

**Welcome to your new CEO**

**A night in emergency**

**Creative therapies a  
lifeline to spinal patients**

**Diabetes Discovery –  
a new early detection  
program**

# Vitality

WINTER 2017

# Welcome Sue Shilbury, new CEO

Earlier this year Sue Shilbury joined Austin Health as our new CEO. We are delighted to welcome Sue and her guidance and experience gained from a three-decade career in the New South Wales public health sector. Sue's most recent role was General Manager of North Shore Ryde Health Service, in which she oversaw the delivery of New South Wales Health's largest capital works program, the \$1.3 billion redevelopment of Royal North Shore Hospital.

## *From Sue:*

It's been a busy start for me in the role of CEO. I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting people and developing an understanding of Austin Health and the community we serve. I have loved my impromptu visits to wards, popping into weekly staff meetings, Medical Grand Rounds and especially stumbling across a wonderful women's choir in the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness & Research Centre.

A highlight for me was the tribute I attended for veterans on Anzac Day at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. The turn-out was substantial, despite the weather! I had the opportunity to speak with veterans and I was very proud to hear their praise for the staff who work with these men and women.

I am so impressed with the commitment to patient care, both from the staff and also from you, our much-appreciated supporters. It is wonderful to hear about the difference you have made through your generous donations, and I thank you for all you have done in the past to help patients at Austin Health. I am really looking forward to working with you as we continue to support people who need our help.

Until next time and with sincere appreciation,



**Sue Shilbury**  
CEO, Austin Health



# Respiratory patients to breathe easier

The chaos and distress caused by the recent 'thunderstorm asthma' event is just one reason why we need to create a new Centre of Excellence in Sleep and Respiratory Medicine. We need help from you and the rest of the community to fund its construction.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016, Melbourne experienced an unprecedented and extremely severe 'thunderstorm asthma' event, resulting in 8,500 people presenting to hospital emergency departments across Victoria and nine people losing their lives. 40 per cent of the people who arrived at hospitals around the city had never suffered from asthma before this night.

Austin Health Emergency Department saw nearly 700 people over two days during the thunderstorm asthma event, many of whom are now patients at the Department of Sleep and Respiratory Medicine. This busy department services 25,000 patients each year and is experiencing a steady 7 per cent increase in patient numbers annually. Currently services are spread across six locations making things difficult for patients, many of whom have breathing difficulties.

## Did you know?

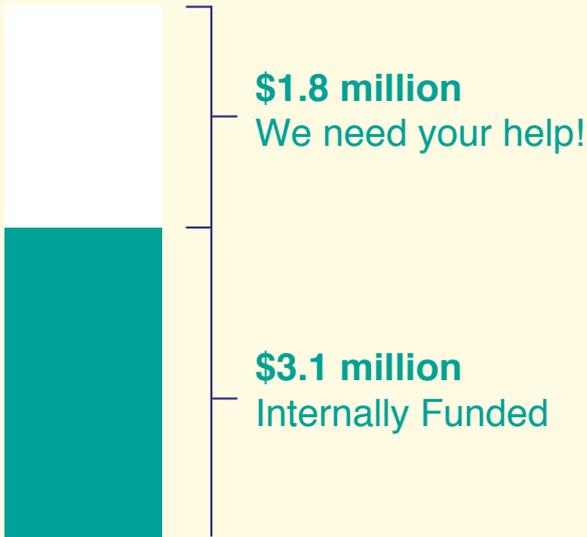
**Asthma affects 10 per cent of Australians. Australia has one of the highest rates of asthma in the world.**

**One in three Australian adults have a sleep disorder such as insomnia, sleep apnoea and restless legs syndrome.**

**Drowsy driving/fatigue is the cause of 20 per cent of road crashes.**

The planned new Centre will provide patients with a one-stop shop in one location offering facilities and services for care and treatment, with a dedicated purpose-built facility for sleep and respiratory health care professionals and researchers to work side-by-side.

We need your help to advance life-changing research-led patient care in a dedicated Centre of Excellence in Respiratory and Sleep Medicine.



**All gifts are tax deductible.**  
**Make your donation before 30 June!**

## Volunteering makes a big impact



At 91, Mavis (right) is one of our oldest volunteers, and one of our longest serving! In the recent Volunteer Service Awards, she received her 35 years of service certificate from Austin Health, together with Lily (left), who was awarded her 25 years of service. Over the combined 60 years they have volunteered at the Heidelberg Op Shop, Mavis and Lily have helped to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for equipment at our hospitals.

Thank you to Mavis, Lily and all the other hard-working volunteers who received awards.

## Creative therapies a lifeline for spinal patients

Art, music and gardening sessions are not usually a part of hospital treatment. But at Austin Health's Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre (Royal Talbot) creative therapies are giving patients with spinal injuries a way to express their feelings and experiences, some of which may have been repressed due to trauma.

