# The Font





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Thanks for never giving up

Plumber gives new life a high five

Art paints a picture of a life well lived



#### Message from the CEO

The pursuit of excellence is at the heart of good healthcare. In this edition of The Font we feature St Vincent's staff striving for something greater every day – whether it be through the highest standards of clinical care, research which explores the power of art to give comfort, new technology to reach our patients in country Victoria, or a lifetime's dedication to the needs of the poor and marginalised.

# True excellence is simply not possible without a collaborative team effort.

True excellence is simply not possible without a collaborative team effort. As an example, it's hard to go past the story of Peter Walsh. In March 2011 St Vincent's performed Australia's first hand transplant for Peter. It was the culmination of months of planning by a large multidisciplinary team of specialists in transplant medicine, surgery, mental health, rehabilitation, and more. Five years on, the results are clear, as you will learn on page 4.

The skill and dedication of our people is just one part of the equation. It is the courage of our patients that spurs us on. Without Peter Walsh's persistence, the hand transplant

would not have been possible, nor would it have been a success. Peter's commitment has allowed him to reclaim his independence, with benefits to himself, his family, and the community at large.

The story of Travis and Ellie Abel is equally inspiring. When Travis was diagnosed with leukaemia just days after their wedding in 2012, having a child must have seemed a distant hope. Thanks to their spirit and our cancer care, intensive care, and rehabilitation teams, Travis and Ellie were able to look to the future once again. The embodiment of their hope came in the form of baby Sophia, who you will meet on page 3.

Stories like these are what makes healthcare the most rewarding of vocations. When we work together, we can save lives, change lives, and in the very best of cases, make new life possible.

Please enjoy this edition of the Font.

belleice

Susan O'Neill
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

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Some things never change

We have a new website

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.

enVision2025 is the roadmap for how SVHA will deliver on its mission over the coming decade, identifying priorities for the Group and its divisions.

Our ambitions and our commitment to the people we serve is embodied in enVision2025's three themes:

- Serving something greater
- Seeing something greater
- Striving for something greater

In each issue of The Font we will bring you stories of the ways St Vincent's Melbourne is serving, seeing and striving for something greater as we work towards the shared goals of enVision2025.





# Thanks for never giving up

'For better or for worse.' When they say their marriage vows, no bride and groom would expect the stark reality to hit within days. But that's how the cards fell for Travis and Ellie.

The Abels were married in 2012, and within a few days Travis fell severely ill and was admitted to St Vincent's Hospital needing urgent treatment. Doctors diagnosed leukaemia, and to make matters worse, the severe symptoms of the blood cancer had also led Travis to have a stroke.

Unable to speak, paralysed on the right side, and battling cancer, Travis was in a bad way. Several times, waiting by his side in ICU, Ellie was told to say her final goodbyes. It was a whirlwind of hope, fear, technology, medication, farewells, tears and sheer determination.

'They would come and check on you...that in itself made those bad days a little bit better because you know you have that support.'

Travis survived months of extensive treatment in various wards of our hospital including ICU, the Cancer Centre, Rehabilitation and others. Travis had to learn how to walk and talk, and even how to eat, again. After more than two years of treatment, Travis was discharged late last year.

In March he came back to St Vincent's for his first six-monthly check-up, not just with his wife Ellie, but also with their 7-week-old daughter Sophia.

The check-up went well, with doctors confirming that Travis is certainly on the mend despite the lingering physical disabilities caused by the stroke.

Travis still struggles to speak, but wanted to say thank you to all the medical staff and nurses who cared for him during his treatment.

'Words can't describe it,' he said, looking at his wife, waiting for Ellie to elaborate.

'They were there for you in those worst nights,' Ellie said, stepping into the verbal breach with practiced ease. 'They would come and check on you... that in itself made those bad days a little bit better because you know you have that support.'

'I remember one of the surgeons one night he came into the room and he said: 'we're in a bit of strife' and I must not have taken it very well, he came and hugged me...and you don't get that much from surgeons.'

'Thank you for never giving up.'

Visit our YouTube channel to meet Travis and Ellie and hear their story http://youtu.be/EtHHQvKDfuA

Please help St Vincent's to Strive for Something Greater by making a donation at www.stvfoundation.org.au/ donate or call 03 9231 3365.



'WOW! We remember you both very well. A young couple determined to not let ANYTHING beat you both or keep you down. Congratulations on your gorgeous little Sophia! This has made our day! Best wishes, Team Rehab

# Plumber gives new life a high five

Five years after making headlines for receiving a hand transplant, Cobden man Peter Walsh takes pleasure in the simple things. He maintains the local cricket pitch and plays bowls regularly.

