

# The Font



ST VINCENT'S  
HOSPITAL  
MELBOURNE

*Inspired by  
You*



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## Message from the CEO

**At St Vincent's we are committed to excellence, continuous improvement and providing the community exceptional patient-driven care.**

Our nursing staff are a critical element in helping us achieve these goals. They are our largest professional staff group, and constant providers of holistic care to our patients when they are at their most fragile and vulnerable.

International Nurses Day was held last month and in this edition of the Font we celebrate and acknowledge the wonderful work that all our dedicated and hardworking St Vincent's nurses offer every day of the year.

The theme for International Nurses Day 2017 is Leading Change. It is a theme which I am proud to acknowledge our nurses live and breathe year in, year out. Through their actions they influence, lead and shape the future of healthcare in their quest to improve patient outcomes.

**'That drive for excellence, improvement and better patient outcomes can also be seen in research occurring across the campus.'**

That drive for excellence, improvement and better patient outcomes can also be seen in research occurring across the campus, such as the surgeons, researchers and collaborators using 3D printing technology to develop innovative ways to repair cartilage, bones and muscles.

The 'Biopen', which has recently received national media coverage, will use ink made from a patient's own stem cells to repair cartilage injuries – currently those patients have limited options, and end up facing a future that includes painful osteoarthritis. This treatment breakthrough highlights the life-changing opportunities that the BioFab3D facility is creating for patients.

St Vincent's and our collaborators are showing that we are at the forefront of the bio-engineering revolution as we continue to take steps to realise our vision for the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery.

Susan O'Neill  
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.

# Biopen tipped to be a 'game changer' in joint repair

St Vincent's surgeons and researchers are working together on a game changing 3D technological solution, which will prevent the onset of osteoarthritis in patients.

Collaborators at the ACMD BioFab facility here at St Vincent's have developed a 3D printer pen loaded with stem cell ink that can print live cells to repair damage to cartilage, bones and muscles.

Orthopaedic surgeon Claudia Di Bella says the 'Biopen' contains a gel made of stem cells taken from the patient before surgery.

'The pen prints a hydrogel that allows cells not just to survive but also increase in numbers and then make certain types of tissues, and in this case cartilage,' she said. 'We're printing cells of the patient, directly into the same person. 'The goal is to try and repair certain injuries like cartilage injuries that at the moment are impossible to repair completely.'

So far it has only been used on sheep but researchers hope it will one day be used to repair joints, muscles and tendons. The procedure could be particularly beneficial in treating young people with early symptoms, so as to slow down or prevent the onset of osteoarthritis.

The work is being done as part of a collaborative effort involving St Vincent's, the University of Melbourne and the University of Wollongong.

The process of commercialising the technology was already underway and Dr Di Bella said it was hoped human trials could be started within a year.



'It is a big game changer not simply for athletes, because obviously it would be [good] for pain relief and getting back to the normal activities,' Dr Di Bella said.

'In the big scheme of things if we decrease the number of patients that have osteoarthritis later in life that would incredibly affect the expenditure of the health budget.'

**To donate and support research such as this, please visit [www.stvfoundation.org.au/ACMD](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au/ACMD) or contact the Foundation Office on 03 9231 3365 for further information.**



Peter Choong @OPUSPFC

Dr Claudia Di Bella describing the Biopen on The Project in AusMedTech 2017 week



**Marguerita Davidson**  
Patient at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

'I'm from Traralgon in country Victoria and I have found my stay at St Vincent's exceptional. The staff have been absolutely excellent and everyone takes their time to get to know you which is really nice. All the nurses and the cleaners know your name and they acknowledge you every morning with a cheery smile.'

# The expanding role of clinical nursing leaders

As the most constant and visible source of care in a hospital setting, nurses are without doubt key to positive patient outcomes. Nurses are in the unique position to develop a relationship with the patient, as well as their family or carer, as they are present at all times through a patient's stay.

'Nurses see patients at their most fragile and most vulnerable,' says Deanne Riddington, St Vincent's Director of Nursing Education.

