

impossible

NEWS | AUTUMN 2024

Inspiring

*Fundraising journey
lives on*

Dog therapy

*Liv's Loving Paws
takes off*

Revolutionary technology

Leading the way



theAlfred
FOUNDATION



Director's report

Patrick Baker

An exciting year lies in wait at The Alfred, with numerous ongoing projects, highlighted by the official opening of the world-class Paula Fox Melanoma and Cancer Centre in April.

Watching this marvellous new building grow to reach into the St Kilda Rd skyline during the past two years has been inspiring, representative of what can be achieved with a dedicated purpose and the highest quality teamwork – something to which we aspire at The Alfred.

But projects on a smaller scale can be equally galvanising, such as those highlighted in this autumn edition of **impossible**. Ranging from an extraordinary commitment to fundraising which spans decades, to being able to bring more game-changing technologies and programs to The Alfred – all thanks to donations from people like you.

I am constantly humbled and motivated by what can be achieved, thanks to your unwavering commitment and support, recognising that each contribution has played a crucial role in making The Alfred a leader of excellence in healthcare.

Your feedback is highly appreciated and always welcome. Please email us at foundation@alfred.org.au or phone (03) 9076 3222.

Warmest regards,

Patrick Baker
Director

Cover image: David Roberts summited Mt Aspiring in New Zealand as part of his fundraising for The Alfred.



Artificial heart to give new hope

A revolutionary, implantable mechanical device to be tested at The Alfred is set to provide new hope to patients with debilitating heart failure.

The 'total artificial heart' (TAH) is intended to fully replace a natural heart, providing patients with a possible alternative to heart transplant, according to project co-lead and Director of Cardiology at The Alfred, Professor David Kaye.

"Currently, some patients with heart failure are eligible for heart pumps on one side of their heart, or even two if both sides are failing," he said.

"Although devices such as these were developed some time ago as lifesaving technology, they are often a temporary solution and there are many limitations as to what they can do.

"For example, the current series of ventricular assist devices are cumbersome, can't automatically respond to the body's physical demands, and come with their own set of risks, like infection.

"Instead, the TAH, developed in Australia by BiVACOR, can adapt its pumping capabilities through a novel engineering solution pioneered by the team."

The TAH is one of three heart technologies being created under the Artificial Heart Frontiers Program, based at the Monash Alfred Baker Centre for Cardiovascular Research at The Alfred. The team is also creating a new mini-pump and a new type of left ventricle assist device, both of which can be implanted next to a natural heart.

Minister for Health and Aged Care, The Hon Mark Butler, said the Artificial Heart Frontiers Program had been awarded a \$50 million grant from the Medical Research Future Fund towards developing and commercialising the three key devices.

Led by Monash University, the Artificial Heart Frontiers Program is a collaboration between industry partner BiVACOR, The Alfred, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, St Vincent's Health Australia, University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, Griffith University and University of Queensland.

Above image: Project co-leads Associate Professor Shaun Gregory and Professor David Kaye with Federal Health Minister Mark Butler at The Alfred.



Dog therapy in Liv's legacy

A paw-some experience has been boosting spirits within the eating disorder program at Alfred Health. With support from The Alfred Foundation, Liv's Loving Paws dog therapy program was launched in February.

Founder of the program, in memory of his daughter Liv, Robb Evans was thrilled to see its launch in the spirit of love and remembrance.

"Liv's Loving Paws is a beacon of hope and healing dedicated to our beloved Liv, who we tragically lost to anorexia nervosa at just 15 years old last year," he said.

"Liv's Loving Paws is more than a program; it's a legacy, a testament to Liv's kind spirit and our collective commitment to making a difference.

"The journey to this point has been a mix of emotions. There's a profound sense of achievement and hope in realising that what once was a vision to honour Liv's memory has now materialised into a tangible program that promises to make a difference in the lives of children suffering from eating disorders."

