

# The Font

*Celebrating  
125 years*



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Leading the way  
in innovation and  
excellence

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fusion patients  
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Just-in-Time Project  
– The Aikenhead  
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## Message from the CEO

At St Vincent's our work is our Mission. We stand for compassion, justice, integrity and excellence. These values underpin the lived expression of our Mission to bring love, healing and hope to the people we serve.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne recently won four categories at this year's St Vincent's Health Australia Innovation and Excellence Awards. These awards formally recognise and showcase a cross-section of excellent and innovative initiatives developed and implemented by staff across SVHA's 27 facilities.

This year's theme was 'Transformed', and the winning entries all show a clear commitment to transforming the way in which we live our Mission and to find new ways of providing better outcomes to our patients.

It was a great source of pride to see the acknowledgement of all the transformational work that is being carried out each and every day at St Vincent's. These projects were outstanding in their field, and most importantly, contribute to significant improvement in patient care and experience.

On behalf of the Executive, staff, patients and supporters of St Vincent's, I would like to congratulate each of the winners and thank everyone for their commitment and dedication.

You can read about each of our award winning entries on page 4.

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.



Our cover image: A resident of Prague House poses for a photo for photographer Befekir Kebede. Prague House is St Vincent's residential aged care facility for people with a mental health diagnosis and or an acquired brain injury at risk of homelessness.



## Emerging novel therapies now and in the future

Over the past five years St Vincent's Department of Haematology has become a preferred site for key international clinical trials.

Clinical researchers A/Prof Con Tam and A/Prof Hang Quach have built a reputation as leaders in the field, and their contributions to clinical knowledge with their own discoveries have pharmaceutical companies taking notice.

The St Vincent's Haematology Clinical Trials Unit held its inaugural orientation day for patients and family members in August. Organised in collaboration with Myeloma Australia and the Leukaemia Foundation, the event aimed to increase public awareness of the role of clinical trials in patient care and of the clinical trials available across major hospitals in Victoria.

In attendance was Paula Brennon, who in 2011 was diagnosed with a rare form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

'Back then it was a big bunch of words and I didn't know what it meant,' Paula says. 'You generally get non-Hodgkin's lymphoma when you are older and I was young to have it.'

'But luckily I was given the opportunity to be on a clinical trial. The trial consisted of six months of chemotherapy, two years of maintenance, and I have been in remission for a long time now. It's been a great success and I feel blessed I was looked after by the team at St Vincent's.'

A/Prof Quach says that patients are never alone in their treatment journey.

'We sympathise with them but admittedly we can't emphasise only because we are not in their shoes', A/Prof Quach says. 'But we will walk with them every step of the way and that's the least we can do. We are available to them not only when they come to the hospital, but we make sure that they know they can call us any day and any time.'

Paula agrees. 'The wonderful thing about St Vincent's is that you are not a number – you are a person. And they become like a part of your family.'

They looked after me very well and I knew what was happening every step of the way.'

**'We are available to them not only when they come to the hospital, but we make sure that they know they can call us any day and any time'**



Clinical trial participant Paula Brennon



St Vincent's Haematologist A/Prof Hang Quach

**'The wonderful thing about St Vincent's is that you are not a number – you are a person. And they become like a part of your family.'**

# Leading the way in innovation and excellence

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne has excelled in the St Vincent's Health Australia Innovation & Excellence Awards, claiming four awards, including the inaugural 'Deadly' Award for excellence by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff member.

The Awards were announced at a gala dinner on 8 October, with representatives from across SVHA's 27 facilities and 20,000 staff. St Vincent's Melbourne was well represented, having the most finalists of any of the SVHA facilities, with a total of 10 finalists.

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 outstanding 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.'

## SVHA Innovation & Excellence Award winners



Fran Timmons, representing the Safe Haven Café project, with award presenter Anthony Jones.



### Transformation Inspired by our Mission

#### Safe Haven Café – A Safe Haven For All

The Safe Haven Café, located in the St Vincent's Art Gallery, represents an alternative to attending the Emergency Department for anyone who may be experiencing difficulties, isolation or loneliness. With 12 months of operation and a doubling in attendance, the café has provided coffee and support to over 1,000 customers, an average of 24 per weekend.