Steven Ribarich, husband and father of three children, recently became quadriplegic after a surfing accident. After being airlifted to the Alfred Hospital, Steven underwent surgery before being transferred to Ward 3 North at Austin Hospital where he stayed for one month. Once stabilised, he moved to Royal Talbot for eight months of intensive rehabilitation where he had to learn many new skills,  
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**“Going backwards and forwards between appointments at different sleep laboratories across the hospital is a source of frustration for patients.”**  
- Annette

**“A Centre of Excellence would make people’s lives better. It’s a no brainer for me.”**  
- Christopher



**“Without the care I received from the respiratory team, I would not have been well enough to carry and give birth to my daughter safely.”**  
- Jessie

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and re-learn many old ones too.

The trauma associated with an event resulting in paraplegia or quadriplegia is significant and life-changing. Everyday life becomes more about learning simple skills again like rolling over, sitting up, getting dressed – things that many of us take for granted. Creative therapies offer a temporary escape from the reality of rehabilitation as well as assisting in processing and integrating trauma experiences.

“I participated in music, art, gardening and singing,” says Steven. “Creative therapies helped me psychologically as I was able to talk a lot while I was doing the task at hand. I was able to talk and discuss issues about my injury.”

“It took my mind off the problem at hand and made me concentrate on other things,” says Steven. “It was something that I looked forward to doing as it was a bit of escapism.”

Research has shown that art therapy is able to access non-verbal parts of the brain that communicate in emotions, visual imagery and body sensations. By tapping into primitive brain networks it can help establish new neural pathways. Art therapy can help patients to express experiences they find hard to put into words (Lobban 2016).

Since returning home five months ago, Steven has remained heavily involved music while he works hard to continue his recovery and rehabilitation.

“Creative art therapy at Royal Talbot is extremely beneficial for the physical and emotional wellbeing of patients,” says Steven. “It creates a sense of worth and instills pride again.”

***Relying solely on donations from the community, the Creative Therapies program at Royal Talbot forms an incredibly valuable experience for many people with spinal injuries.***



**Mountains and Snow**

*“I love this drawing because it’s something I didn’t think I could actually do. I now realise that Art Therapy is not just about art, it’s about the therapy too. I’ve been able to talk about my experiences, thoughts and feelings as I’ve been creating my drawings.”*

**- Steven Ribarich**



Photographer: Julian Kingma

## A night in emergency

It’s called ED. The place people instinctively turn to when they are injured or suddenly ill, and where the doctors are ready for anything. Austin Health’s Emergency Department treats more than 80,000 patients every year, and anything goes in this busy department.

ED registrar Dr Lee Yung Wong meets 67-year-old Maryann, who, with daughter Tracy, has made a 30-kilometre taxi trip to the hospital from her home in the outer western suburbs. And she’s had a long history with Austin Health since a liver transplant here in 1999.

“I hear you’ve had a pretty rough trot,” says Dr Wong.

“Yes, I’ve had the liver transplant, bones broken in both my legs, breast cancer, a thyroid operation, and whatever else there was I don’t remember.”

Maryann has had almost constant diarrhoea for the past five days. She is very pale, badly dehydrated and close to exhaustion, with pain in the abdomen and lower back. She winces and moans softly as Dr Wong presses under her ribs and around her kidneys.

Dr Wong orders blood tests and sets about getting her rehydrated. He’ll be back to see her when the results come back, he says.

Dr Wong came to Melbourne from Kuching in Malaysia in 2004 as an 18-year-old. Apart from one year, he has been at Austin Health since his internship here in 2010. After enjoying a few rotations through the ED, he began emergency medicine training in 2013.

“There’s something attractive about doing a small thing that has a big impact in a great time of

need,” he says. “We’re generalists. We try to care for the patient as a whole and I think that’s a good quality of emergency medicine.”

“People are usually in a great deal of pain or distress when they come to Emergency. I like the fact that you can still do a lot for them.”

In an examination room, plumber Graeme Davis’s left knee is sore and badly swollen. He was putting up some guttering yesterday when the ladder slipped and he rode it to the ground. X-rays show a fractured patella, an ultrasound confirms there is no bleeding in the joint, and a 3D scan reveals in detail the break, which looks like a slightly tilted capital F.

The good news is that it won’t require wiring and Graeme goes home in a Zimmer splint stretching from his upper thigh to lower calf.

They keep coming: 17-year-old Angus Garrard has broken the fifth metacarpal in his left hand after crashing his trail bike into a kangaroo at Hurstbridge; he goes home in a plaster cast. Adele, 31, receives eight neat stitches to seal a cut in her forehead suffered in a fall at a supermarket.

