

# Heartbeat

St Vincent's Foundation Victoria Newsletter

Autumn-Winter 2026



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St Vincent's nurses**

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# Message from the Executive Director

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Community and connection have been the inspiring theme over the past months and feature prominently in this edition of Heartbeat. From young musicians fundraising through performance, to volunteers who have given many years of service - we are delighted to share with you the many ways your generosity is being felt across St Vincent's.

Within these pages, you will meet Elizabeth, whose years of volunteering, personal experience as a patient, and the loss of her father inspired her to leave a gift in her Will to advance oncology research. You will hear about our new nurse-led hormone therapy clinic, which is helping men with advanced prostate cancer feel informed and supported during treatment, thanks to Freemasons Foundation Victoria. A significant gift from The Ian Potter Foundation is also supporting cancer research by providing cutting-edge equipment at the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery.

Recognising and supporting the important and extraordinary work of our nurses is a strong thread throughout this edition. Thanks to your support of our Christmas appeal, 12 nurses will undertake further study in critical areas of care. You will hear about supporter Peter who even held his own fundraiser for nursing scholarships in lieu of receiving presents for his 70th birthday. We also celebrate the expansion of Delta Goodrem AM's Angels and Heroes Nurse Program, now recognising and supporting nurses across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

And you couldn't find a better example of the impact of simple acts of generosity than Zouki joining the hospital in thanking our staff for their extraordinary dedication and service when St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne was named Premier's Large Health Service of the Year - with the gift of a free coffee for all staff.

Together, these stories reflect what your collective support makes possible: care that endures, knowledge that multiplies, and a community that stands beside patients and clinicians when it matters most. Thank you for being part of St Vincent's.



**Melina Talanis**  
 Executive Director  
 St Vincent's Foundation  
 Victoria

# Nurses receive the gift of education

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**St Vincent's nurses will have the opportunity to embark on further education this year thanks to your support of nursing scholarships during our Christmas appeal.**

Thanks to you, 12 nurses will receive nursing scholarships to help them stay ahead of the curve in patient care.

We can now offer nurses the chance to attain specialised skillsets in areas of need across St Vincent's – including in oncology, cardiology, maternity, perioperative, orthopaedics, neurology, intensive care and palliative care.

For Acute Pain Nurse Consultant, Wendy McDonald, receiving a scholarship means she can undertake further study in psychology to better comprehend any mental health and psychological challenges her patients are experiencing.

"I am passionate to understand where our patients coming from, so I can really help them manage their pain," Wendy said.

Outside of work, life is just as busy for Wendy who is the primary income earner in her household and has a teenage son to look after. Without a scholarship, studying felt next to impossible.

**"It was the scholarship that I received from supporters like you that gifted me the capacity to study. I now have the space to learn while still being there for my family," Wendy said.**

Chief Nursing Officer Jacqui Bilo said giving a nurse a scholarship is not only about financial support, but also the vote of confidence a nurse needs to step up as a leader and a mentor.

"When nurses feel supported, valued and well-informed, it shows in every patient interaction. I see it in the confidence of their care, the kindness of their words, and the calmness they bring."

"Thank you for giving our nurses the opportunity to grow, give their absolute best for our patients and as a result make our hospitals so much stronger," said Jacqui.



*A scholarship can make a huge difference for a nurse like Wendy. "I'm a very passionate nurse, and this scholarship has given me renewed energy and focus. It allows me to continue learning and gives me confidence to grow as a clinician and a leader," she said.*



**If you would still like to contribute to nursing scholarships, it's not too late. Make your kind donation today.**

## Care that leaves a lasting impression

We asked you – our supporters – to tell us some of your most touching memories interacting with St Vincent's nurses.

