

2016 Annual Meeting Chief Executive's Address

Presented by Prof Andrew Way, Chief Executive of Alfred Health
on Wednesday, 23 November 2016

We are fortunate to have an extraordinary team here at Alfred Health. Year on year, day after day, we work hard to make a difference to our patients' lives.

A commitment demonstrated by very recent events.

Twice in the past week we have seen our staff respond to unforeseen challenges – shifting gear to once again support the broader community.

Last Friday, a blaze at the Commonwealth Bank in Springvale, saw us mobilise resources quickly, preparing to receive people with the most serious injuries from the incident.

This was a whole of health service response, with Caulfield and Sandringham supporting The Alfred by creating capacity for incoming patients, and our clinicians – many off duty – quickly volunteering their services, if needed.

We received six people suffering from burns – some severe – but stood ready to care for more. An appropriate response from one of the state's major adult trauma services.

Then, on Monday night, nature threw a curve ball and Melbourne experienced 'Thunderstorm Asthma', which certainly posed challenges for the whole Victorian health care system.

Like other healthcare services, hospitals, community services and GP's, we received an influx of patients over a few brief hours.

Our clinical teams did what they do best, pulled together and went above and beyond, to care for each and every one of these patients.

On the night:

Numbers peaked at The Alfred ED with 108 patients at 9pm

Sandringham ED peaked at 11pm with 58 patients

Two people required admission to the Alfred's intensive care unit.

Putting these figures in another way, we treated more patients with asthma distress in one night than we would normally in six months.

2015-16 Results

It was this 'can do' attitude that saw us care for more Victorians in 2015-16 than ever before.

Our results speak for themselves.

We provided almost 109,000 episodes of inpatient care and there were close to 95,000 emergency department presentations across The Alfred and Sandringham Hospital.

As a result, 78 per cent of patients waited less than four hours in The Alfred's Emergency Department, falling only slightly short of the government's 81 per cent target. This was despite increased demand for complex emergency care – particularly those who started their emergency treatment at a hospital not part of Alfred Health.

Our Emergency Department at Sandringham Hospital met target.

Emergency operations increased by 8 per cent, and 11,351 elective surgeries were performed.

Importantly, 98 per cent of elective waitlist patients were treated within clinically recommended times – well above target.

Our heart and lung transplantation services continued to be one of the busiest – and most successful – in the world.

Many people were given a second chance at life through 94 lung and 31 heart transplants.

This was a strong performance on all measures, balancing quality care with increased demand for our services.

And, it was achieved within a sound financial framework as we recorded a financial operating surplus of \$300 thousand on our \$1billion+ turnover.

Meeting community standards and expectations

As a leading healthcare service with a strong bond of trust with the people of Victoria, it is imperative we meet and – where possible – exceed our community's expectations.

One measure of this is patient feedback, which last year remained at high levels.

The Alfred Health Patient Experience Survey showed that 94 per cent of patients rated the quality of their overall care as 'good', 'very good' or 'exceptional'.

Importantly, 96 per cent felt they were always or almost always treated with respect and dignity.

Another measure is national accreditation – a process that rigorously assesses day-to-day hospital performance against ten exacting standards.

In May, Alfred Health was again fully accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, receiving 51 'Met with Merits' from independent surveyors. It was the highest number of 'Met with Merits' so far given to one organisation.

This positive result reassured us, the Board, the executive, and the clinical leadership, that we are consistently providing our community with quality care.

In another vote of confidence, Alfred Health was awarded the 2015 Premier's Health Service of the Year award at the Victorian Public Healthcare Awards in November last year.

It was a proud moment.

This prestigious award highlighted where we have transformed how we delivered care – by putting patients at the centre of how we work.

Collaborating with others

Often providing the best possible healthcare for patients and the community requires collaboration with other skilled and specialist providers.

We successfully deployed this approach in 2013, with the Royal Women's Hospital taking management of the maternity and gynaecological service at Sandringham Hospital.

This collaboration, which gave our community tertiary level maternity care in a local environment, has been a great success.

In May this year, we announced that we would extend this 'Sandringham model', and the Women's assumed the management of the Special Care Nursery service from September 2016.

Next year, the nursery at Sandringham Hospital will be refurbished and expanded, allowing more newborns to be cared for closer to home. This service transfer is now complete and working well.

We are working with the local community to improve access to other services at Sandringham Hospital and I hope we will be able to make some exciting announcements about this in the coming months.

A year of change and focus...

2015-16 was a year of change; change that I believe will define our organisation for the next decade to come.

A key instrument of this change is our *Strategic Plan for 2016-20*. The Board of Alfred Health led a process that will see the organisation re-emphasise its core values, while responding to new challenges.

The plan's ambitious agenda responds to the challenges of the rapidly changing healthcare environment.

It features three flagship projects that will change the face of our healthcare service.

First is eTQC.

The electronic Timely Quality Care project will transform the way we care for patients by creating a single unified view of the treatment we provide through an electronic health record available to clinicians in real time. We will capture data in a way that will support near time service improvements.

Second is the new St Kilda Wing.

This is potentially the most significant redevelopment project that The Alfred has seen since the 1970s. Our vision is for state-of-the-art theatres, a new ICU and modern wards that will support our role as the state's leading Trauma and Critical Care Centre, as well as our other wide ranging clinical programs.