Peter, known to everyone including his small army of grandkids as 'Plumber'. after his trade, lost both hands and both feet to a devastating infection that almost took his life. But although he survived the infection, he says it was the transplant that really gave him back his life.

'It took about three years before I could do everything I can do now. It's the day-to-day things that have made the biggest difference, like being able to shave or drive or put on my prosthetic legs,' Peter says.

It's been a gradual process. Just days after the landmark surgery, rehabilitation began, led by Senior Hand Therapist Katie Anjou. At six weeks Peter was able to hold and drink from a cup for the first time in four years. At six months he was able to write a thank you letter to the donor's family.

In the ground breaking nine-hour operation at St Vincent's Melbourne, Peter became the first Australian to receive a hand transplant and, at 65, the oldest person in the world to get a new hand and hope of a better life. There were many in the international medical community who were sceptical about the prospects of a hand transplant in someone of Peter's age. Lead surgeon Professor Wayne Morrison says Peter's unique needs and motivation made his case compelling.

'In Plumber's case, his loss of independence had been so significant that any kind of benefit was going to have a huge positive impact on his life.'

Did Peter have any doubts?

'I knew it was going to work. I was looking forward, not looking back,' he says.

It's an outlook that has stood Peter in good stead in the years since the surgery. He sees his surgeons and doctors every few months, and continues physical rehabilitation at home and with a hand therapist in Warrnambool.

The anti-rejection medications he takes every day can take a heavy toll on the body but transplant physician Professor Karen Dwyer says Peter has tolerated the medications incredibly well.

'Peter is just remarkable, he's a very robust fellow. He is very active and independent, he is certainly making the most of it.'

For Peter, the answer to what keeps him motivated is as simple as it is obvious. 'I want to live.'

And live he does.

Please support St Vincent's research and innovation by making a donation at www. stvfoundation.org.au/donate or call 03 9231 3365.



Days after surgery Peter began rehabilitation



Six weeks after surgery Peter was able to drink from a cup, the first time in four years



Ten weeks after surgery

Peter was able to write a thank you letter to the donor's family

Photo courtesy of the Herald Sun. Photographer Jay Town.



They make them tough in Cobden.

Marie White

Amazing how talented the surgeons at St V's are... Bless them all!

Joanne Sheridan Smyth

Sensational! What a team and what an achievement.

Marcelle Mogg

Looking good Plumber. Charles Gore







### Superlatives mark visionary's silver anniversary

There wasn't a dry eye in the house when St Vincent's farewelled Chief Social Worker Sonia Posenelli and celebrated the extraordinary legacy of her 25 years in the post.

In the weeks leading up to Sonia's retirement in April, the Social Work department resembled a florist as colleagues paid tribute to one of St Vincent's most beloved staff.

'The words people use when they talk about Sonia speak volumes about the respect and affection people have for her – words like iconic, visionary, optimistic, creative, courageous, loyal, generous, wise, resourceful, and persistent,' says Fiona McKinnon, says Fiona McKinnon, who runs St Vincent's Allied Health and Community Programs.

'SVHA asks all of its staff to serve something greater, and Sonia has done exactly that for 25 years. She has always recognised the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged people, and proactively sought out opportunities to support these people.'

During her time at St Vincent's, Sonia worked in partnership with the Aboriginal community to develop one of Victoria's first Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer program, was pivotal to the establishment of The Cottage for unwell homeless people, has led pioneering work to help hospitals identify and respond to elder abuse, and much more.





Sonia, it was an absolute honour and delight to work with you over many years at St V's. I absolutely valued your integral commitment to so many marginalised people who passed through the doors of St V's, and your ability to gently educate staff to embrace your values.

Juliet Gavens

Congratulations Sonia on reaching such a wonderful milestone. You have been an inspiring leader and mentor and will be missed far and wide. All the very best for the next stage.

Mandy Strange

Thanks for everything you have done for The Cottage and St V's Sonia, you will be missed.

Byron Lazarides

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence Report recently recognised the Social Work team's elder abuse framework, proposing that other hospitals and aged care services adopt the St Vincent's approach.

Sonia says it has been a privilege to be part of the St Vincent's family and to lead the Social Work and Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer teams.

'Whatever we have achieved has been done together - a team effort, a shared vision and commitment,' she says.