'Nurses will know if an agitated patient is distressed because of a particular diagnosis or because there is no one at home caring for their pet.'

'The evolution of what an average nurse does has changed dramatically over the years compared to when I commenced my training.'

Deanne believes that the role of nurses will continue to evolve with contemporary practice and offer prospects for further development of their scope of practice.

Deanne is excited about the future of clinical development for nurses, and believes that St Vincent's is gaining momentum in clinical leadership opportunities for nurses. Clinical leader roles in nursing are a growing field, with nurse practitioners, clinical nurse consultants and clinical nurse specialists leading care around the health service.

'There are now many nurses who want to be clinical leaders in their field. From a clinical perspective, the clinical leaders in nursing are the role models for all the staff in our developmental programs.'

'All nurses, from graduates to nurse practitioners, need role models in their units who consistently nurse to a best practice standard, and also initiate and lead best practice,' Deanne says.



'For those that want to live and breathe clinical leadership, it's role models that they seek. At St Vincent's our role models are across all our campuses and represent our different cultures and age groups.'

## Meet St Vincent's newest Nurse Practitioner



As St Vincent's first Aged Care Nurse Practitioner (ACNP), Sarah Kendall joins a select group of five Nurse Practitioners across the SVHM health service.

The role of Nurse Practitioner is a relatively new development in Australia, but has been gathering momentum over the last 10 to 15 years, with over 1,200 Nurse Practitioners now involved in a wide range of specialties and practice settings.

As an Aged Care Nurse Practitioner, Sarah is comprehensively trained within the Geriatric Medical Team to identify and address health concerns within the older person population. Her comprises assessment, examination, diagnosis and management.

Sarah undertook her initial nursing training at St Vincent's, commencing in 1981, and spent many years working in Australia and overseas in a variety of roles before settling back at St Vincent's in 2012. Sarah now works in HIP Complex Care Services, in a multidisciplinary team providing community based support to older people with complex health care and social needs, and in a Nurse Practitioner role in the Pain Clinic for Older People.

'In HIP I see clients that are considered at high risk of being re-admitted,' Sarah says. 'I work with the Care Coordinator, visiting them at home to enable them to remain in the community for treatment where appropriate to do so.'

As well as her advanced clinical role, being a Nurse Practitioner means Sarah has a number of other responsibilities.

'I am active in research, mentor other nurses to further their clinical skills and promote the Nurse Practitioner role among nurses,' Sarah says.

The role of Aged Care Nurse Practitioner is a new role for St Vincent's, and one that is evolving across Victoria, with only 27 Aged Care Nurse Practitioners in Victoria, mostly in regional areas.

The role of an Aged Care Nurse Practitioner is providing advanced evidence based nursing care to the older members of our society – and an additional flexible way of supporting St Vincent's patients to remain well and at home, where most prefer to be.



**‘Working in Emergency, there are times of quite extreme emotions, ranging from fear, sorrow as well as a lot of joy and laughter.’**

## 40 years of nursing in St Vincent’s ED

After a career spanning 47 years, with 40 of those in the St Vincent’s Emergency Department, nurse Cathy Duncan is retiring.

Cathy began her training at St Vincent’s in 1970, when trainee nurses lived on site in the Aikenhead Building.

‘I loved it from the moment I started,’ Cathy says. ‘It was quite strict in those days. We had to be in by 10pm and the sisters rigorously controlled our lives, but we had a lot of fun.’

As she contemplates leaving the workplace that has been such a big part of her life for so many years, Cathy has been doing a fair amount of reminiscing.

‘Working in Emergency, there are times of quite extreme emotions, ranging from fear, sorrow as well as a lot of joy and laughter,’ Cathy says.

Of the thousands of shifts Cathy worked during her time in ED, one that stands out the most, for terrible reasons, was the evening of Sunday, 9 August 1987 when nine people were killed by an armed gunman on Hoddle Street.