A scientist, who has had long-term eye problems including glaucoma and is on the waiting list for a second cataract operation, presents with a bad bleed in his right eye.

“There are many demands at that coalface,” says Dr Thomas Chan, Director of Emergency Medicine. “Time pressures; the ability to think on your feet is important; there are the demands of shift work; and the ability to prioritise your clinical demands and to make sure not only are patients diagnosed correctly but that they are identified as either potentially deteriorating or otherwise.”

“The ED is the front door,” he says. “When there’s no one else a patient can go to, be it medical or social, they come to the ED because we’re open 24/7.”

*Story abridged and reprinted with permission from 3010 Melbourne University Alumni magazine. [unimelb.edu.au/3010](http://unimelb.edu.au/3010)*

**The Austin Health Emergency Department needs your help to purchase 6 special patient bedside monitors to provide instant patient observations and to make a real difference when multiple patients and priorities demand attention. If you would like to take action please fill in the tear-off donation coupon attached to this newsletter or call (03) 9496 5753 to donate today.**

## Human Nature brings joy to Mandy



**Mandy Johnson was just 29 years old when life took an unexpected turn. Diagnosed with respiratory failure, she was in dire straits and spent 11 weeks in hospital, including five weeks in Austin Hospital’s Ward 5 West.**

A busy and active member of the community in Benalla, the Victorian country town where she lives with her family, Mandy worked as a volunteer at both the local community house and the hospital. After finally settling and feeling at home in Benalla since her family moved there four years ago, life was good.

Until one day, after several weeks of feeling extremely tired and lethargic, Mandy saw her doctor and was immediately sent in an ambulance to hospital, where she was diagnosed with respiratory failure. Her condition was so severe that after one week she was transferred to Melbourne for intensive care.

“I don’t remember a lot about this time. I had to have a tracheostomy (a special breathing tube) for many weeks, so I wasn’t allowed to leave the hospital,” says Mandy. “I was pretty devastated because I had tickets to see Human Nature in Melbourne and I couldn’t go. Seeing them in concert was a lifelong dream.”

Thanks to the care and dedication of nurses, physiotherapists and doctors caring for Mandy, a surprise was planned when word spread that Human Nature would be doing an informal performance for patients at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness & Research Centre (ONJ Centre).

“When the physiotherapist told me they were  
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going to take me off the ward to see Human going to take me off the ward to see Human Nature perform at the ONJ Centre I burst into tears. It was a massive surprise,” says Mandy. “The best thing about the day was seeing the surprise on my sister Karen’s face. I had kept it a secret from her. It made my day seeing her that happy.”

Mandy has returned home to Benalla and is back at work again which she loves.

“Three months on and I am doing a lot better. For a long time I didn’t think I would ever see daylight again. If it wasn’t for the Austin, I probably wouldn’t be here today talking to you.”

## Austin Health leads the way with Diabetes Discovery

Diabetes is the epidemic of the 21st century and the biggest challenge confronting Australia’s health system, with around 1.7 million of us estimated to have the disease. This includes all types of diagnosed diabetes as well as silent, undiagnosed type 2 diabetes. But doctors at Austin Health are leading the way with a new early identification and review program.

In fact, diabetes is the fastest growing chronic condition in Australia; increasing at a faster rate than other chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. All types of diabetes are increasing in prevalence:

- Type 1 diabetes accounts for 10% of all diabetes and is increasing
- Type 2 diabetes accounts for 85% of all diabetes and is increasing
- Gestational diabetes in pregnancy is increasing

“Diabetes Discovery is a world-first program. First of its kind, it has led to system wide change with direct effects on improving patient care through rapid review of sick inpatients with diabetes and detecting undiagnosed diabetes in patients admitted to Austin Health,” says Dr Elif Ekinci, Director of Diabetes at Austin Health and Sir Edward Dunlop Medical Research Foundation Senior Fellow at the University of Melbourne. “When people get admitted to hospital there is no way of knowing if they have diabetes, apart from asking them. There are a lot of people who don’t know they have diabetes or high blood sugar.”

Through this program, every patient over the age of 54 who is admitted automatically undergoes a blood test to indicate blood sugar levels in the past 3 months and their likelihood of either having diabetes.

“Anybody who has a high reading is seen directly by a specialist within 24-48 hours,” says Dr Ekinci.

**280 Australians develop diabetes every day. That’s one person every five minutes**



*“Having compassion for patients is really important because diabetes is not an easy thing for people to manage.”*  
- Dr Elif Ekinci

“What we have learnt is that one-third of people over the age of 54 who are admitted to Austin Health have diabetes. And a further one-third have pre-diabetes. Only one-third are in the normal range for blood sugar levels.”