'Right across St Vincent's I have had the pleasure of working with people who simply make your day because of how they respond, come to the party with ideas and help, or because they share a laugh. Pound for pound, this organisation has an abundance of outstanding role models. I am fortunate indeed to have been a part of the St Vincent's community and the work we do.'

Left: Sonia Posenelli with St Vincent's first social worker Mariorie Awburn and other social workers in 1993.



# Art paints a picture of a life well lived

An innovative research project, using art to trigger memories and spark conversation, is reinvigorating dementia patients.

Cognitive impairment makes communication difficult for these patients, but social worker Danielle Moss and art curator Monique Silk have discovered that art has an amazing ability to elicit strong feelings in all people. Even for patients who may not know what day it is, art can trigger emotions, and memories and lead to surprising conversations.

With the support of research mentor Dr Carrie Lethborg,
Monique and Danielle are using the St Vincent's art collection to stimulate conversation with patients with cognitive impairment. St Vincent's is home to Australia's largest art collection at a public hospital with over 1,000 works, providing a unique environment to explore the intersection of health and art.

Above: Dr Carrie Lethborg (left) and Danielle Moss

'This study came about through a discussion with our Mission team about how we can use the extensive art collection at St Vincent's as part of patient care,' Danielle says about her first foray into research, under the mentorship of Dr Lethborg.

Five pieces were selected from the St Vincent's collection and art curator Monique Silk then spent time with each patient, guiding them through a viewing of each artwork. The pieces incorporated different art styles or themes, including landscape, portrait and Aboriginal abstract..

Conversation around each artwork flowed, but interestingly it was the patient leading the discussion. At the session conclusion, they were invited to choose their favourite artwork and were given a copy to keep.

'One of the things we measured is engagement through non-verbal and verbal cues,' Carrie says. 'We found that art does increase engagement in these patients. 'The transcripts show that paintings trigger reminiscence. For example there is one painting of the MCG that triggered memories in everyone. Most participants talked about their experiences of going to the MCG or of living in Melbourne.

'Another picture of a sunny holiday setting prompted one patient to speak about his brother living in Queensland. What's impressive is that it's hard to ask these patients where they are, how they are feeling and about their family. But when an image is introduced it triggers memories and all of a sudden you can engage and find out more about them.'

# 'This study is unique in bringing art to the bedside of hospital patients as a tool for engagement.'

What was surprising for family members to see was the knowledge and willingness with which patients spoke about art.

'What we found was that aesthetic preference in art is stable over time. Patients with cognitive impairment are very open to talking about what they like or don't like about a particular artwork,' Danielle says. 'This study is unique in bringing art to the bedside of hospital patients as a tool for engagement'.

This study is an example of the powerful work that can be achieved when staff with a range of skills are brought together with a research expert to improve patient care. 'The study needed to involve both clinicians and someone who was very knowledgeable about art. Having an art curator on staff made it possible,' Carrie says.

Support by the St Vincent's Research Endowment Fund and The Andrews Foundation has inspired some big picture ideas about other ways the art collection might be used in patient care. 'We have such an amazing art collection here and it gives us a unique opportunity to have a discussion about what else we can do. Now it's time to get creative,' says Carrie.



#### Meet our people



'I started working at St Vincent's two months ago as a graduate nurse. Before I came here, starting as a graduate nurse was a daunting idea but it really has been a positive experience. I honestly couldn't have felt by all of my new colleagues.'

Kellie Christiansen, **Graduate Registered Nurse** 



'I love working at St Vincent's because I get to provide Aboriginal patients. It has also given me the chance to be involved in Aboriginal cancer Indigenous Cancer Conference in Brisbane next month.'

Faye Halatanu, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer



## St Vincent's Young Adult Complex Disability Service

From child to adult - coming of age is a significant celebration. And vet there's a unique group of young adults for whom the transition carries very little to celebrate.

Nathan Slachter was diagnosed with cerebral palsy as a child. Growing up, Nathan enjoyed good support for his disability, but this all changed when he turned 18 and graduated to the adult health system.

Nathan soon discovered that the adult system wasn't equipped to cater for the needs of young adult patients.

In recognition of this unique need, a pilot project was launched in 2004 at St Vincent's to specifically help young adults with complex physical disabilities move into adult healthcare.

In 2006, the pilot project became an ongoing state-wide service provided by St Vincent's and is called the Young Adult Complex Disability Service.

Typically under this program, a combination of allied health and medical staff work together to identify goals for the young adult patient and help them achieve those goals.