‘For me the night of the Hoddle Street Massacre was the night that Melbourne lost its innocence,’ Cathy says. ‘I remember one of our young doctors came in and threw himself on the bed in the ED and said “I’ve been shot!” We were ready for a crisis... we coped well with what we got, which was around 10 to 12 people, all with just two doctors and three nurses.’

‘St Vincent’s is a place I have always been proud to work in. The sisters are no longer here but they have left an incredible legacy of caring and equality’

Thank you Cathy for your wonderful service and we wish you a retirement filled with joy and happiness.

## Going Dry in July for cancer care



For patients like Steven, who has been receiving treatment at St Vincent’s for Leukaemia for five months, the proceeds from Dry July help make their stay just a little bit more comfortable.

Dry July encourages people to give up alcohol for the month of July, raising money to improve the wellbeing of adults living with cancer.

Over the last four years \$315,000 has been raised to fund a range of items, including an ice making machine. Steven is just one of many patients who benefits from the simple but effective use of the ice.

‘Chemotherapy leaves me feeling a little worse for wear because it is hitting my immune system, meaning I am vulnerable to all sorts of infections and illness,’ Steven says. ‘But the machine uses filtered water so it’s that bit safer for someone in my position. Just sucking on the ice makes my mouth ulcers feel better too.’

These types of items cannot be purchased using government funds as they are for patient comfort. Such items are seen as invaluable to ‘keeping up spirits’ and reducing the discomfort of treatments such as chemotherapy.

Another benefit of sucking on ice is that the reduced oral capillary action safeguards the delicate tissues from damage resulting from the treatment – so simple and yet so effective.

‘Feeling a bit better when treatment is hard going means I can have a better time during family visits and bounce back on my non-treatment days quicker,’ Steven says. ‘I’m grateful to Dry July and everyone who has helped make this ice making machine available for all of us to use.’

So why not help people like Steven get through their cancer treatments while giving yourself the gift of feeling clearer and brighter for an alcohol free month?

**Sign up now!**

[dryjuly.com/beneficiaries/stvincentshospitalmelbourne](http://dryjuly.com/beneficiaries/stvincentshospitalmelbourne)

For more information please contact the Foundation office on 03 9231 3365 or visit [www.stvfoundation.org.au](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au)

## It's a wrap!

# Running for a reason



A much-needed extra pair of cardiac forceps for theatre was enough to motivate 'Operating Suite on the Run' to lead the team fundraising charge at the fifth annual Scrubs Run at Princes Park.

Operating Suite on the Run were just one of 56 teams and over 600 staff, relatives, patients and friends who rallied together to run for a reason, raising over \$34,000 for their nominated hospital departments, ultimately making a difference in the lives of our patients and reflecting the community spirit of St Vincent's.

It was wonderful to see a multi-generational approach from the Happy Feet for Health team who got the whole family involved. Rachelle and her grandfather were part of the team, raising over \$1,200 to assist St Vincent's Mental Health projects.

Thank you to all who participated, donated and volunteered. Congratulations must go to Sr Maryanne Confoy, who was the highest individual fundraiser for the second year running.

A big thank you to our generous event partners, **Zouki Café** and **13Cabs**, event supporters, **Smartsalary**, **Lorna Jane Australia** and **Active Feet**, who along with our community partners **Collingwood Football Club**, helped us make a real difference – we could not have done it without you!

The annual Scrubs Run would not happen without the wonderful support of our volunteers. Over 50 people selflessly gave their time and energy to pack registration goodie bags, help set up and pack up on the day, run the registration desk and marshal around the course to make sure participants were on the right track.

Volunteer team leader Sonia played a pivotal role coordination our registration teams.

'Not only was it great fun, it was actually really nice to feel part of the team. There was such great camaraderie as we all worked towards the same purpose. It's really rewarding being involved with St Vincent's events,' Sonia said.

The contribution of our volunteers is gratefully received and ensures that even more funds can support patient care.