“There is no doubt that because of Diabetes Discovery we are seeing sick people earlier,” says Dr Ekinci. “We are using technology to identify patients earlier, see them earlier and we are also actively educating junior hospital doctors and general practitioners in the local area to increase awareness of diabetes.”

Although the incidence of diabetes is increasing in the population, there is hope, says Dr Ekinci.

“More recently new therapies have emerged which are quite good at preventing complications resulting from diabetes, and technology is offering hope through new devices aimed at eliminating the painful finger-pricking method of checking blood sugar.

# YES! I will help purchase 6 special bedside patient monitors.



Title: Dr / Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms (please circle)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ P/code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to become a regular supporter of Austin Health.  
Please send me more information.

Please accept my tax-deductible donation of:

\$35    \$50    \$75    \$150    \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
my choice

Enclosed is my cheque/money order made payable to Austin Health

**OR** Please debit the amount I have indicated from my:

VISA    MASTERCARD    AMEX

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Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

AHW17

Please send me information about:

Making a bequest in my Will to Austin Health; **OR**

I have already included Austin Health in my Will

 **Austin Health** ABN 96 237 388 063

Locked Bag 25, Heidelberg VIC 3084  
Ph (03) 9496 5753 Email fundraising@austin.org.au

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**Did you know that you can choose Austin Health as your chosen charity for Run Melbourne on 30 July 2017?**

**Choose from 5km, 10km or half-marathon and fundraise at the same time.**

**Go to [nfp.everydayhero.com/au/austin-health](http://nfp.everydayhero.com/au/austin-health)**



**To find out how you can support Austin Health please call 03 9496 5753, email [fundraising@austin.org.au](mailto:fundraising@austin.org.au) or visit our website at [www.austin.org.au](http://www.austin.org.au)**

## 3 easy ways to give:



**Post**

Simply complete this donation form and return it to:  
Austin Health, Locked Bag 25,  
Heidelberg VIC 3084



**Call**

Call us on (03) 9496 5753  
and make a donation over  
the phone



**Online**

Visit [www.austin.org.au/support-us](http://www.austin.org.au/support-us) and fill in your details to make a secure online donation

## You make a world of difference

The generosity and kindness of every one of our supporters is inspirational. So before anything else, we want to say “Thank You!”

We'd like to give special mention to:

- **Kew Golf Club** who held a charity day and donated the fantastic amount of \$10,000 for a Gazebo for the Spinal Ward at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre.
- **Ducati Owners Club of Victoria** who raised an amazing \$32,750 from their 40th Birthday Monster Raffle for the Victorian Spinal Cord Service. The money will be used to purchase equipment for supported living apartments, and the remaining funds will be set aside for the Ward 3 North Balcony area which is in need of a facelift for patients and families to enjoy.
- The students of **Soreth House, Whitefriars College** have donated \$36,055 over 10 years since 2007 for the Acute Spinal Ward.
- **Myer Doncaster** who raised \$17,606 for the kidney transplant unit – half raised by staff and then matched dollar for dollar by the Myer Stores Community Fund.
- The Estate of **Graham Marshall**.

## Palliative Care Appeal

We asked for your help in raising money to purchase new equipment for the Palliative Care Ward. Thanks to your generosity, we have been able to purchase two Recliner Chairs, three Crash Mats and five Commodes. **This equipment is helping our staff provide more comfort and dignity to people at the end of their life.**

## The Surgery Centre



Because you have action in the 2016 Appeal, we were new equipment for theatres at The Surgery Centre in Austin Health's

Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. We have purchased two Alaris Pumps, four Stryker Printers, two Continuous Flow Sets and four Perianal Trays.

With more equipment we can perform more elective surgeries, freeing up vital space in our emergency surgery theatres at the Austin Hospital, allowing more patients to be treated.

**Thank you.**

## A new scanner lights the way for chronic bone diseases



The 1272 Scanner, installed at Austin Health this month, is giving researchers access to a new generation of extremely high resolution images of bones. The \$731,000 scanner has the potential to lead to improved treatment for chronic diseases such as osteoporosis, arthritis and cancer.

“This scanner will allow us to gain insight into how certain agents (such as hormones and pharmaceuticals) act on the bone microarchitecture, which is a very important determinant of its strength,” says Associate Professor Rachel Davey, Head, Molecular Endocrinology and Musculoskeletal Research Group at Austin Health. “This will not only allow us

to gain insight into current therapies but also will allow the testing of new therapeutics in pre-clinical models. This is particularly important for osteoporosis treatments as the majority of the current therapies stop the loss of bone but do not restore the bone already lost.”

We are very grateful for the support of the following organisations which have enabled the purchase of the scanner:

- Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne
- Gandel Philanthropy
- H.T Pamphilon Fund
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Dorothy Nowell
- University of Melbourne - Collaborative Equipment Grant Scheme