**"There has been nothing but the best support and specialised treatment for my grandmother. While she is not well, we know she is in the best hands, and you are doing your best to get her back on her feet as quickly and safely as possible. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to the St Vincent's team, we will forever be grateful for everyone that had a hand in saving her life."**

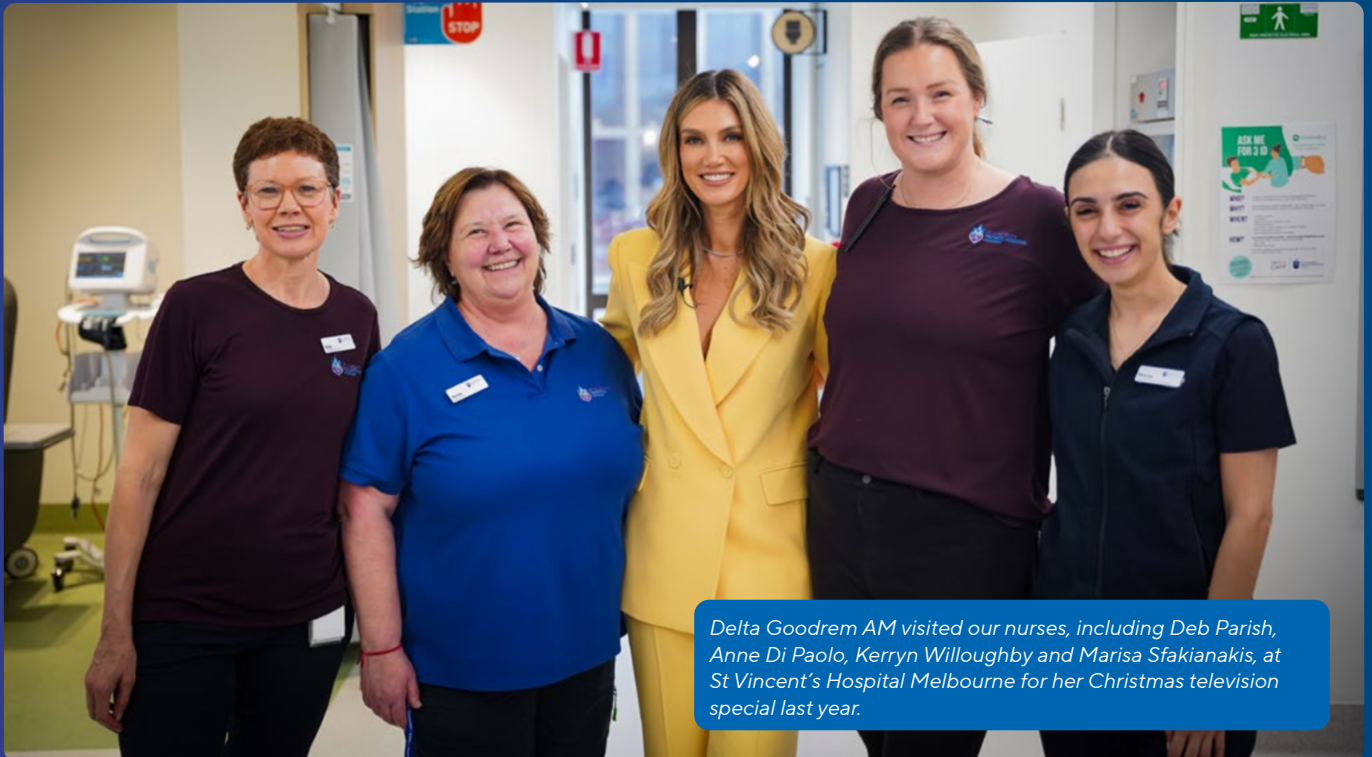
## FEATURE

# Delta announces expansion of her support to St Vincent's nurses

Singer-songwriter Delta Goodrem AM brought good news to our nurses in Victoria when she visited St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne to film her Christmas television special late last year.