**To donate contact Foundation**

**T: (03) 9231 3365**

**W: [www.stvfoundation.org.au](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au)**

**Race results for runners [www.tomatotiming.racetecresults.com](http://www.tomatotiming.racetecresults.com)**



Videos and photos of the day can be found at our Facebook page @StVincentsHospitalMelb



# Celebrating Australia's first Intensive Care Unit



In the early 1960s a Polio epidemic in Victoria left many patients with respiratory failure and in need of medium to long term ventilation. At the same time, the development of modern anaesthesia and blood transfusion techniques led to significant growth in surgery. Such surgery, in particular open heart surgery, required extended Recovery Room Care and in some cases, mechanical ventilation.

Both of these emerging needs led St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne to create Australia's Intensive Care Unit (ICU), which admitted its first patient in November 1961.

**ICU is a highly specialised environment where healthcare professionals work together to address every aspect of the patient's needs.**

In 1995, a 16 bed ICU was commissioned and led the way with new therapies such as:

- Haemofiltration, an external filtration process that removes impurities from a patient's blood.
- Plasmapheresis, where blood plasma is removed from donated blood and the remaining red blood cells returned to the donor.
- ECMO, in which cardiac and respiratory support oxygen is delivered to patients whose heart and lungs can no longer function independently
- High frequency oscillation which is a way to manage patients with severe lung failure.

Today, the St Vincent's ICU receives over 1,600 admissions each year, with an average stay of 2-3 days. The ICU Unit cares for patients who frequently require machines to support their lungs, heart and kidneys as well as multiple specific medications and very close monitoring.

ICU is a highly specialised environment where healthcare professionals work together to address every aspect of the patient's needs with patient to nurse ratio is 1:1. Our highly skilled intensivists and nurses see patients with a range of conditions, including serious infections, heart or lung problems, traumatic injuries or recovery from major operations such as heart and brain surgery.

St Vincent's End of Financial Year Appeal aims to ensure we can continue to provide the best technology and latest equipment for our high needs patients. We are seeking your help to raise \$50,000 to purchase an Artic Sun Temperature Management system. This piece of life saving piece of equipment is purpose-built for patients within six hours of their cardiac arrest to help give them the best chance of recovery.

**For further details about supporting our ICU Appeal, please visit [www.stvfoundation.org.au/ICUtaxappeal](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au/ICUtaxappeal) or contact Foundation on 03 9231 3365.**

 **1,600**

admissions to the St Vincent's ICU each year.

 **2-3 day**

average stay for each admission.

 **1:1**

patient to nurse ratio in the ICU.

# International Nurses Day: 12 May



**Melissa Evans**  
Acting Chief  
Nursing Officer

'St Vincent's nurses are central to our core mission of delivering exceptional and innovative care to our patients and their families each and everyday. Thank you to all of our wonderful nurses for everything that they do for our patients.'



**Clinton Cummins**  
Executive Director  
Performance Improvement

'Our nurses are best placed to understand our patients' needs and in turn improve patient care through innovation. We need to provide our nurses with a voice and the opportunity to have a say in how we provide patient care.'



**Angela Nolan**  
Executive Director  
Acute Services

'Leading change requires courage, determination and an unwavering passion for 'the cause' - qualities that St Vincent's nurses have in abundance! Thank you to all our nurses who, every day, improve life outcomes for patients and their families.'



## Introducing the Nurses Fund

Every day our nurses across St Vincent's go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure our patients are provided with outstanding care. It is essential that we continue to support our 2,268 nurses in their careers to ensure the best possible care continues at St Vincent's.

This year, St Vincent's has launched a Nurses Fund. We are hoping to create funding for educational opportunities to support our Nurses with ongoing clinical training and

development. The fund will assist with tertiary scholarships so that our nurses can continue to provide the highest level of care at St Vincent's.

**Say thank you to our exceptional nurses and support St Vincent's Nurses Fund. Please visit [www.stvfoundation.org.au/nursesfund](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au/nursesfund) or contact the Foundation Office on 03 9231 3365.**





**Claire Ristovski**  
General Manager  
Specialist Services

‘With representation from the coal face of care delivery through to Executive levels, Nurses have the responsibility to influence, lead and direct change positively impacting the Profession of Nursing and the standard of care delivery to our patients.’



