

impossible

NEWS | AUTUMN 2026

Transforming the future

Philanthropy driving UTI breakthroughs

A personal connection

Clare moved by care

Shout for a Mate

Bowlers hit the greens for Geoff

Blood vessels (orange) and nerves (cyan) intertwine like threads in a living tapestry, carrying oxygen, nutrients and signals that sustain urinary function.

Photo credit: Ashleigh Paschek,
Urinary Tract Disease Research Group



theAlfred
FOUNDATION



Director's
report
Patrick Baker

Welcome back to another edition of our newsletter, impossible.

One thing that never changes at The Alfred is the drive to innovate so we can deliver the best possible care for every patient who walks through our doors. And time and again, that next step forward happens because people like you choose to back bold ideas.

In this issue, you'll meet Dr Malcolm Starkey and his team, who are determined to bring urinary tract infection (UTI) care into the 21st century. Their work tackles two long-standing barriers at once: outdated diagnostics that miss too many infections, and limited treatment options for people living with recurrent or chronic UTIs.

Philanthropy is already accelerating this program — helping generate the early data and momentum required to change practice at scale.

You'll also read Clare O'Donoghue's story — a tribute to the compassion and skill of our clinicians and nurses over decades, and to the power of a gift made in honour of a loved one.

Clare's future gift in her Will is helping accelerate advancements in digestive health through our planned Centre of Excellence for Digestive Health, an ambitious initiative to detect digestive cancers earlier, tailor treatment more precisely and expand timely access to endoscopy — investments that will change thousands of lives.

Across these stories runs a common thread: when community and clinicians work together, progress follows. Your support turns promising ideas into real-world solutions.

Thank you for everything you do to make that possible. If you have feedback or would like to discuss how you can help, we'd love to hear from you by emailing us at foundation@alfred.org.au or phoning (03) 9076 3222.

Warmest regards,

Patrick Baker
Director, The Alfred Foundation

Simone heads Bayside Health Alfred

The Alfred Foundation extends a welcome to Adjunct Professor Simone Alexander as the Chief Executive of Bayside Health Alfred (BHA).

The BHA is located across Melbourne's inner south-east and bayside suburbs, encompassing The Alfred, Caulfield and Sandringham hospitals and associated sites.

Bayside Health was formed as part of the merger between Alfred Health, Peninsula Health, Kooweerup Regional Health Service, Bass Coast Health and Gippsland Southern Health to create a unified and integrated health service, servicing more than 1.2 million Victorians.

Each hospital and healthcare site will continue to operate under its existing name, with the same staff delivering the same trusted care.

Adj. Prof Alexander is a senior health service executive with more than 30 years' experience in public healthcare, starting as a student perioperative nurse at The Alfred.

"I am thrilled to take on this role at such a pivotal moment for our growing community," she said. "Together with our donors and partners, we can accelerate innovation and ensure every contribution translates into better care for patients."

Before the merger, Adj. Prof Alexander was the Interim Chief Executive at Bass Coast while continuing to serve as Alfred Health's Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer.

As a registered nurse, she has an extensive clinical background in perioperative nursing. She is recognised for her strategic, people-centred leadership and her ability to lead large, complex organisations through transformation.

Adj. Prof Alexander is deeply committed to improving patient outcomes, supporting workforce wellbeing and fostering inclusive, high-performance cultures.

Adjunct Professor Simone Alexander is the Chief Executive of the newly-formed Bayside Health Alfred Care Group.



A distinguished leader

Globally-recognised clinical neurologist and translational neuroscientist, Professor Terry O'Brien has been appointed as the new Director of Research for Bayside Health Alfred.

He will begin the role in August 2026, following the retirement of long-serving research leader Prof Stephen Jane AO.

Over the past decade, Prof O'Brien's work at The Alfred saw him initially lead the Alfred Neurology Department and, later, establish Australia's leading integrated neuroscience treatment, research and education hub, The Alfred Brain Program.

In 2018, he established the Neuroscience Clinical Trials Unit at The Alfred, which has grown to become the largest clinical trial site of its kind in Australia and a major contributor to national and international advances in patient care.