Data supports that customers have gained from the experience with many reporting that they would have had to use ED if the café was not available. Others felt an improved sense of social connectedness and a better hospital experience as a result of attending the café.

The SHC model directly influences the power of vulnerable, marginalised, lonely and isolated individuals to direct their own care, find solutions that are related to their needs, whilst building a sense of community connectedness. This allows them to take risks to join their communities and improve their sense of wellbeing.



Andy Brigham with SVHA Reconciliation Action Plan Committee Chair Denise Dreise.



### The 'Deadly' Award Andy Brigham

This year an additional award has been added to recognise the inspiring story of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff member whose contribution to the community and work of SVHA has been an exemplar of our mission and values. Andy is an outstanding

performer and a greatly valued member of the Aboriginal Health team. He is sought after across the hospital for his advocacy, knowledge and support in service of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families.





## Clinical Improvement and Innovation

### Prescription Opioid Practice Improvement

Reports of prescription opioids causing addiction and overdose deaths feature regularly in the media. The Prescription Opioid Practice Improvement (POPI) project aimed to improve our practice as a hospital when discharging patients with these medications, by developing and implementing an Opioid Prescribing Guideline and education program,

as well as improving supportive links between St Vincent's Addiction Medicine team and primary care.

Audits have shown significant improvements in opioid prescribing practice, including a 50% reduction in the number of opioid tablets prescribed on discharge, improved opioid selection, and improved communication with GP's on discharge. Following the release of the new guideline in 2019, Stage 2 POPI is applying evidence-based methods to embed this better practice into daily routine to improve safety and health outcomes for patients.



Amanda Norman and Noni Osborne, winners of the Clinical Improvement and Innovation category for the POPI project.



## Digital Innovation

### Enkey: Australia's first hospital-wide electronic drugs of dependence management system

This project successfully implemented Australia's first electronic Drugs of Dependence (including opioids such as oxycodone) management system within a tertiary teaching hospital environment.

Paper-based records commonly used to track these drugs are inadequate to meet contemporary management, audit and security needs within a busy complex health environment.

The system was developed by end users, making it easy to use, while still fulfilling the strict legislative requirements for handling drugs of dependence. It was first piloted on a surgical ward and is now being progressively deployed across the health service.



St Vincent's Pharmacy team members Andrew Cording (far left) and Stewart Cockram (far right) with award presenters.

Enkey was developed collaboratively by Pharmacy, Decision Support Unit and nursing staff and has now been

adopted across the majority of the health service and has received strong interest from national and international organisations.

# 'STAY' project helping at-risk tenants remain in their homes

In the absence of specialist support for mental health issues, individuals and families living in public housing are at higher risk of losing tenancy due to challenges maintaining their homes, keeping up with rental payments, behavioural difficulties, or sustaining safe and stable household environments. This can exacerbate health and welfare issues for those involved and lead to lifestyle instability or homelessness.

The Supporting Tenancy at Yarra (STAY) project is a unique, tailored partnership between St Vincent's, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Mental Health Branch and North East Melbourne Area Fitzroy Housing Service.

The program provides a coordinated service response to prevent tenancy loss and subsequent homelessness and in doing so, improve outcomes for people in high-risk tenancies who experience mental health issues.

Two mental health clinicians are co-located with Fitzroy Housing office team to support at-risk tenants by providing mental health assessment, care coordination and referral.

**'Since commencing services 12 months ago, STAY has helped over 40 residents.'**



**'I have been in the new apartment since January and just flying... I just can't say enough good things about the program'**

While the project is in its infancy, early indicators of success are positive. Since commencing services 12 months ago, STAY has helped over 40 residents by providing assessments and consultation.

Fitzroy resident Dylan Graeme is one of the clients of STAY, and says that the program has saved him. 'If they didn't get involved when they did, I don't know where I would be,' Dylan says. 'My situation was that bad.'

'They got involved because of an incident that I was involved in, they recognised my problem, gave me a diagnosis of a mental health issue that I never knew I had, provided me with treatment and helped me with a transfer into a new apartment. I have been in the new apartment since January and just flying. It's a huge change for me and I just can't say enough good things about the program.'

Clinicians hold a daily huddle with housing staff to check in on any referrals and progress. The project also supports housing staff by educating them in identification of emerging mental health issues and strategies to provide support and referral. So far STAY clinicians have conducted over 30 training events for housing staff.