*Singer-songwriter Delta Goodrem AM with nurses Jemimah Chisholm and Elissa Geralis.*



*Delta Goodrem AM visited our nurses, including Deb Parish, Anne Di Paolo, Kerry Willoughby and Marisa Sfakianakis, at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne for her Christmas television special last year.*

Our nurses were delighted to interact and share their stories with Delta, who has been a long-term supporter of St Vincent's in Sydney. She was successfully treated at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney for Hodgkin's Lymphoma disease at the age of just 18.

In 2024, Delta established the Angels and Heroes Nurse Program, an initiative to recognise and thank St Vincent's nurses for the invaluable contribution they make every day. The program provides nurses with care packs, training opportunities and scholarship funding for postgraduate studies.

Initially focused on St Vincent's nurses in New South Wales, this year, Delta is growing her program to also generously support St Vincent's nurses in Victoria and Queensland.

"St Vincent's nurses have always held a special place in my heart. You are the angels and heroes who show up with kindness, courage and hope, especially on the days that matter most to patients and their families," Delta said.

**"I'm honoured to celebrate you... and thrilled to expand the Angels and Heroes Nurse Program across St Vincent's nationally in 2026. Thank you for everything you do."**

*Delta Goodrem AM with a St Vincent's patient.*



# Supporting men through prostate cancer with specialist nursing care

Thanks to a generous donation from Freemasons Foundation Victoria, St Vincent's is piloting a new hormone therapy clinic for men with advanced prostate cancer.



*Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurses, Molly Trethewey and Gail Tzounos provide vital support to men diagnosed with prostate cancer at St Vincent's Androgen Deprivation Therapy clinic.*

**Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia. One in six men will be diagnosed before age 85. In 2025, there were nearly 4,000 deaths due to prostate cancer nationally.**

Although advanced prostate cancer is not curable, current treatments can slow disease progression, manage symptoms and extend life expectancy. However, side effects such as increased risk of cardiovascular disease, mood and anxiety changes and sexual dysfunction can significantly affect a patient's quality of life.

Our Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT) clinic is supporting men through their treatment, which involves reducing or blocking the production of testosterone with the aim of slowing the growth of cancer cells. Testosterone is one of several male hormones known as androgens, which while important for a healthy prostate, can also help cancer cells grow and spread.

Led by St Vincent's Prostate Cancer Specialist Nurses, Molly Trethewey and Gail Tzounos, the ADT clinic sees patients who have advanced prostate cancer.

"The inspiration in setting up the nurse-led clinic was to help men feel more supported when they begin hormone therapy by providing dedicated, evidence-based and compassionate support. The clinic focuses on the whole person, offering information guidance and ongoing care to help men manage side effects and ultimately improve their quality of life." said Molly.

**"It's incredibly rewarding to meet men and their families at a time when they're often overwhelmed and vulnerable, and to be able to offer guidance and clear information about treatment side effects and management as well as to remain a constant support for them."**

All patients have access to a specialised nurse and are referred to an exercise physiologist to incorporate exercises that help to manage or reduce side effects, for example to maintain muscle mass and bone density or to reduce the risk of cardiovascular issues. Where needed, patients are referred to other health professionals such as dieticians or psychologists.

**"While we cannot take away the treatment side effects or the anxiety that comes with a cancer diagnosis, research suggests that the support from a dedicated, specialist nurse can help ease the impact of illness on a person's life," Gail said.**

"Patients will often start a consult in high distress and by the end are displaying much lower levels of distress simply due to our support," she said.

The funding from Freemasons Foundation Victoria has allowed our specialist nurses to dedicate time each week to specifically research what prostate cancer care models work best, set up the nurse-led clinic for hormone therapy patients and importantly, collate the data to show that the clinic works. The results speak for themselves – 90 percent of patients so far have said that their needs were met "extremely well" or "very well".



As with any kind of cancer, early detection is the goal. According to current recommendations, men should take a prostate specific antigen test every two years from the age of 50, and those with a family history of prostate cancer should be tested from the age of 40.

