

Chief Executive's report



2016-17 was an incredibly rewarding, yet challenging year, on several fronts.

It was challenging for several reasons – most notably:

- the growing demand from our community for care
- the increased level of severity and complexity seen in many of our admitted patients and
- the corresponding demand for inpatient beds in older ageing facilities.

In true Alfred Health style, our team responded with professionalism and compassion to deliver the best possible care for our community.

A growing health service

We are a growing health service with increases across almost all areas of our activity.

Much of this growth was seen across the many state-wide services we provide for our Victorian community: we are truly a health service that cares for all Victorians.

Our emergency, trauma and critical care capability was needed more than ever.

The Bourke Street Mall incident in January brought into focus the importance of an integrated and effective state trauma system. Our Emergency and Trauma team was ready and waiting to receive those who had been severely injured in the incident. We received seven people, though were prepared to care for many more.

Throughout the year there was sustained growth in the major trauma program, with close to 1,500 patients treated for severe life-threatening injuries. Most required surgery and intensive care to survive.

There was a corresponding lift in the number of patients supported through our Rehabilitation Services at Caulfield Hospital.

Our Acquired Brain Injury Unit, which opened in 2014, now accounts for almost 40 per cent of all rehabilitation-occupied bed days at Caulfield.

Our surgical capacity supported the state's elective surgery program. By undertaking additional surgical work from other hospitals, such as Western Health and Monash Health,

we gave more than 100 patients earlier than expected access to orthopaedic, vascular and ear-nose-and throat surgery.

Importantly this eased elective surgery waiting lists at other public hospitals and demonstrated our 'broader-than-catchment' role in the Victorian healthcare system.

Even with this extra workload, close to 98 per cent of our elective waitlist patients were treated within clinically recommended times.

Acute care specialisation

One of the things that makes Alfred Health different from other health services is our level of specialisation – particularly in acute care.

Nowhere is this more evident than in our transplantation program.

This year we gave dozens of Australians a second chance at life through organ transplant. Our clinicians performed 96 lung, 20 heart and 28 kidney transplants as well as more than 100 stem cell transplants for cancer patients.

The Alfred is expert in ECMO – extracorporeal membrane

oxygenation – a technique that provides cardiac and respiratory support to patients whose heart and lungs are unable to work effectively on their own.

The use of this technique in our ICU is increasing and was relied on heavily during the recent influenza season, which was one of the worst on record. Our detection rates were up 500 per cent compared to last year.

While we would all know of someone who was affected, we were all moved by the story of Sarah Hawthorn. Sarah fell ill with influenza late in her pregnancy.

Due to the severity of her symptoms, her baby boy was delivered early, and she was transferred to The Alfred in August, unaware that she was now a mother.

Sarah remained in a critical condition for more than three months while our specialists worked tirelessly to save her life.

Against all odds, our critical care team gave her a second chance. And, if you follow the news, you'll already know she is in a stable condition and starting rehabilitation ahead of what we all hope will be an eventual move back home to the farm.

Truly a great outcome. An outcome that some may argue could only have been achieved here.

We are also known here for our leading role in cardiac care and, during the year, we continued to treat some of the most complex cardiac cases in the state.

We are the only Victorian health service able to provide the full range of adult cardiac care from heart failure through to cardiac rehabilitation. Due to our specialisation and increased regional referrals, cardiac admissions have grown by 42 per cent over the last five years.

Our constant improvement in cardiac clinical practice – as with many of our other specialities – is a result of direct involvement in global research and clinical trials.

As a case in point, we became the first hospital in Australia to participate in trialling Trans catheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) for low-risk patients. If successful, this could reduce the need for open heart surgery for many patients.

Research: Discovering the next generation of care

And that is another difference here: we integrate research into clinical practice. This means we can put research to work to make a bigger difference to our patients sooner than otherwise possible.

Some recent major research achievements include:

- Australia's first dedicated blood cancer research centre, established by The Alfred and Monash University thanks to a \$1.2 million grant from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF).
- The expansion of PrepX – a ground-breaking study, which is providing people at high risk of HIV infection with access to the life-changing medication, Pre-exposure prophylaxis – commonly known as PrEP.

This study, supported by The Alfred, the Victorian AIDS Council and the Victorian Government expanded into rural and regional sites as well as Tasmania and Western Australia.

In its early days it would seem that the study is contributing to reducing HIV infections.

- Progression on a landmark peanut vaccine trial, led by respiratory physician Professor Robyn O'Hehir. This treatment is trialling the use of new technology to reset the immune system to tolerate peanuts without any allergic reactions.

And the First Chair of Oncology, created in honour of the late-Tony Charlton, who spent more than 20 years supporting The Alfred. Eminent researcher and clinician, Professor John Zalcberg accepted the inaugural position to foster the transfer of research into clinical practice, which will make a positive difference to the lives of thousands of Victorians fighting cancer.