'I recently went to the supermarket after work and I was still wearing my work uniform. As I was picking my groceries, a man approached me and said 'Hi, you're doing a good job there,' and pointed to the logo on my work blouse. He said 'I had a surgery at St Vincent's two years ago – it's a very good hospital and I'm happy with how they took care of me' and showed me the stitches on his chest. I smiled and felt so proud when he said 'keep up the good work'. What a very beautiful feeling it was for me. The encounter made my day and that proud feeling stayed with me for the rest of the day. To the doctors, nurses and fellow St Vincent's staff including all SSAs like me, it's great to hear these positive comments and stories from patients. Let's keep up the good work and be proud because St Vincent's is a great place to work.'

– Maria Incoul



# A visit from 'Dr Jim'



In August, hundreds of St Vincent's staff heard from one of the world's foremost experts in homeless health, Dr Jim O'Connell.

'Dr Jim', as he is affectionately known, was one of the pioneering forces behind the establishment of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, of which he is now President, which cares for more than 13,000 homeless people each year across two locations.

He also established the first US medical respite program for people experiencing homelessness and designed and implemented the country's first computerised medical record for the homeless program.

Dr Jim told a packed audience of doctors, nurses, research and allied health staff that he was inspired by how St Vincent's reaches out to some of the most vulnerable in the community.

'I find caring for the homeless population is something that has become a passion over these 35 years,' he said. 'And when I come and see what's going on in cities like this, it really gives me hope and inspiration that you have the right attitude and you already figured out how to do it.'

'But I can't tell you how rare that is. What you have is incredibly special.'

## The Cottage



**St Vincent's has a long history and commitment to providing care for vulnerable populations, including those experiencing homelessness.**

The Francesca Healy Cottage is the only facility of its kind in Australia, providing a welcome safe haven and supportive place where people experiencing homelessness or social isolation can prepare for medical treatment or recover from illness.

Located in a 19th century terrace house on Fitzroy Street, 'the Cottage', as it is better known, aims to improve the health status of people experiencing homelessness and coordinate and refer patients to appropriate health, housing and community care services.

Liz Yeomans is a Personal Care Assistant at the Cottage, and also a nursing student at Victoria University.

'When I came in for my job interview a few months ago, I had a walk around the Cottage and I thought 'I have to work here', Liz says. 'It just seemed right. It had a down-to-earth kind of community vibe and I loved that.'

'I think the best thing about working here is that it feels like your home,' Liz says. 'It is work but it definitely feels like home. Some days we get busy discharging people and cleaning rooms, but other days we get to do some baking and spend most of our morning chatting over tea and cake.'

# Getting spinal fusion patients home sooner



In 2018, length of stay for patients after spinal fusion surgery at St Vincent's was 24 hours longer than other metropolitan hospitals. In an effort to find out why and get patients home sooner, physiotherapist Lucy Stone saw an opportunity.

Generally speaking, patients requiring physiotherapy review are seen once daily, however Lucy and her team decided to look at whether twice-daily (physiotherapy) reviews would reduce length of stay.

'This project encouraged early mobilisation, reducing length of stay by an average of 40 hours with twice-daily physiotherapy, condensed earlier into a patient's admission,' Lucy says. 'It is now standard practice for physiotherapy to see patients twice daily after spinal fusion surgery.'

'The total number of physiotherapy contacts per admission remained the same at three, so we were just condensing our interventions into a shorter period rather than increasing our workload. My ward and grade one staff were extremely supportive and everyone was keen to be involved and track our changes.'

Lucy was supported by a Continuous Improvement coach and used the continuous improvement framework to ensure her team were identifying and addressing the real issues.

'I really believe that the staff on the ground are best placed to be making changes that will positively impact their day to day work as well as the patient experience,' Lucy says.

**'I really believe that the staff on the ground are best placed to be making changes that will positively impact their day to day work as well as the patient experience,'**

There is now an opportunity to look at the timing and frequency of physiotherapy in other patient populations to ensure that we are providing the most efficient and effective service.