In announcing the appointment, Bayside Health Chief Executive Adam Horsburgh said Prof O'Brien's leadership comes at a pivotal time for the organisation's research strategy.

"Prof O'Brien is exceptionally well placed to lead the health service into its next era of research excellence," Mr Horsburgh said. "We have extraordinary clinicians and researchers, strengthened infrastructure, and deep partnerships with institutions, such as Monash University."

"His vision and experience will help us accelerate translational research, apply emerging technologies, such as AI, and continue to improve patient outcomes across the community."



Professor Terry O'Brien has been appointed as a Director of Research for Alfred Care Group.

Reflecting on the appointment, Prof O'Brien said he was excited to build on the strong foundations established over the past decade.

"The Alfred is uniquely positioned to lead the next generation of health breakthroughs," Prof O'Brien said. "We have an unrivalled ecosystem where research, translation and clinical practice come together on a single campus, supported by exceptional talent across all disciplines."

Prof O'Brien has also been appointed as Monash University's next Dean of the Sub-Faculty of Translational Medicine and Public Health within the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

This alignment between Bayside Health and Monash University further strengthens the shared commitment to advancing world-leading research and clinical innovation.

Bayside Health also acknowledges the significant contributions of Prof Jane, whose leadership in these roles since 2011 has helped shape a research environment that is nationally and internationally recognised for excellence and impact. He will conclude his roles with The Alfred and Monash University in July 2026.

The Alfred in the top 50 hospitals

The Alfred has been recognised as Australia's highest-ranked hospital in Newsweek's World's Best Hospitals 2026.

For the first time, The Alfred has been placed in the global top 50, ranked number 49, among more than 2500 hospitals evaluated worldwide.

This is a remarkable achievement for a public hospital and something our donor community can take real

pride in. Your generosity strengthens the research, technology and clinical excellence that help The Alfred deliver care at a world-leading standard.

Alfred Care Group Chief Executive Simone Alexander said the recognition reflects the dedication, skill and continual innovation of staff who work around the clock to deliver outstanding patient care, alongside those advancing clinical research.

"This acknowledgement is one measure of the quality of public healthcare our community can access, and it reflects our ongoing commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our patients," she said.

Transforming the future of UTI care

Half of all women will experience a urinary tract infection (UTI) at some point in their lives, yet countless patients are still told their symptoms don't exist. A reliance on a diagnostic test from the 1950s remains the global standard — one that routinely fails to detect chronic infection.

For some patients, this leads to years or even decades of pain, repeated antibiotics and hospital admissions.

But hope is already taking shape, fuelled by two timely philanthropic gifts to The Alfred that have sparked new momentum and discovery.

UTIs affect more than 405 million people worldwide every year and the true tally could be double that, given how often cases are misdiagnosed or missed entirely.

Yet despite this staggering number, research into the condition has been largely stagnant for decades. Patients with recurrent or chronic infections often fall through the cracks, with no clear diagnosis, no treatment pathway and no answers.



Dr Malcolm Starkey (centre) with the Urinary Tract Disease research team.

Dr Malcolm Starkey, Head of the Urinary Tract Disease Research Group, is determined to change that.

"Our goal is to transform how UTIs are diagnosed and treated," he said. "We're developing new diagnostics and exploring immunotherapy — using the body's own immune system to fight infection. But none of this would be possible without philanthropy.

"Philanthropy is the launchpad for innovation. Not only for an initial donation, like this, but it also allows us to generate the early data needed to secure major grants and industry partnerships. A single donation can have a multiplying effect."