One of Nathan's goals when he joined the program was to improve his confidence and physical ability so that he is able to go to a local gym rather than come to the hospital to exercise regularly.

'After a 12 week physical exercise program here at St Vincent's, we facilitated his transition to the local gym of his choice,' says Ray Lobo. one of the program's physiotherapists. 'Nathan has achieved his goal of independently attending his local gym.'

'As a result of the gym program, he is also able to walk longer distances without requiring rest and feels better about his general health.'

Nathan says the gym program has helped him enormously and he is grateful to all the St Vincent's staff for their help.

'I feel so good and am finding the benefits astronomical,' the 23 year-old says.

#### Nathan says the gym program has helped him enormously.

'If every hospital implemented this, it would change a lot of lives and we probably wouldn't have the obesity rates and health risks that we do have.'

Cerebral palsy is a permanent life-long disease that affects a person's ability to move, and occurs when the developing brain is damaged either during pregnancy or shortly after birth.

Above: Nathan Slacther, pictured with St Vincent's physiotherapist Ray Lobo.

## Technology makes the road to

## recovery easier



Benalla resident Anna Bogdal is delighted she no longer needs to spend hours travelling to and from St Vincent's for hospital appointments following a hip replacement.

Thanks to an innovative new telehealth program being piloted at St Vincent's, Anna can now speak to her physiotherapist from the comfort of her own home, with little more than Skype and an internet connection.

'The trip from Benalla to Melbourne is three hours each way. Driving all that way...would be very difficult to manage,' Anna says. 'The telehealth appointment means I can still see my physiotherapist face-to-face and discuss any issues I'm having.'

St Vincent's performs over 700 joint replacements a year, and many patients come from regional and rural Victoria, leading to significant travel for post-operative reviews.

As part of a Workforce Innovation Grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), physiotherapists have been offering eligible patients the option of a video consultation for reviews more than six months post-surgery.

Physiotherapist Stephanie Carroll says telehealth improves patient access to care.

'It means less travel, less time off work and reduced costs associated with transport for patients,' says Stephanie. 'Through the video link, we are able to perform a visual assessment and provide the same quality of care they would receive with traditional face-to-face appointments.'

Stephanie reports that outcomes from the telehealth project have been very positive for patients and our hospital.

'The feedback is clear; 100 per cent of telehealth patients were happy with the service and would utilise it again,' says Stephanie.



### A special bond of language

visiting the hospital for a variety of conditions for many years.

But despite the psoriasis, the

Speaking to Mr Ong with the

'Kim is very good – she is Mr Ong says.

He and Kim have much in

grateful for what the hospital has the day I die.'

showing their gratitude for the





# Opera in the market

On one special night each summer, when dusk falls in Melbourne, lovers of fine music and food converge upon the Queen Victoria Market for a night to remember.

The idea for Opera in the Market was sparked by an impromptu rendition of Verdi and Mozart by former Victoria State Opera performers Margot and Graeme Wall as they strolled up the K Shed on a non-market day in 1998. The raked floor and high vaulted ceiling provided the acoustics to rival any concert hall - and of course the iconic market is THE place for food.

The evening is not only about enjoying sublime performances from Teddy Tahu Rhodes, Greta Bradman, Shanul Sharma and concert pianist Stefan Cassomenos. It's about raising vital funds for the work of St Vincent's.

Over the years the generosity of Opera in the Market patrons has helped St Vincent's build Stage 1 of the Cancer Centre. Last year, patrons raised funds towards Stage 2 of the development which will bring talented research teams into the heart of the clinical care environment.

This year's event was a smash, exceeding its fundraising target of \$350,000, which will go towards developing and implementing new treatments and procedures for cardiovascular disease.

In an exciting and bold move St Vincent's is working to develop a new campus-wide approach to cardiovascular treatment, research and care. These funds will help the cardiovascular team take their excellence and innovation to the next level

St Vincent's Foundation would like to sincerely thank the many individuals and corporate partners who contribute to the success of the event and help to make this vision a reality.

If you are interested in further supporting St Vincent's vision for heart care, or another area of the hospital, please do not hesitate to contact St Vincent's Foundation on (03) 9231 3365.



A special thank you to our volunteers:

Jessica Burke, Rachel Ridley, Rebecca Tivendale, Donna-Marie Pascoe, Patricia Ng, Angela Livingstone, Jodie Li Mei Tham, Pinar Simsir, Elizabeth Chow, Phyl Halliday, Karisma McMahon, Katherine Ingram.