**Kirsten Rodger**  
General Manager  
Cancer & Diagnostics

‘From Florence Nightingale to contemporary nursing, at the frontline of delivering care, nurses play a crucial role in advocating and creating change to improve outcomes for our patients.’



**Fran Timmons**  
Director of Nursing  
Mental Health

‘Nurses take what they learn and translate that into practice which influences patient outcomes, the development of systems, policy and strategy which creates inspiration, and in doing so they demonstrate the true meaning of leading.’



**Steve Connor**  
Patient at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

‘I was unconscious when I came here and when I woke up I remember being very difficult because I wanted to get out. The nurses have copped my bad attitude, but they kept up with me and stayed relentlessly caring. I came to see reason and gladly I stayed. The nurses have been wonderful. Their sense of humour is just priceless.’



**Ann Howarth**  
Patient at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

‘I'm from Warrnambool and was flown to St Vincent's a few weeks ago with an illness that made it difficult for me to breath. It was pretty scary. I had an operation straight away and am having a good, but long recovery. I just want to say that I have never experienced such high-level of care, and couldn't have wished for better doctors or nurses.’

## Slater and Gordon Tour St Vincent's Mesothelioma research facilities



Legal firm Slater and Gordon has made a generous grant of \$25,000 to fund research to explore a major gap in the treatment of aggressive mesothelioma, which could lead to new outcomes for patients.

Representatives of Slater and Gordon's Asbestos Practice Group toured the St Vincent's research facilities recently and met with the research team led by Dr Matthew Conron, Director of Respiratory Medicine, to hear directly about how the funds would be used.

St Vincent's is one of the few locations in Victoria where this research can be done in house.

'We're going to be genetically analysing 30 cases of mesothelioma from the St Vincent's 'Tumour Bank' in the pathology archive, to identify recurring mutations,' Dr Conron said.

'We've noticed a major gap in treatment of mesothelioma, especially with the more aggressive sarcomatoid variant, where we believe the tumour may be 'addicted' to a specific gene mutation, which acts as a driver of the tumour's growth.

'Our research project aims to map out the landscape for larger studies of this condition and will hopefully allow for the development of effective treatments and more accurate diagnosis.'

Slater and Gordon representatives were given a tour of the pathology lab by Senior Anatomical Pathologist, Dr Vivek Rathi, who illustrated the process that the genetic analysis would take. Senior Anatomical Pathologist, A/Prof Prue Russell, provided detailed explanation of the histological process in this analysis and Director of Surgical Oncology, A/Prof Gavin Wright, provided an overview on the treatment outcomes that the research will enable.

Dr Conron said that Slater and Gordon's support combined with St Vincent's unique facilities provides an ideal opportunity to undertake a study of this nature into mesothelioma.

'Slater and Gordon's support is crucial in enabling the first steps to be taken to improve our genetic understanding of mesothelioma.

'Our tumour bank is a unique resource to undertake this research and alongside the recent addition of the Ion Torrent Personal Genome Machine means that St Vincent's is one of the few locations in Victoria where we can undertake extensive genetic analysis in house.

'This research funded by Slater and Gordon has the potential to provide new outcomes for mesothelioma patients.'

**If you would like to speak to someone about how to fund medical research of this nature, please contact St Vincent's Foundation on 03 9231 3365.**



### Honouring Vera

Douglas Newberry, a generous donor to St Vincent's Hospital, has made it his mission to honour the memory of his wife Vera, who dedicated 40 years of her working life at the hospital.

Vera loved people and the different roles which she held over the years. She always had a smile and a willingness to help others. Vera often dropped by the dialysis unit to help a couple of women with their crocheting

to pass the time. Over the years Doug also helped in an unofficial way and met many staff and patients. He was always impressed with the friendliness of the staff.