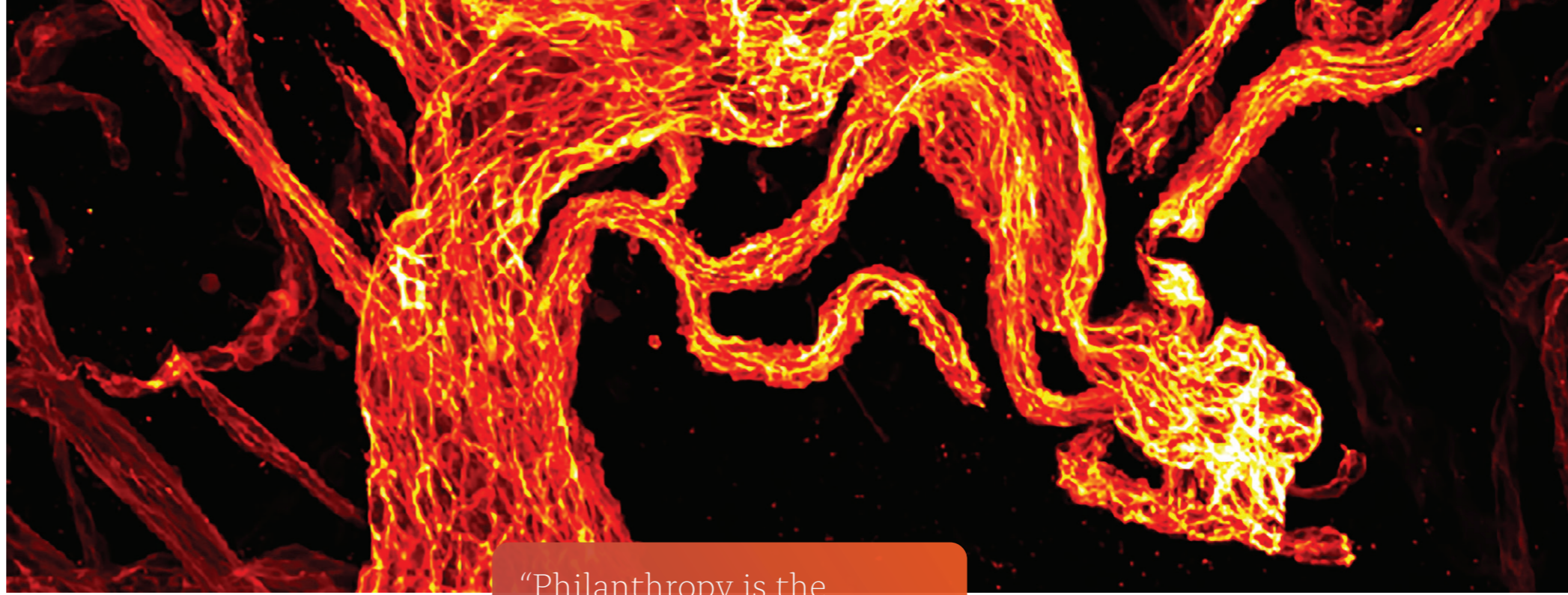
These early gifts have enabled new discoveries, new research directions and the recruitment of talented young female scientists whose careers are now taking flight.

Despite the prevalence of UTIs, the condition remains under-recognised and underfunded. UTIs are often dismissed as minor infections, yet the reality is far more serious.

More than one-third of patients fail to respond to current antibiotic treatments, leading to recurrent infections, kidney complications and life-threatening bloodstream infections. In children, repeated infections can cause lifelong kidney damage and even kidney failure.

"UTIs are almost a taboo topic," Dr Starkey said. "I'd love to see them spoken about the way we now talk about endometriosis or breast cancer.

"Everybody knows someone affected by UTIs.



"Philanthropy is the launchpad for innovation. A single donation can have a multiplying effect"

Dr Malcolm Starkey, Head of the Urinary Tract Disease Research Group

"We want to increase awareness and advocacy around this so that there is consistency in the diagnostic labs. It would be great to get to a point where people aren't suffering in silence, or getting lost in the system.

"We need to bring this condition out of the shadows."

For donors like Janet Tiller of the Wanless Family Foundation, the impact is deeply meaningful.

"UTIs are debilitating for so many people," she said. "I don't experience it myself, but I know a number of people who do, and it really affects their health and wellbeing.

"Supporting this research means improving quality of life."

The Urinary Disease Research Group is uniquely positioned to lead a global shift in how UTIs are understood, diagnosed and treated — an impact made possible through the strong collaboration between The Alfred and Monash University.

"There's so much to do in this space," Dr Starkey said. "There are more questions than answers — and that's exactly why philanthropic support is so vital."

Above image: The bladder's blood vessels coil and twist like the sinuous body of a mythical Chinese dragon - this image transforms anatomy into mythology - a reminder that even the smallest tissue can embody epic forms.