# Donation from The Ian Potter Foundation set to advance cancer research

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Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of The Ian Potter Foundation, St Vincent's urologist, Associate Professor Lih-Ming Wong and his team, now have access to cutting-edge imaging technology with the potential to transform cancer diagnosis and surgery.

The new equipment, a Spectrum 3 Spectrometer, uses a light-based technique that reads the chemical "fingerprint" of tissue and delivers results in real time. By analysing how molecules such as proteins, fats and DNA respond to infrared light, the technology can rapidly distinguish between healthy and cancerous tissue, without damaging samples or relying on dyes or stains.

**"Spectroscopy offers an exciting alternative to traditional methods of tissue diagnosis, which require tissue biopsy and sample preparation and are time-consuming and costly,"** said A/Prof Wong. **"We are pleased to be working closely with Professor Bayden Wood from Monash University's Centre for Biospectroscopy as a key collaborator on this research."**

When combined with advanced computer analysis, the new approach will help A/Prof Wong and his team to identify cancer-related changes at a molecular level – in some cases before traditional pathology can detect visible abnormalities.

Early pilot studies in bladder cancer have already demonstrated diagnostic accuracy of up to 99 per cent, with further research now underway to explore its use during surgery and across other cancer types, including oesophageal cancer.

**"The possibility of a cancer diagnosis is life-changing for patients and their families,"** A/Prof Wong said. **"Innovations that deliver accurate diagnoses in a less invasive and more efficient way can reduce anxiety, shorten the path to treatment, and improve outcomes at one of the most vulnerable moments in a patient's life,"** he said.

The Ian Potter Foundation's \$100,000 grant towards this medical research equipment to aid A/Prof Wong's work is accelerating vital research, supporting clinician led innovation, and helping bring earlier, more precise cancer diagnosis closer to everyday clinical care.



**"Philanthropic donations such as those from The Ian Potter Foundation to St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne are essential because they enable high-impact, early-stage research that has the potential to fundamentally change patient care,"** A/Prof Wong said.

St Vincent's will lead this important work as a partner of the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD), Australia's first hospital-based, multidisciplinary medical innovation centre focused exclusively on MedTech, digital health, regenerative medicine manufacturing technology and research into human health. Other ACMD partners like Swinburne University of Technology and St Vincent's Institute will also have access to the machine.

Scheduled for its official opening in 2026, the ACMD is positioned directly adjacent to St Vincent's public and private hospitals on St Vincent's Fitzroy Health and Innovation Precinct, bringing the clinical and research world together in a way yet to be seen in Victoria.

Spectrum 3 Spectrometer



St Vincent's urologist, Associate Professor Lih-Ming Wong



The Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD)

# Elizabeth deepens her connection to St Vincent's with a gift in her Will

**Elizabeth Chow has spent many precious moments volunteering at St Vincent's over the past decade, whether sharing a cup of tea with patients, or reading to provide special comfort to those in palliative care.**

These interactions, coupled with her personal experience as a patient, have had a deep impact on Elizabeth, igniting her passion to contribute further.

That is why Elizabeth decided to leave a gift in her Will to St Vincent's for oncology research, a cause that carries special meaning for Elizabeth who sadly lost her father to cancer.

"As a person with a passion for research, as well as someone whose family has been affected by cancer, I've chosen to support St Vincent's oncology research through a gift in my Will. If my contribution helps even one person to have a better outcome than my father, I'll know I've made a meaningful impact," she said.

Elizabeth's interest in research started many years ago in the United States. Balancing a busy corporate life at the time, she had volunteered at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, instilling in her the importance of compassionate healthcare and seeking answers to challenging medical questions.

After Elizabeth arrived in Melbourne in 2012, she sought a similarly fulfilling way to connect and give back to her new community – a community which she said, "had welcomed [her] with open arms."

"I considered several hospitals, but it was St Vincent's that stood out. I saw a genuine sense of care and a deep culture of inclusiveness, one that conveyed the message of 'Are you hurt? Come in, we can help'," Elizabeth said.

