Terry McManus



'It's been 8 years since I accessed the inpatient services of St Vincent's Mental Health. I haven't required any inpatient services since then. But I do have a case manager, a psychologist and a psychiatrist. Along with my medication, I rely on their support and I connect really well with them. I catch up with my case manager for coffee at my local café, we have a chat and we just connect really well. I value that a lot and I think that's the one key thing in life that keeps me going.'

Nicoletta Kazas

New Rehab power wheelchair

Occupational Therapist Emma Parfitt has treated many patients in her career but there is one patient who stands out.

In 2014 Emma met Ray, who was admitted to the Rehab Ward following a car accident which left him with life threatening injuries. Emma and her colleagues worked tirelessly with Ray over the next 10 months to get the best possible result for him.

While working with Ray, Emma was inspired by the determination and commitment that he and his family had shown towards his recovery. Each day Ray faced major challenges and obstacles. Having access to an invaluable power wheelchair helped him stay positive throughout his journey.

Motivated by Ray's story, Emma set herself a challenge to raise enough money to purchase a new power wheelchair, so that others could benefit like Ray had.

Emma ran a 42km trail marathon through bush land around Marysville and with support from family and friends she successfully reached her fundraising goal.

The Rehab Ward is now fully equipped with a brand new power wheelchair



thanks to Emma's hard work and the generosity from a St Vincent's trusted supplier, Linds Rehabilitation Equipment, who gave the hospital a substantial discount, as well as providing four new pressure cushions from Sunrise Medical to be used with the wheelchair.

Emma hopes to inspire others to make a difference.

'Each one of us has the capability to make a difference in patients' lives and we all are capable of amazing things,' she says.

If you're a staff member or a hospital supporter and would like to follow in Emma's footsteps, head to stvfoundation.org.au/fundraise

Active minds and active bodies

St Vincent's physiotherapists are using different ways to keep our patients physically and mentally active.

The team has recently started a new activity for patients on the neurology ward, playing games such as bingo, quoits, jenga and colouring to assist in recovery.

Physiotherapist Lucy Stone says the games are great because they get patients out of their rooms and participating in something that is enjoyable.

'Many of our patients have had a stroke or neurosurgery so it's an important part of both their physical and cognitive rehabilitation,' says Lucy. The skills they use playing the games like counting, problem solving, memory and speech are very functional and transferable to many aspects of their life.'

'We involve physical activity wherever we can to increase the total amount of time our patients are out of bed and participating in their rehabilitation.'

'Patients love the activities because they get to support one another and have a laugh, during what can be quite a difficult time.'

All the games are provided by The St Vincent's Mission Department.



Oh what a night!



St Vincent's was joined by more than 600 supporters in August to celebrate 125 years of caring for the Victorian community at the Gala Ball.

This year's event exceeded all expectations and raised more than \$140,000. These funds help St Vincent's provide the best healthcare to benefit Victorians now and into the future.

St Vincent's supporters were treated to superior hospitality, electrifying entertainment from Tim Campbell and music from the Australian's Girls Choir, all guided by Ann Peacock as MC.

Our thanks goes to our generous sponsors PFD Food Services, AND1 Australia, Catholic Church Insurance, Nelson Alexander, 13Cabs and Symbion Hospital Services.

View the glamorous images at stvfoundation.org.au/news



**ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL**
MELBOURNE

PO Box 2900 Fitzroy
VIC 3065 Australia
(03) 9231 2211
www.svhm.org.au

 StVincentsHospitalMelb
 @StVincentsMelb
 st-vincent's-hospital-melbourne
 @stvincentsmelb