It was only due to the overwhelming generosity of friends, family and kind-hearted souls from across the globe that allowed this vision to turn into a reality, Robb said.

"Every donation to Liv's GoFundMe page has been a ray of light in our darkest times," he said. "We had donations from young girls who knew Liv, donating their pocket money, to business colleagues of mine located in the United States.



At the launch were (from left) family peer specialist Sandra Dorse, Eating Disorders practice lead Jenny-Maree Marshall, Angela Evans, Emily Evans (holding Liv's urn), Robb Evans, Eating Disorders clinical lead Rachel Barbara-May and (front) Lottie the dog with her owner Brigitte.

"Each contribution, regardless of its size, gets me emotional and represents a shared belief in the transformative power of empathy and care."

The program, developed in collaboration with Alfred Health, is designed to bring comfort, joy and unconditional love to children suffering from eating disorders.

These special therapy dogs are not just pets; they are trained companions that offer support, reduce stress and anxiety, and provide a non-judgmental presence that encourages healing and recovery.

"It's a program inspired by Liv's own love for animals and her understanding nature, reflecting her belief in kindness and support for those in need," Robb said.

"As we move forward, I remain hopeful that Liv's Loving Paws will serve as a model for similar initiatives, inspiring further research and adoption of holistic treatments that address the emotional and psychological needs of patients alongside traditional medical care.

"Together, we are making a difference, one paw at a time."

The program is aiming to eventually have two sessions a week with a dog, present around the time of nursing appointments.

Mt Aspiring Challenge continuing to inspire

The pain and anguish of watching a loved one go through their journey with cancer is something that tens of thousands of Australians are experiencing every day. For Betty Roberts, whose son David passed away more than 20 years ago, it remains a fresh and impactful memory. But it is also a memory which inspires her to continue fundraising towards blood cancer research at The Alfred through the Mt Aspiring Challenge.

David Roberts was just 22 when he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system, in 2000. A burgeoning explorer and alpinist, who graduated from Monash University with a civil and computing engineering degree, David's life was turned upside down upon hearing the news.

Despite going into remission once after a first bone marrow transplant, and a successful second transplant the following year thanks to a donation from his sister Jayne, David passed away in 2003 aged just 25.

"My son David, he was an adventurer, even from school," Betty said. "In his first year of uni, he completed the Kokoda Trail and climbed Mt Aspiring, a 3027m-tall peak that is one of New Zealand's most recognisable landmarks.

"The following year he made an ascent of Mt Cook (3724m) and blew us all away.

"Unfortunately, he then became ill, which was a shock to everyone because he was such a fit and healthy young man."

Initial chemotherapy treatment was successful, but he was then moved to The Alfred for a bone marrow transplant using his own stem cells.

Maureen O'Brien, who became David's favourite nurse during his time at The Alfred and still works as a clinical nurse consultant in the haematology department today, said *"the treatment room always had a positive atmosphere on the days David was there"*.

"He was always selfless and so much fun," Maureen said. "I remember him down in Alf's Cafe (now The Alfred Cafe) selling bandanas to raise money for cancer - with an IV drip attached. Looking after David was such a pleasure."

David started the Mt Aspiring Challenge in 2002, determined to aid the very program at The Alfred that was helping him, by vowing to summit Mt Aspiring for a second time.

The plight of David's situation and cause struck a chord and, after a successful climb, about \$90,000 was donated with great help from David's family, friends and business colleagues. Now, some 20 years later, almost half a million dollars has been raised through the lifetime of the foundation.

Director of Haematology at The Alfred and Director of The Alfred Cancer Program, Dr Harshal Nandurkar, said the power of this fundraising towards research was multi-fold.

"Our focus is on enabling and teaching the next generation, so that our skillsets can be transferred and amplified down the line so that more people can take advantage of this knowledge," he said.

"This holistic process, which involved so many aspects of care, is about making tomorrow better than today. Patients should know that what they are participating in today is not just helping them, but that they are making tomorrow better for others.