**"It was clear this was a place where I could offer my time and feel truly aligned with its values of excellent and compassionate care for every person in need," she continued.**

In 2021, Elizabeth experienced St Vincent's from a different perspective entirely – as a patient. It was a challenging time in Victoria. Covid was rife and the public health system was under significant pressure.

"Even under the strain of the pandemic, the staff made me feel safe, heard, and cared for. That experience reaffirmed everything I believed about St Vincent's, that it's more than a hospital. It's a place of holistic, authentic medical care; a leader in research, collaboration and trust," she said.

### Elizabeth Chow

*Elizabeth decided to leave a gift in her Will to St Vincent's for oncology research, a cause that carries special meaning for Elizabeth who sadly lost her father to cancer.*



Elizabeth said her positive experiences volunteering and as a patient receiving exceptional care made it an easy decision to leave a gift in her Will to St Vincent's, and invited others to consider doing the same.

"I'd like to invite you to join me and a growing community of St Vincent's supporters and grateful patients who have pledged a gift in our Wills for the future of healthcare," she said.

**"Through a gift in your Will, you too can give back and make a meaningful contribution to an organisation that truly lives by its commitment to provide compassionate care to every person in our community."**

Gifts left to us by kind supporters in their Wills have made an enormous impact on patient care, medical research, and education opportunities for our dedicated medical teams, and the significant contributions made by these selfless individuals cannot be overstated.

We are extraordinarily grateful to our many supporters who have pledged a gift in their Will for St Vincent's, and those who are considering including St Vincent's in their estate plans. To learn more about our Gifts in Wills program, please reach out to Kristy Lawler on (03) 9231 3365 or [kristy.lawler@svha.org.au](mailto:kristy.lawler@svha.org.au)



*Elizabeth Chow and her father.*



FEATURE

# Peter Hui's gift that keeps on giving

It was the multiplier effect of teaching one person to help many that drew Peter to philanthropic giving, particularly at St Vincent's.

## Peter Hui never expected Reiki to shape the way he thought about giving.

With a background in engineering, software and systems, Peter describes himself as someone who once trusted only what could be measured.

That mindset began to shift in the early 1990s, while in business school in Hawaii. There, he first witnessed Reiki – a form of hands-on healing originating in Japan which would go on to change the course of his life.

“At first I thought it was ridiculous,” Peter said. “But I saw people genuinely feeling better. That’s when I got curious.”

By pure coincidence, a Reiki Master from Melbourne was also at the business school, so Peter was able to learn Reiki when he returned home. It marked the start of his decades-long practice alongside wife Mandy, culminating in becoming a Reiki Master and being able to tune others into the skill.

“The real power isn’t just helping one person,” he said. “It’s teaching someone else how to help many.”

This multiplier effect was what drew Peter to philanthropic giving, particularly at St Vincent’s. His connection began more than 20 years ago, when his mother was admitted to the hospital, and was later strengthened through one of his Reiki patients.

“I will never forget the first patient I supported – a 20-year-old with late-stage cancer who was being treated by St Vincent’s. I was so moved when he was discharged and experienced nine months of remission,” Peter said.

These truly personal experiences, coupled with years of attending St Vincent’s Foundation Victoria events, have only brought Peter and St Vincent’s closer together.

At first, he gave where there was a need. But more recently, one area has stood out: nursing education. After attending a scholarship presentation for nurses undertaking postgraduate study in palliative care, something clicked.

“When you support education, the impact keeps multiplying,” he said. “You’re not just helping one nurse. You’re supporting every patient they care for, and every colleague they go on to teach.”

That’s why, when Peter celebrated his 70th birthday last year, he asked friends not for gifts, but for donations towards nursing scholarships.

“I didn’t need more things,” he said. “But this could genuinely make a difference.”

Their response was positive and raised \$5,781 to contribute towards a nursing scholarship – an investment Peter believes will pay dividends for years to come.