Vera died in unexpected circumstances while on a bike tour in Tasmania with the Catholic Bush Walking Club towards the end of her career. Posthumously, she was presented with a beautiful silver

## A Prestigious Award for Outstanding Service



**Dr John Moloney has been recognised for his outstanding contribution during the Black Saturday bushfire emergency with a National Emergency Medal. After eight years, it was a belated but richly deserved recognition.**

Black Saturday was the worst bushfire in Australian history. 173 lives were lost, over 1,800 homes were destroyed and entire townships were destroyed.

On that fateful day, Dr John Moloney was the acting Field Emergency Medical Officer (FEMO), a state-wide program hosted at St Vincent's. John, whose day job is Head of Trauma Anaesthesia at The Alfred Hospital, was called to the ominously named 'casualty collecting post' at the station shared by the CFA and Ambulance Victoria at Diamond Creek.

His role on that awful day was to manage the front line medical response.

'People were being brought down from the hills, suffering major burns, minor burns, smoke inhalation and eye problems,' John says. 'One was dead on arrival. They were coming in police cars, by ambulance and by private cars.'

John's role wasn't just to assess and treat people onsite, but to organise how and where they would be treated. He coordinated medical and clinical advice to ambulance services and patients, liaised with the Health Commander to work out which hospital to send patients, and managed health and medical volunteers.

John was one of six FEMO officers called on that day. But his dedication didn't just stop after Black Saturday. In the following weeks, John tirelessly continued to provide basic health care to the local communities affected by the fires.

Ambulance Victoria nominated John for a National Emergency Medal to ensure his outstanding contribution did not go unnoticed. The National Emergency Medal is awarded by the Governor General to recognise people who provide sustained service during nationally significant emergencies.

John was recognised for his sustained contribution in selflessly protecting the lives and property of others in direct response to this tragic national emergency.

Above: Dr John Moloney with his family after accepting the National Emergency Medal

platter for her years of service and Doug holds it very dear. Recently, Doug joined the St Vincent's Foundation staff for an historical walking tour on the anniversary of Vera's passing and shared her love of the hospital.

Doug believes in giving from the heart to continue the traditions of St Vincent's. His generosity over the past seven years has benefited our programs for The Cottage, Mission and pastoral care.

An interest in history and first-hand knowledge of St Vincent's gives Doug the confidence that he is helping to build on strong foundations. Doug has included a gift in his Will, continuing the tradition of giving. He understands the need for changes and 'keeping an eye on the end game – caring for people.'

We are honoured by Vera's loyal service and Doug's generosity.

**If you would like to inquire about including a gift in your Will please contact Sue Worland, Bequests Officer of St Vincent's Foundation, on 03 9231 3363 or email [sue.worland@svha.org.au](mailto:sue.worland@svha.org.au)**

Far left: The painting of the North Flinders' Ranges was given by Douglas and his daughter Allison as it was one of Vera's favourite areas to bush walk and photograph.

# Queensland Angels

The St Vincent's Foundation is delighted to announce a three year pledge of \$150,000 towards the development of a Systemic Sclerosis (Scleroderma) Disease Activity Index by a Brisbane couple who wish to remain anonymous and have also signed up to the registry.

The generosity of this donation will significantly assist with costs to fund the position of Dr Laura Ross, a new Scleroderma Research Fellow at St Vincent's. It will also assist with a biostatistician and other survey costs.

Dr Ross is in her final year of advanced training in rheumatology and is currently working with Dr Wendy Stevens in the specialist Scleroderma Clinic at St Vincent's.

Dr Ross has commenced her PhD under the supervision of Dr Mandy Nikpour and will develop the activity index to measure a patient's disease activity at a given time point using clinical features of the disease as well as investigation results.

**The generosity of this donation will significantly assist with costs to fund the position of Dr Laura Ross, a new Scleroderma Research Fellow at St Vincent's.**

Activity indices have been developed in other rheumatological conditions and are widely used to direct treatment decisions to times of greater disease activity. In other conditions targeting therapy in this way has been shown to improve long term outcomes. The Activity Index will also be used in clinical trials to help develop new therapies for scleroderma.