## Our kitchen rules

**The St Vincent's kitchen, located in the Main Hospital building in Fitzroy, prepares all patient meals on site, making over 2,000 fresh homemade meals per day.**

St Vincent's has developed a delicious, culturally varied menu in collaboration with our patients, with 90 different variations to cater for our patients' dietary needs.

In August, Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos MP toured the St Vincent's kitchen and met with staff to announce that the Victorian Government will conduct a food audit of meals served in Victorian public hospitals and aged care centres.

Chief Dietitian Natalie Simmance says that good food is so important for patients in hospital.

'Delicious and nutritious food helps patients on their road to recovery, reduces complications and improves patient experience,' Natalie says.



## Switch from paper to screen means safer cancer care

St Vincent's Cancer Centre has a new state-of-the-art cancer care management system helping to provide improved patient safety.

From diagnosis through treatment and follow-up, the system allows all members of the cancer care team to efficiently manage every aspect of the chemotherapy care plan of their patients.

The software, known as Mosaik, is designed to reduce errors and inefficiencies and is being rolled out nationally by St Vincent's Health Australia.

Project Manager Helen Baumann said over 120 pharmacists, medical, nursing and admin staff have been provided with rigorous training, ensuring a safe and smooth transition from paper to the electronic Mosaik.

The system already in operation, allows the cancer care team to bring together all patient documentation, medication administration and assessments into a cohesive system and enter data accurately to produce a document that brings everything from arrival to discharge together in the safest manner.



'It gives us one point of access to enter patient information and also provides us with greater evidence-based records of the latest assessments such as for scalp cooling or symptom management control,' said Cameron Brent, one of the Cancer Centre's senior nurses.

Manager of Cancer and Palliative Care, Lesa Stewart, said all of the clinicians involved in a patient's cancer care plan, which includes the medical staff, the nursing staff and cancer care pharmacists, have access to timely

information so they always know where the patient is in their treatment journey.

'It ensures the patient is receiving the right medication at the right time with the right doses and the right safety measures,' Lesa said.

'It's about seamless care to make sure our patients are receiving the best treatment possible and also ensures we are meeting national standards in cancer care.'



Frank Morabito was on the St Vincent's Neurosurgery Ward just before Christmas last year after he had brain surgery to treat his brain aneurysm.

Frank was first in ICU and doctors had to insert a shunt to drain away the extra fluid from the ventricles of his brain. Thankfully the surgery was successful, as was his recovery, and Frank recently returned to work.

Last month Frank returned to the 10 West ward to deliver a personal thank you to the staff that looked after him.

'I just wanted to give my appreciation and thanks to the great staff of this hospital. They looked after me so well and that helped me in my recovery,' Frank said.

## Just-in-Time Project – The Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD)



Prof Peter Choong demonstrates 3D printing capabilities with Federal Minister for Health the Hon. Greg Hunt.

A major new ACMD research project is set to transform the way we surgically treat tumours and bone cancer.

Using 3D printing, robotic surgery and improved process flows, the project aims to create tailored implants for patients with bone cancer in a shorter amount of time, dramatically improving healthcare outcomes.

The five year research project is a collaboration between the Australian Government, RMIT University, the University of Technology Sydney, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, University of Melbourne and global medical technology firm, Stryker.

As well as cutting down the current time of four to six weeks to produce a solid implant, the custom-made, lattice-structured implant is intended to improve long-term integration with the bone. The robotic removal of the tumour will result in more exact margins, reducing the re-occurrence rate of the tumour.

St Vincent's Professor Peter Choong and his project team will also generate the evidence that these tailored implants will improve outcomes.

**'In the past we would use fixed devices... or even amputate if we could not get rid of the tumour. This process will expand the surgical options available to patients and surgeons and increase the potential for limb-saving surgery.'**

Prof Choong believes that Just-In-Time 3D implants will transform the delivery of care for people with bone cancer.

'In the past we would use fixed devices, such as knee replacements or hip replacements, or even amputate if we could not get rid of the tumour,' Prof Choong says. 'This process will expand the surgical options available to patients and surgeons and increase the potential for limb-saving surgery.'

You can support our revolutionary research projects by donating to the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery [www.stvfoundation.org.au/donate-acmd](http://www.stvfoundation.org.au/donate-acmd)



### Husband and wife support each other during their patient journey

Surgery can be a daunting proposition for any patient. It is important to have support before and after any major procedure.