Safety and wellbeing of staff

Great care is the result of great clinicians working in great teams. We are truly blessed with the quality and commitment of our workforce.

This is also why there is zero tolerance for aggressive or violent behaviour from patients or the community towards our staff.

This increasing incidence of aggression and violence towards staff while they provide care is a disturbing trend. Our staff have the unequivocal right to a safe workplace.

In early March we launched **an internal campaign**, encouraging staff to report these incidents to the health service and Victoria Police.

In addition, we endorsed and promoted the Victorian Government's excellent Worksafe campaign that tackles this issue.

We are continuing to train our staff in de-escalation techniques to prevent any conflict. This is reinforced through our new Occupational Health and Safety Framework that focuses on staff being safe at work, healthy at work and supported at work.

The challenges of infrastructure

Now turning to other side of the growth coin: the increasing need for inpatient beds and updated facilities.

Even though we opened an additional 33 inpatient beds during the year, limited bed capacity challenged our ability to provide timely care.

To address capacity in the short term, planning is underway for a new ward on the fifth floor of The Alfred's main ward block – the last remaining ward space available for development.

Planned to open in 2018, this new ward will support the early recovery of trauma patients.

Of course creating new clinical areas is not without its challenges and I thank all staff who have moved to offices adjacent to our campus so we can give primacy to patient care.

It is no surprise to anyone, that our infrastructure – particularly The Alfred – is ageing.

This presented a challenge in late-December when flooding from thunderstorms entered our operating theatre as well as the recovery suite at The Alfred.

This incident demonstrated how the infrastructure – much of which dates back to the late 1960s – struggles with significant weather events. The Victorian Government generously provided \$9.4million in funding to help address the stormwater and other essential infrastructure issues in the short term.

Amid challenges there were many achievements.

The redevelopment of the Eva and Les Erdi Emergency and Trauma Centre at The Alfred is progressing well and is due to open in early 2018.

Also, we successfully raised funds for the Sandringham Hospital's new Day Procedure Centre, thanks to our local community, and the Victorian Government.

The specially-designed facility, due to open next year, will add extra capacity by freeing up bed space for patients from the emergency department. Most importantly it will offer convenient and accessible care to the local Sandringham community.

Supporting communities

Partnerships underpinned our response to better supporting our more disadvantaged communities.

This year I was particularly pleased to see the progress made in building relationships with our Aboriginal community.

With the help of Reconciliation Australia, our local elders and staff, we developed our first Reconciliation Action Plan.

This plan, aims to create enduring relationships with our local Aboriginal community built on the basis of respect and understanding.

It was harmoniously launched to the sound of local performer Dan Sultan which was enjoyed by our staff, patients and community alike.

And now turning to the future

We entered the second year of our five-year Strategic Plan. Already I can see the significant strides that, through our three flagship projects, will change the face of our healthcare service.

First to eTQC

The electronic Timely Quality Care initiative – known internally as eTQC – will transition Alfred Health to an integrated electronic medical information system, digitising our health system as a result.

It will improve data quality and accessibility and better support how we deliver clinical care.

Substantial progress has been made. Just in the last month we completed an important project milestone – **Future State Validation** – where staff had the opportunity to feed into the design of the extended EMR before the build process.

This project, which will fundamentally shape the way we work, will require the focus and commitment of the whole health service as we plan to go live with the first phase in October 2018.

Second, the redevelopment at The Alfred

This is potentially the most significant and ambitious redevelopment project that The Alfred has embarked upon since the 70s. In our strategic plan we refer to this project as the St Kilda Wing. However, the recent review of our service plan demonstrates the rate of growth in our catchment as well as across the state will require an expansion of the original development.

While we are still refining the master plan this redevelopment the focus is on new theatres, an expanded ICU, state of the art pathology and diagnostic facilities and new modern ward.

This is a development that will build the next generation of health care at The Alfred to the benefit of all Victorians.

We remain encouraged that this redevelopment will receive the support and funding from government in the future.

And thirdly, the Respect and Quality Improvement Project, which is building a culture of respect and accountability across our health service.

Our most recent People Matters Survey demonstrates that we are a supportive and collaborative workforce with a shared set of beliefs and values.

It also shows that we have further to go in removing bullying and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

A new agreement with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The Memorandum of Understanding commits both organisations to work closely to address issues around discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in surgery and the broader healthcare sector.

There are many other constructive initiatives underway.

My gratitude

And before I come to an end I would like to express my gratitude goes to the unstinting support of my Board and Executive team during the year.

To our community – your generosity whether it is through volunteering, supporting our many events or becoming a donor, truly makes a difference to our patients and our staff every day.

And to our frontline staff – your unfailing commitment to our patients is the bedrock of our great public healthcare service.

Thank you

Chief Executive,
Professor Andrew Way