This project will further ASIG's international collaboration both with the Scleroderma Clinical Trials Consortium (SCTC) and the Canadian Scleroderma

Research Group (CSRG) and could not have been achieved without the financial support of this generous Brisbane couple.

**If you would like to further build on the generosity of our Queensland Angels and support St Vincent's work in this area, please contact the Foundation on (03) 9231 3365 or [www.stvfoundation.org.au/donate](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au/donate)**



**Christian Kerr**  
Patient at St Vincent's  
Hospital Melbourne

'What really stood out to me was the grace under pressure of the nursing staff and what wonderful communicators they were. Everybody knows how the public health system is under stress, and that there are so many competing demands on the staff, but the nurses approach everything with good humour and they seem to find time to build relationships with you. Their dedication is quite remarkable.'

# The Good Samaritan Fund gets 'appy



**Kaela Salmond is one of St Vincent's dedicated Speech Pathologists and works closely with her patient Jason Jacenko through the Community Rehabilitation Centre.**

After experiencing a stroke, young tattoo artist Jason Jacenko was left with significant language impairment issues and right arm weakness. This speech impairment has impacted his ability to easily communicate with others.

Kaela Salmond, a dedicated Speech Pathologist at St Vincent's, works closely with Jason through the Community Rehabilitation Centre.

Despite extensive speech pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy sessions over a number of years to improve his functional abilities, Kaela felt that setting Jason up with his own tailored communication system would vastly improve his road to recovery, well-being and enjoyment of life.

Kaela put forward an application to the St Vincent's Good Samaritan Fund to purchase an iPad and the app Proloquo2go for Jason to carry with him as his "voice". The fully programmable app allows Jason to strike up conversations, ask questions and share his interests at the touch of a button with selected words and phrases.

Ironically, when Jason tries to explain how much the app was helping him to communicate, he was lost for words! Jason is overwhelmed by the difference the iPad makes and by the generosity of staff who donate to the Good Samaritan Fund.

The Good Samaritan Fund is funded by donations from St Vincent's staff and appeal donors so that our most disadvantaged patients have support. Covering medical or other costs which they are unable to pay will make a significant difference to the quality of their lives.

**If you would like to donate to the Good Samaritan Fund, please go to [www.stvfoundation.org.au/goodsamaritanfund](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au/goodsamaritanfund)**

**The fully programmable app allows Jason at to strike up conversations, ask questions and share his interests at the touch of a button with selected words and phrases.**



Watch the video at  
[youtube/3tR4JPVCApE](https://youtube.com/3tR4JPVCApE)

# Standardising Social work care for mental health patients

As social workers at St Vincent's Mental Health, Loren Urzia and Meg Buck work with some of the community's most marginalised people.

Our clients experience a variety of psychosocial issues including homelessness, poverty, social isolation, family violence, sexual assault and drug and alcohol issues,' Loren says. 'Our job as social workers on an inpatient unit is to address those issues and ensure that clients are safe for discharge.'

However Loren, Meg and their colleagues often felt under the pump in their role and began looking at how their work processes impact the patient journey and how they could streamline discharge planning.

'As a team we wanted to create more capacity in the ward so that consumers waiting to access care in the community and in the emergency department could be accommodated without delay,' Meg says.

'What we found was that there was no standardised process for screening patients. After reviewing three months of files we found that only 17 per cent of clients had been contacted by Social Work. We also found that the average length of stay was 28 days.'

The team has implemented a screening tool that ensures that all patients are now reviewed by social work as soon as possible after admission and are screened for any barriers to discharge. These barriers are clearly identified and a plan is developed to manage the issues.

'Before we implemented the screening tool, the way that social workers would receive a referral was via ward round or from a doctor,' Loren says. 'Doctors would ask for our help addressing an issue so that the patient can be discharged. Doctors were seen as the decision makers, and we waiting for direction, rather than being proactive.'

'Maybe doctors didn't fully understand the role that social work can play in identifying barriers to discharge,' Loren says. 'A doctor's primary concern would have been medications or treatment, as opposed to looking at the social aspect.'