# A day at St Vincent's – specialist clinics

With over 96,000 appointments per year across 20 different medical and surgical specialties, St Vincent's Specialist Clinics are among the busiest areas of our hospital.

The clinics provide a gateway to the hospital for patients requiring elective surgery and ongoing chronic disease management. It's a place where our highly-skilled and enthusiastic nurses and clerical staff work closely with our specialist medical teams to provide the best care possible for our patients.















# Thinking Skills for Work -

#### improving the prospects for mental health patients

One of the key determinants of health is employment - and yet for people with a severe mental illness, employment can be difficult to secure and even harder to keep. Less than seven per cent of people with a severe mental illness have a job, further marginalising and excluding them from mainstream society.

St Vincent's Consulting Cognitive Neuropsychologist Professor Susan Rossell has recently led a team to complete an innovative pilot project, entitled 'Thinking Skills for Work', which aims to help people with mental health issues participate more effectively in the workforce.

'Challenges such as lower attention and concentration spans, slow information processing speed and poor short and long-term memory all contribute to difficulties in holding down regular employment,' says Prof Rossell.

St Vincent's has partnered with Clean Force, a division of Wise Employment, to pilot the new program, which uses cognitive remediation to improve skills like memory, attention and problem solving.

'The program assists participants to become more aware of how the challenges they face might affect their social or work environment, and aims to address these challenges in a workplace setting,' says Prof Rossell. A group of Clean Force employees received twelve weeks of training, involving practicing skills such as attention, executive function and memory. We then interviewed the participants who were very enthusiastic about the sessions. By participating they noticed improvement in all aspects of their thinking including social interaction and functioning in general. They found doing Thinking Skills for Work enjoyable and gave lots of examples of how it helped them day to day.

Paul Fraser, Manager of Clean Force, has been particularly happy with the project.

'Clean Force's involvement in Thinking Skills for Work has been really positive. In particular, the social skills and levels of vocational independence amongst the participants in the project have noticeably improved.'

'In particular, the social skills and levels of vocational independence amongst the participants in the project have noticeably improved.'

Above: Participants of the Thinking Skills for Work program.

St Vincent's Mental Health Services will be developing this pilot into a program that can take place in other workplaces and help people with a mental illness take a more active role and make the most of their potential in the workforce and the community.

St Vincent's is particularly grateful to the Mazda Foundation and State Trustees Australia Foundation who generously funded this project.





2016

TIME: 12.00 - 3.00pm Where: Fenix - 680 Victoria St, Richmond VIC 3121

Please purchase tickets here: http://www.trybooking.com/192137 and be quick! TICKETS ARE \$130PP AND INCLUDES A 2 COURSE MEAL, BEVERAGES, ENTERTAINMENT, GOODIE BAGS AND MORE!

THERE WILL BE A SILENT AUCTION PLUS GREAT PRIZES TO BE WON IN ALL PRICE RANGES.











#### Thank you from our patients

I want to sincerely thank all the wonderful staff at St Vincent's for the simply amazing job you do, day in and day out to people you've never met. You are special people who do a job that a lot of us simply cannot.

All the staff in every department, did such a great job on this occasion, and the last time I was in.

I was made to feel at ease and well looked after during both times in Hospital. Their experience and professionalism is to be commended on every level.

A very big Thank You from me and my family.

Julian Grudzien

Patients also show their appreciation for the wonderful treatment they have received by making a donation to St Vincent's Hospital.

To make a donation go to www.stvfoundation.org.au/ donate or call 03 9231 3365.



Dry July is on again - Save the Date! Please support St Vincent's and go dry this July to support adults living with cancer.



#### Some things never change

Ten former nurses who commenced their training at St Vincent's in 1956 recently came back to visit the hospital.

Jan Jelleff and her nine lifelong friends trained onsite at the hospital 60 years ago.

'My colleagues and I enjoyed treating the poorest people in Fitzroy and restoring them to good health. From what I understand that mission of St Vincent's hasn't changed at all,' said Jan.

#### We have a new website

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne has a new website, dedicated to giving patients, visitors and staff a new user experience.

Our new website introduces a new web brand to guide users to their online destination. The site makes it easy for visitors to find frequently viewed pages such as: Patients and Visitors, Our Services, Careers, Health Professionals, Research and Education.

The biggest improvement of the website is the ability to view the site

and social media feeds from all SVHM channels.

Go to www.svhm.org.au now, and we hope you enjoy all the new improvements.



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

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