Photo credit: Ashleigh Paschek, Urinary Tract Disease Research Group

Philanthropic support enables bold ideas, rapid progress and discoveries that traditional funding cannot reach. It fuels the early-stage innovation that leads to breakthroughs and provides hope for patients who have been overlooked for decades, finally receiving the care they deserve.

With your support, The Alfred can lead a global shift in how UTIs are understood, diagnosed and treated — potentially improving countless lives.



The Wanless Family Foundation is a family affair - Janet's brother Robert is pictured here with wife Jackie and children Mark and Kate.

Honouring a mother's legacy

When Clare O'Donoghue talks about The Alfred, it is with a depth of gratitude shaped by decades of lived experience.

Her family's first association with the hospital in 1988 was a dramatic occasion, when her mother had emergency surgery after being diagnosed with late-stage bowel cancer.

The first of several urgent procedures over the years, each surgery was successful.

"I was always bowled over by the care that the specialists, surgeons and nurses took," Clare said. "I've spent more time in A&E at The Alfred than I ever wanted to, often in the middle of the night, and I've seen how people work under incredible pressure."

For Clare, the hospital is woven into the story of her family. Her father, mother and brother all spent their final days at The Alfred.

"You'd think that would give me really lousy memories," she said. "But I've always had that respect and regard for the staff."

One moment remains especially vivid: her mother's final admission, when the head surgeon told her that she couldn't operate.

"She (the surgeon) still came in on the weekend just to see my mum, even though they knew there was nothing they could do," Clare said. "That was incredibly special for me."



Clare O'Donoghue is incredibly grateful for the treatment and care afforded to her mum, Marie (pictured), at The Alfred.

Clare's decision to leave a gift in her Will is deeply personal. *"I was brought up to care for people," she said. "My mother was so altruistic. So it is very important for me that I do things in her memory."*

Her future gift will go towards supporting the critical work of the planned Centre of Excellence for Digestive Health (CEDH) — a bold vision to detect digestive cancers earlier, treat them more precisely and, ultimately, save more lives.

Director of the Department of Gastroenterology and the Department of Clinical Genetics and Genomics, Professor Alex Boussioutas, said personalised therapy and prevention of gastrointestinal diseases would be greatly enhanced by coordination through the CEDH.

"The value of having a comprehensive centre for digestive health is that you have all medical, nursing and Allied Health disciplines coordinated and targeted to prevention of colorectal cancer," he said. "You can save someone from a cancer diagnosis by investing appropriately in providing the right services to the right person at the right time."

The cross-disciplinary expertise in the gastroenterology team at The Alfred and Bayside Health is a huge strength in this endeavour, already providing tremendous patient outcomes.

This centre would only make that better — but it still needs more support.

"Philanthropy is a bit of a godsend at the moment, because there is no other way to make the financial investment that leads to giant leaps in infrastructure and expertise to impact patient outcomes," Prof Boussioutas said. "For instance, philanthropic investment into building an endoscopy centre will fundamentally change thousands of lives, because you can offer patients the timely care they need."

Clare believes in what the Centre can achieve.

"Anything that reduces waiting times or increases research is incredibly important," she said. "I just think The Alfred is an incredible hospital. I'd urge anyone thinking about a donation to make one — because you're helping save someone else's family, just as The Alfred helped mine."

To find out more about philanthropic opportunities at The Alfred, please contact Major Gifts Senior Manager Marlo Newton by emailing philanthropy@alfred.org.au or phoning (03) 9076 3222.



Geoff with his three daughters and wife.

Shout for a Mate: a community tribute on the greens

In the midst of his battles with cancer, Geoff Elletson had a brainwave.

'Shout for a Mate' was born, inspired by the generosity he would see at his home-away-from-home, Mitcham Bowling Club. Instead of everyone buying each other drinks, people could donate to a cause.

Unfortunately, Geoff ran out of time to see it launch, and so it instead remains as his legacy to fight a terrible cancer.

Almost all of Geoff's treatment for metastatic uveal melanoma was at the Paula Fox Melanoma and Cancer Centre (PFMCC), where he took part in clinical trials.