'Since we implemented the screening tool, we have been able to see all patients between day one and day three of admission,' Meg says. 'Social workers can now identify the barriers to discharge themselves and start working straight away.'

The organisation has benefited as the screening tool has contributed to reduced length of stay, and has helped create capacity to accommodate the patients with deteriorating mental health status in the community and emergency department.

It is abundantly clear that the screening tool is improving client outcomes. Client needs are being addressed earlier and they can be reassured that they are getting support they require.

The evidence shows that the new process has also contributed towards reducing length of stay, from 28 days to 9.4 days. Now clients are able to minimise the time spent as an inpatient and resume their lives without delay.

'Before the screening tool was implemented, social workers often felt overwhelmed with work load, but now they have a plan and feel they are in control,' Meg says.

Below: Mental health social workers Loren Urzia (Left) and Meg Buckdaughter Allison as it was one of Vera's favourite areas to bush walk and photograph.





## The STAR staff support program celebrates 20 years

Providing healthcare brings many emotional demands. Most of the time, health workers can manage the impact of stressful events, but sometimes they need assistance. Thankfully, here at St Vincent's, there is the STAR program to help staff cope with stress from critical incidents.

The STAR program ensures that clinicians and other staff have someone they can turn to who understands; someone they can trust; and someone familiar, at times when workplace stress, critical incident stress, or the demands of personal life can become too much.

The STAR program was established in 1997 to assist participants to cope with stress and anxiety, stay connected with work both physically and emotionally following a stressful event, make employees feel valued by the organisation and assist employees to seek professional assistance if required.

From humble beginnings, STAR has expanded to be a widely accessed program by 100 volunteers and supports 1,000 colleagues per year. It has built a reputation as Australia's leading peer support program in the health industry.

### Studies have shown that STAR has a positive influence on an individual's ability to deal with stress.

The STAR Program has proven to be a valuable service. Studies have shown that STAR has a positive influence on an individual's ability to deal with stress. It has also been proven to reduce sick leave and assist with staff retention, with less leave taken by STAR users.

While these figures are impressive, the real value of the STAR Program becomes evident at times of great need. Over the last six months, St Vincent's has been tested with numerous highly stressful events, including the Bourke Street Tragedy and incidents in juvenile detention. Following these critical incidents, the ability of STAR volunteers to provide early intervention to a great number of staff – to listen and support, with empathy and confidentiality – has been invaluable.

None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary amount of work put in by STAR Program Manager, Jacqui Bloink, and STAR Coordinator Tiffany Plummer.

Jacqui in particular, has led the STAR program as it has gone from strength to strength. Jacqui was an inaugural STAR volunteer and was seconded to complete a review of the STAR program in 1999. She has been a driving force ever since.

Congratulations to Jacqui, Tiffany and all of our STAR volunteers for 20 years of amazing work supporting our most valuable asset – our staff.

## Your chance to make a difference

With thanks to our donors we have raised just over \$60,000 towards our world first clinical trial, revolutionising the way we treat neurological diseases.

Natalie, who was featured in the last edition of the Font, continues to go from strength to strength. 'My life is WONDERFUL!', Natalie says.

### Without this clinical trial we would not have been able to achieve such a successful outcome.

Natalie has found the confidence to go out shopping without assistance and can walk by herself without experiencing a seizure. Natalie finally has her independence back. More importantly, she's working a few hours a week. For the first time in a long time she may have the chance to get a part-time job.

Without this clinical trial we would not have been able to achieve such a successful outcome – managing Natalie's epilepsy and providing her with an exciting future ahead.

**If you would like to help others have the same opportunity as Natalie, please donate via our Appeal, by visiting [www.stvfoundation.org.au](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au) or calling the Foundation on 03 9231 3365.**



Meet Natalie and hear her inspirational story. Watch the video at [youtu.be/xn1Z9Xc0XuQ](https://youtu.be/xn1Z9Xc0XuQ)



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