And thirdly, the Respect and Quality Improvement Project that will build a culture of shared expectations and mutual accountability to engage our frontline staff in change.

Already significant work has been achieved on each of these projects.

We moved away from the more traditional format of Vision, Mission and Objectives. Our new purpose and new beliefs lie at the heart of the plan.

Our new purpose – *improving the lives of our patients and their families, our community and humanity* – is intentionally a bold and aspirational statement.

As the past week shows, our team is clearly up to the challenge.

Our new purpose is important as it articulates not only what we do every day but, also, how our work takes us beyond the walls of our hospitals.

Educating people about their health to prevent disease and improve wellbeing will be increasingly the future direction of health.

Our new beliefs place the patient / staff relationship front and centre, emphasising the importance of compassion, care and respect.

The 'how' we work is as equally important as the 'what' we do.

During the year, we put a stronger spotlight on the health and wellbeing of our staff. Our ability to provide excellent care is predicated on a genuine culture of safety and respect.

In other words, the safety of staff is as important as the safety of our patients, as we cannot have one without the other.

Recent survey results showed staff felt they worked in a supportive and caring workplace that reinforced patient safety,

At the same time, staff told us they were experiencing increased aggression and occasional violence at work.

We are determined to address this worrying and unacceptable trend that is increasingly evident across healthcare.

Practical measures are being put in place such as on the job training for staff and improved incident reporting.

There is a solid commitment from Board and executive to ensure that our staff are safe, supported and healthy at work.

Innovation and research

Innovation has always been a driving force at Alfred Health.

In the year I am reporting on we raised the bar higher, launching the inaugural *2015 Alfred Health Innovations Grant* initiative.

Four projects were successfully developed, launched and implemented, using technology common in other industries to improve service experiences.

The four projects were:

Boarding passes at The Alfred's Heart Centre, where we have introduced an electronic check-in for their appointments.

An SMS theatre event tracking system was introduced, messaging next-of-kin at key times by electronically following patients through their theatre journey.

Our Healthcare at Caulfield patient portal, was launched to help orientate patients to the Caulfield Hospital environment.

ICU discharge risk identifier – a system that helps us predict those patients who will need greater support when they have moved from ICU to the wards.

Given the enthusiasm from staff and the great results achieved, we have launched our 2016 Innovations Grants and I look forward to reading staff submissions later in the month.

Research: Discovering the next generation of care

A culture of innovation goes hand-in-hand with a culture of research.

And, this year, there were significant research developments that informed clinical practice in Australia and overseas.

Researchers from The Alfred answered the long-held debate over whether aspirin should be stopped before coronary artery surgery.

The results of the 10-year international study showed there was no increased risk of surgical bleeding or increased need for blood transfusion associated with aspirin use.

Scientists from The Alfred and Monash University made a breakthrough in targeting aggressive blood cancers through combination therapy, giving hope to people suffering from Acute Myeloid Leukaemia.

And, here at our Caulfield campus, early research results from the international drug trial of Anavex 2-73, which aims to address the symptoms of dementia, were positive.

Building our future facilities

During the year there was significant infrastructure development at The Alfred.

In January we opened a new Admissions Unit, next to The Alfred's main operating suites and recovery.

We started expanding our cardiac facilities on Ward 3West, in response to increased need for specialised services.

The Emergency & Trauma Centre (E&TC) redevelopment progressed with the appointment of the main contractor. Made possible through the support of the Eva and Les Erdi Humanitarian Charitable Foundation, this project will transform the existing facility.

Sadly, Eva Erdi passed away in August. She was a generous benefactor and supporter of The Alfred, and her extraordinary philanthropy will be felt by the Victorian community for generations to come.

At Sandringham Hospital we launched a capital appeal, asking the local community to help us build a new Day Procedure Centre.

The exponential growth in surgical procedures at Sandringham demonstrates a strong need to provide straightforward procedures close to home, and in a comfortable and welcoming setting.

To date there has been strong community support for the appeal, which is very encouraging for the future of this new centre.

Future focus

Looking forward to the next year – undoubtedly there will be more challenges and changes on the horizon.

We know there will be greater focus on the safety and quality performance of the broader health system, following the recent *Duckett Report*.

We know there will probably be more occasions when the community will need our trauma centre and rehabilitation service, as we see a sustained growth in major trauma cases across the state.

We know that that the Australian Government Medical Research Future Fund will change the research landscape. This fund will strengthen the focus on health service research and its link to directly improving patient outcomes.

This new initiative is to ensure that Australia remains at the forefront of the world's medical research effort.

We also know we have a team who are ready and able to meet challenges, both seen and unforeseen.

Appreciation and gratitude

We also know our strong performance is the result of a strong team, not just Alfred Health staff.

Gratitude goes to our many donors and volunteers, whose constant support and tireless efforts make a difference to our patients' health and wellbeing. Your generosity inspires our work.

Appreciation must also go to the Board for their guidance and direction, and to the Alfred Health Executive team for their continued support.

And lastly, thank you to Alfred Health's dedicated staff whose unfailing commitment to improving the lives of our patients and community remains the lynchpin of our great public healthcare service.