"Dad loved lawn bowls, with Mitcham being his family," Geoff's daughter, Christine, said. "He was your typical goofy dad who would always try and pull off the worst jokes and had the driest sense of humour."

Andrew McFarland, one of his best mates, remembered Geoff as *"tenacious and always up for a challenge"*. *"Geoff was one of those guys who didn't commit to anything without giving it his 110 per cent,"* he said.

Andrew hopes that Geoff's famously dry and quirky sense of humour would have appreciated Christine winning a club title recently — something which he was unable to do throughout his extensive time on the greens, which included playing in Mitcham's top pennant team.

Shout for a Mate was held in early March, with his family and friends planning for it to become an annual event. All funds raised will go towards supporting world-leading care, research and clinical trials of metastatic uveal melanoma at the PFMCC at The Alfred.

It is one of many community-led events that are held every year which play a vital role in supporting world-leading care and research at The Alfred.

A show of thanks, via giving backpacks

Rozz Dunn could feel the care from staff at The Alfred during a stay of multiple weeks last year.

Rozz was hit from behind by a cyclist while walking, resulting in a fractured skull and a seizure, before being placed in an induced coma for two weeks.

"At The Alfred, the staff were amazing," she said. "Everyone was so caring and so kind, even though I was their job, never once was I made to feel like that — and I was not a stellar patient, even trying to escape once."

Operation Backpack was launched in April 2025, with Rozz endeavouring to raise funds to provide backpacks of supplies for those people who could show up with nothing and have no one to get things for them.

Carly Maxwell, a Team Leader in the Social Work Department at The Alfred, said they had already been able to provide cancer patients with essentials that they would have otherwise struggled to obtain due to their illness, as well as help homeless patients.

"Such a donation makes such a difference to our patients, especially when they do not have support structures in place to assist them," Carly said. *"Thank you Rozz for your generosity and to those who assisted Rozz in making such an impact for patients at The Alfred."*



Rozz and her two children with Oscar from the Social Work Department handing over the backpacks.

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Donations of \$2 and over are tax-deductible
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Our community



Run Melbourne

Run Melbourne is back again in July — and so is our highest fundraiser from Team Alfred last year, Kiera Bulluss (pictured). Kiera's inspirational efforts in 2025 saw her raise more than \$5500 by herself among more than 300 people who represented Team Alfred across the half-marathon, 10km and 5km events.

Join us once again at Melbourne's largest winter running event of 2026, where more than 25,000 runners will embrace the thrill of running through the city's closed streets and iconic landmarks.

To sign up with Team Alfred, go to runmelbourne26.grassrootz.com/the-alfred-foundation



Team David

Brett Fullard set up a fundraising page in memory of his dad, David (pictured), to support the Paula Fox Melanoma and Cancer Centre (PFMCC).

"Dad knew that he couldn't beat his cancer, so he joined some clinical trials to hopefully help someone else have a better outcome," Brett said. *"This donation is a follow-on from his want to help the next person and is our small way of honouring his memory and legacy."*

"It was with their care and support at PFMCC that they were able to give us extra time, while treating Dad with care and dignity."



Running for a cause

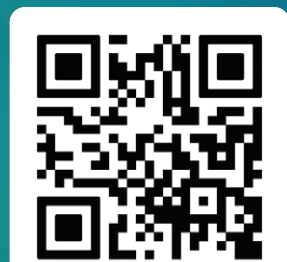
Alfred staff members are supporting the hospital through other events, including Oncology nurse Corey Sammut (pictured). Corey will be running his third full 42.2km-event when he takes part in the Ballarat Marathon on April 26.

"I am raising money for The Alfred Foundation because my patients regularly ask how they can give back," he said. *"This is the most meaningful way that they can do it."*

Associate Nurse Unit Manager in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Nova Sta Maria, is also raising funds by running a marathon — her first — in Sydney in August. *"I am dedicating this run to raise funds for the wellbeing of my colleagues at The Alfred ICU who give their absolute best to care for the sickest of the sick,"* she said.

Make the
impossible
possible

See reverse for details on how to donate to The Alfred Foundation, or scan the QR code below



Are you interested in creating your own fundraiser?

Scan the QR code or head to fundraising.alfredfoundation.org.au and create your own page today.



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