So when Launceston couple Lance and Vera Smith required lung surgery at the same time, the thoracic team at St Vincent's were able to facilitate their surgeries a day apart to allow them to travel to Melbourne together and provide support for each other during their recovery.

After both underwent minimally invasive key hole procedures, Vera and Lance were able to recover together on Ward 4 East where a multi-disciplinary team guide them on their journey to recovery.

Lance and Vera are now back in Launceston, recuperating at home.

'St Vincent's is such an amazing hospital,' Vera says. 'The whole team have been really wonderful and we couldn't thank them enough.'



# Introducing aSmile.org.au

St Vincent's Mental Health has a proud history of providing innovative mental health care and services to the Victorian community.

St Vincent's is happy to announce the launch of [asmile.org.au](http://asmile.org.au) – a state-wide mental health website developed in collaboration with other mental health organisations in Victoria.

aSMILE will be a reputable mental health information portal, compiled and maintained by our most experienced mental health clinicians in accurate and easy to understand language for both consumers and carers.

Developed to address a gap in the resources available, it is an important and trustworthy addition to the information available for those with mental illness in our community. Excellent mental health websites do exist, but many are limited to particular types of mental illness, or to specific age groups.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of mental health information in the Australian context is only available in English. This places CALD communities at a significant disadvantage when addressing mental health issues.

St Vincent's patient population is the most diverse among major Melbourne hospitals, with 48% of our patients coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and 20% preferring to speak a language other than English.

aSMILE will begin with an initial live English language version but we will soon duplicate the website into languages commonly spoken in Australia, starting with Greek, Vietnamese, Italian, Arabic, Mandarin and Cantonese.

St Vincent's is committed to being an advocate for the more vulnerable members of society, whether that be those battling mental illness, or those from a different cultural background, which makes this project such a vital component in improving the care we can provide in the mental health sector.

Visit the website at [asmile.org.au](http://asmile.org.au)

**Content will cover all aspects of mental health and associated issues, such as:**

- mental health diagnosis and hospitalization processes
- guidance on financial, legal and employment matters
- treatment and medication options
- general physical health including side effects, and
- The option to create and store personal e-records.

## 48%

of our patients come from a culturally and linguistically diverse background

## 20%

of our patients prefer to speak a language other than English



'I'm one of the case managers, or social workers, here at St Vincent's Hawthorn Mental Health Clinic. We support people who are recovering from serious mental health issues in their lives. We help them to reclaim some of the things they lost through that experience and support them to get their lives back on track. For some it may only be a matter of months or years and for others it's a life-long process. When I have moments where I can see a positive change in somebody, I really think that there isn't anything I'd rather do. I feel so privileged to support people through that process and help them get some meaning back in their lives and a bit of a sense of a future. It really is a fantastic feeling.'

– Michael Pauly

# Open your eyes to see with your heart



Befekir Kebede

**Held each September, St Vincent's Mission Week celebrates our Mission as it's lived right across the health service – in our people, our places, our care and our services.**

A key part of the celebration was a photo exhibition by St Vincent's staff member, Befekir Kebede. If a picture paints a thousand words, this exhibition writes a book, says Director of Mission Margaret Stewart.

'We stand for compassion, justice, integrity and excellence,' says Margaret. 'They are the lived expression of our mission to bring love, healing and hope to the poorest of the poor, the sickest of the sick and those most vulnerable.'

'And here it is captured in the faces of our staff, residents, patients, volunteers and visitors and their activity, responses and relationships.'

Befekir says that he is always on the lookout for photo opportunities to try and capture some candid moments of St Vincent's staff and their patients.



A nurse and patient in the Cancer Centre

'In fact my favourite thing to do is to walk around the hospital and just observe the many interactions between staff and patients,' says Befekir. 'I love it because the staff always engage with their patients on a human-to-human level and the interactions aren't just a clinician and patient.'

'I took a photo of a patient and a nurse in the Cancer Centre. I actually spent a few minutes just looking at them and being amazed before I started shooting.'

The nurse did everything that is expected of a nurse and then took her time to sit down and talk to the patient gently and that went on for a few minutes. She was very generous with her time and I could see that the patient absolutely enjoyed it.'

'It was such a quintessential St Vincent's moment and I am happy that I captured it.'



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