"Whether it is one brick, or 100 bricks, it is all part of the wall that is supporting our aspirations."

Professor Constantine Tam

"While state and federal governments fund direct aspects of care, fundraising such as this is vital for our foundations. People helping in their own way, through dollars or otherwise, helps with a brick in the wall that will build our foundations up.

"Whether it is one brick, or 100 bricks, it is all part of the wall that is supporting our aspirations."

Head of the Lymphoma Service at The Alfred, Professor Constantine Tam, said the current research focused on CAR T-cell therapy, which is a lifesaving procedure using a patient's own immune system to cure otherwise inoperable lymphoma.

"It is a specialised procedure performed in only six centres in Australia," he said. "We have successfully set up a program which detects these cells in patients after infusions - this ability was recently crucial in saving the life of a patient, where we were able to adjust his treatment in real-time."

Above left: David Roberts was an avid climber; above right: Leonie Prendergast (administration manager at The Alfred Foundation), Maureen O'Brien (donor and research clinical nurse consultant, who treated Betty's son David more than 20 years ago), Betty Roberts, Lorrie Deboer and Jayne (Betty's daughter).

The Alfred leading the way

In a Victorian-first, The Alfred can now use a revolutionary technology to best treat patients with epilepsy and brain tumours, thanks to the generosity of donors.

Laser interstitial thermal therapy (LITT) allows our neurosurgeons to treat epilepsy and brain tumours using a minimally invasive method. It works by inserting a laser catheter into the brain and precisely guiding it with MRI to provide targeted heat to destroy lesions that were once untreatable.

This breakthrough offers new hope and possibilities, completely transforming the lives of people who have often suffered without hope for many years.

Alfred Brain Program Director Professor Terry O'Brien said LITT was now "first-line therapy in the leading epilepsy surgery and brain tumour treatment centres in the US and Europe".

"It is less invasive, with shorter length of stay and quicker post-operative recovery, as well as reduced risk of post-operative neurological morbidity," he said.

Dr Matthew Gutman led the push for LITT at The Alfred, which is the first hospital in Victoria and second in Australia to offer the technology.

"As the Lead of Epilepsy Surgery at The Alfred, I felt responsible for ensuring that Australian patients had access to this technique," he said. "I have seen firsthand how effective LITT is for patients during my time working at Great Ormond St Hospital in London and we now have well over 10 years of strong clinical data from north America and Europe with this technique.



Excited about the technology are (from left) Professor Terry O'Brien, Dr Matthew Gutman, Associate Professor Andrew Neal and Dr Joshua Laing.

"It enables us to treat pathology that is not safely accessible with open surgery via a minimally invasive laser used under direct MRI guidance."

Not only does the technology enable surgeons to cure epilepsy and treat brain tumours without a traditional craniotomy, but they can now access and treat previously inaccessible parts of the brain.

"With the expertise of our comprehensive epilepsy program and having personally just completed a Churchill Fellowship in north America to develop further experience with the technique, we are uniquely positioned as an Australian centre to select the ideal patients and safely perform this procedure," Dr Gutman said.

"Our comprehensive epilepsy program can now offer a number of interventions to treat and cure epilepsy which were not available in Australia even a few years ago."

Fundraising towards the Lifesaving Equipment Fund was "essential" in allowing The Alfred to start offering LITT at The Alfred, according to Prof O'Brien.

"It funded more than half of the new equipment required for this. Without these donations, we would have not been able to implement LITT here at this time," he said.

"This is further evidence of Alfred Brain as the leading centre in Australia for the adoption of innovative new treatments to better treat patients with serious disease of the nervous system."

The team at The Alfred will share its LITT experience and will offer Fellows from across Australia to train and develop their abilities with this technology.



A flying leap for fundraising

The Alfred Foundation's very own Senior Fundraising and Corporate Partnerships Manager Nairn Miller made a big splash at this year's Moomba Festival, taking part in the Birdman Rally.