“If you help one nurse grow, they’ll help hundreds of patients,” he said. “That’s what meaningful giving looks like.”

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**Peter would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated in lieu of a birthday gift. Your generosity is helping nurses continue their education, and in doing so, supporting better care for countless patients now and into the future.**

*Image left: Peter and his wife Mandy with Sister Maryanne Confoy while on a tour of the new East Tower at St Vincent’s Private Hospital Fitzroy last year.*

# When the East Meets the West

**A special charity concert held last year, “When the East Meets the West” was a wonderful example of community-led fundraising in action.**

Year 9 students and best friends Vanessa Liang (viola and piano) from Melbourne Girls Grammar School and Isabella Cen (guqin) from Methodist Ladies’ College returned for a second year of fundraising for St Vincent’s. The pair performed at the Melbourne Steinway Gallery alongside pianist Coco Yao from Lauriston Girls’ School.

Penny Tao, Vice President, Australia China Business Council Victoria, and Vanessa’s mother, said the combination of viola,

piano and the traditional Chinese guqin created an atmosphere that was “both intimate and powerful”, reflecting the event’s theme.

“There was a real sense of dialogue between East and West, tradition and modernity... You could feel the sincerity behind every note. It wasn’t just a concert, but a shared experience filled with warmth, gratitude and purpose,” Penny said.

The three girls share a strong passion for charity and recognise the care and compassion that hospitals provide to families every day. For Vanessa, who was born at St Vincent’s, the cause is also a deeply personal one. She regularly organises and performs concerts at St Vincent’s Care Services Hawthorn during school holidays.

“Turning their music into something that could directly help others made the experience even more special,” Penny said. “Fundraising through performance feels very natural to them. It is an extension of their values, their friendship, and their desire to contribute meaningfully to the wider community.”

**With support from their families, the students exceeded their fundraising target of \$4000 to care for patients at St Vincent’s Private Hospital Fitzroy in their greatest time of need.**

*Coco, Isabella and Vanessa gave a moving performance last year to raise funds for St Vincent’s Private Hospital Fitzroy. (Credit: Richard Cen)*



# Celebrating our wonderful volunteers

At the heart of philanthropy is the desire to help others. Philanthropy can take so many shapes and forms - whether by donating money or giving time to a specific cause.

At St Vincent's, all our supporters are important to us, and we wanted to acknowledge some of our hardworking volunteers who are celebrating significant milestones providing service to St Vincent's.

## 20 years

- Margaret Urquhart, 4th floor, St Vincent's Private Hospital East Melbourne

## 15 years

- Rani Ryan, Communion Minister, St George's Health Service
- Mary Waddick, Communion Minister, St George's Health Service

## 10 years

- Beverley Harding, information desk, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
- Helen Jones, information desk in clinics, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
- Tracy Leslie, admin help, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
- Sister Catherine Meese, St Augustine ward and prison visits
- Tony Roberts, information desk, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
- Sister Mary Scanlon, ward support, Caritas Christi



Volunteer Jenny Werner making beautiful hearts with her granddaughter to give to patients going through a difficult time. Jenny has volunteered with St Vincent's for 28 years, during which time she has made 1,340 hearts.

If you would like to get involved with St Vincent's as a volunteer, email [stv.volunteers@svhm.org.au](mailto:stv.volunteers@svhm.org.au) or phone (03) 9231 2027. Visit [svph.org.au/services/volunteers](http://svph.org.au/services/volunteers) to volunteer at our private hospitals.



## Free coffees all-round

To mark St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne being named the Premier's Large Health Service of the Year in 2025, and thank staff for their dedication and service, staff were treated to a free hot beverage in November, generously provided by Zouki.

In total, 2,641 hot beverages were shared across Courtyard 55, the Green Shop and St George's. It was wonderful to see so many staff stopping by, cup in hand, to celebrate this shared achievement. Thanks to Zouki for their support!

Did you enjoy our newsletter?  
If you have any feedback, we  
would love to hear from you.

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