Nairn was a festival of colours all by himself, with an extravagantly designed pair of butterfly wings glittering in the sunlight as he plunged into the Yarra River.

Raising money for the oncology department at Alfred Health, to help find a cure for melanoma, the design was complemented by a series of selfie drawings from students at Mordialloc Beach Primary School.

Nairn said that he had been inspired by Morgan Mansell and her family. At just 25 years old, Morgan passed away after a short battle with melanoma.

"While Morgan is no longer with us, her legacy lives on," Morgan's dad Peter said. "We want to keep Morgan's memory alive."

"We also know that raising funds to support melanoma research at The Alfred is the best way to find a cure for the disease."

Peter Mansell

"We want as many people as possible to be aware of the dangers and signs of melanoma."

"We also know that raising funds to support melanoma research at The Alfred is the best way to find a cure for the disease."

With sizeable help from Lucas Real Estate, Nairn won the top prize of \$10,000 for fundraising, bringing the total to more than \$24,000. You can watch the telecast by searching for 'Birdman' on 9now.com.au. Donations can still be made at birdmanrally2024.gofundraise.com.au/page/AlfredOncology



YES, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE TO THE ALFRED FOUNDATION

\$35 \$60 \$100 \$250 \$1,000

Other \$

Or

I want to give a regular monthly gift of \$ to The Alfred Foundation to be deducted from my credit card on the last day of each month
(I can cancel at any time by giving 14 days notice)

Please find enclosed:

Cheque Money order (payable to The Alfred Foundation)

Or, please debit my:

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Name on card:

Card number: /

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I am considering including a gift to The Alfred in my Will

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To make your gift, complete and return this coupon in the enclosed reply paid envelope, or send to:

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alwaysthealfred.org.au



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Donations of \$2 and over are tax-deductible
ABN 27 318 956 319

Are you interested in creating your own fundraiser?

Organising your own fundraiser is a great way to take action and support The Alfred. You could take on your own unique physical challenge or ask your friends and family to give to The Alfred in lieu of gifts. You could also create a tribute page to celebrate the life of a loved one.

Our community making the **impossible** possible



Run Melbourne

Will you be there to embrace the day? Last year we had 151 runners who joined Team Alfred at Run Melbourne, raising almost \$34,000 in the process.

Join us once more on July 21 and make your run even more special by supporting the vital work of The Alfred. Have friends and family sponsor you for any of the events, with 5.2km, 10km and half-marathon distances on offer.

Drop by our on-site marquee throughout the day and celebrate a great occasion with other The Alfred staff, patients and their families and friends.

Sign up to Team Alfred at Run Melbourne by visiting: <https://runmelbourne24.grassrootz.com/the-alfred-foundation>



Dry July

Alfred Cancer provides world-class cancer treatment, care and compassion to the people of Melbourne and Victoria. Each year, The Alfred treats thousands of people living with cancer, allowing for close clinical coordination with a range of cancer specialists.

By joining Team Alfred this Dry July, you will help raise funds for projects for people affected by cancer. Dry July was a great success last year, with more than \$26,500 raised.

To read more, visit <https://www.dryjuly.com/beneficiaries/thealfredmelbourne>



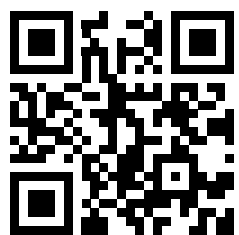
Melbourne Marathon

Looking for the ultimate challenge? Join Team Alfred at the Melbourne Marathon and make your run even more special by supporting the vital work of The Alfred. When you raise just \$50, you will receive a free training top from The Alfred Foundation.

With more than 135 staff, patients, families and friends signing up to represent Team Alfred last year, you can join thousands of others and make a difference as you run,

jog, wheel or walk your way through the city streets before finishing with a lap of honour on the MCG.

To sign up or for information, visit <https://melbmara2024.grassrootz.com/the-alfred-foundation>



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



The Alfred Foundation

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