

# Community PULSE

Winter | 2016



Western Health



## June celebrates 45 years of volunteering

6

### Inside this edition:



Melbourne's west a  
winner in Victorian  
State Budget

2



Elderly heart  
patients staying  
healthy at home

3



The People's Hospital -  
Tales from the surgeon's  
table

4

*Together, caring for the West*

It has been a successful few months for Western Health, starting with the announcement by the Minister for Health, The Hon Jill Hennessy, that Western Health will receive \$61.3 million as part of this year's State Budget.

These funds include \$17 million for urgent maintenance at Footscray Hospital and the next stage of planning for an eventual rebuild of the south block on that site. This is great news as it means we can now move forward with refining plans for how to rebuild parts of the hospital to support a modern and progressive health service for our community.

The funding will also see an additional 64 beds established at Sunshine Hospital. Pressures on our bed numbers are intense and the numbers of patients coming through our Emergency Department at Sunshine Hospital are climbing steeply, so these beds are a much needed addition to our service.

With construction work to start on the new Women's and Children's Hospital at Sunshine later this year, there are exciting times ahead for Western Health.

In May we marked National Volunteer Week, with a special function to thank our 600-strong volunteer team. We are lucky to have some wonderful people in our region who commit so generously to support patients, families and carers across Western Health.

On a recent day at Western Health, our volunteer team recorded over 650 interactions between volunteers and patients. These interactions were through social support, mobile trolleys, garden therapy, Emergency Department support and numerous other activities, highlighting the enormous impact volunteers have on our organisation. We are very proud and thankful of the fantastic work our volunteers do each and every day.

We also celebrated the launch of a wonderful new book, which shares the stories of surgeons who worked at Footscray Hospital in its earliest days. *The People's Hospital – Tales from the surgeon's table* also details the campaign by community leaders and local factory workers in the early 1900s to get the hospital built.

The book includes the story of the incredible 34 year campaign by the Hospital Movement, to have a hospital built in Footscray. J Kelso Duncan led the movement, which eventually succeeded with the opening of the People's Hospital in 1953 - the first acute care general hospital to be built in suburban Melbourne.

To purchase a copy of the book, visit [www.whpeopleshospital.com.au](http://www.whpeopleshospital.com.au) where you will also find a series of video interviews with a number of the surgeons interviewed in the book. ❤️



Associate Professor Alex Cockram  
Chief Executive, Western Health

# Melbourne's west a winner in Victorian State Budget

Patients across the west of Melbourne will benefit from some great news in this year's Victorian State Budget, with the announcement by the Minister for Health, The Hon Jill Hennessy, that Western Health will receive \$61.3 million.

The funds include \$17 million announced by the Minister for urgent maintenance at Footscray Hospital and the next stage of planning for an eventual rebuild of the south block on that site.

With demands on the health service rapidly increasing, the State Budget funding will also enable Western Health to establish an additional 64 beds at Sunshine Hospital.

Kitchen facilities at Sunshine Hospital will be upgraded to allow for the increased patient numbers and works will commence on extra loading dock capacity as well.

The Minister visited Sunshine Hospital the day after the State Budget announcement in late April to meet with staff and patients.

The additional funding is fantastic news for the west as it is always extremely challenging to meet the vast demands for improved health infrastructure and this funding demonstrates the Andrews Government's strong commitment to responding to areas of greatest need. ❤️



Sunshine Hospital patient, Nada was happy to chat to Health Minister, The Hon Jill Hennessy, Western Health Chief Executive, A/Prof Alex Cockram and Member for St Albans, Natalie Suleyman MP.



# A breakthrough for Hepatitis C sufferers

**A new drug, hailed as a breakthrough for treating and curing patients with Hepatitis C, can now be used by Victoria's health services.**

The drug has much higher cure rates, fewer side effects and a much shorter treatment span for patients than previous drugs used to treat Hepatitis C and its associated liver disease.

The expensive drug – a combination of direct acting anti-viral drugs – was previously unavailable in Australia.

But in March the federal government listed it on the PBS scheme, enabling doctors to prescribe it for the cost of a basic script.

Dr Ian Kronborg, a hepatologist at Western Health, said the drug would enable health services to treat many more of the half a million Australians estimated to have Hepatitis C and liver disease caused by Hepatitis C.

Previously, only about 2000 Hepatitis C sufferers were receiving treatment because other medications were too expensive for patients and their severe side effects forced about one third to drop out of treatment.

The new drug's side effects lead to less than one per cent of patients dropping out of



*Western Health Clinical Nurse Consultant, Liz Scholes with Cardiogeriatric Heart Failure Service patient, Robert.*

treatment. The drug cures more than 90 per cent of patients, compared with other drugs that cure between 50-70 per cent.

"This is a breakthrough for the treatment of Hepatitis C in Australia," Dr Kronborg said. "It will allow us to treat much larger numbers of people, giving us the potential to eliminate the disease in the community."

"Hepatitis C is now the most common cause of liver transplantation in Australia. Within two years, because of these new drugs, Hepatitis C won't be the most common cause of liver transplants, it will be alcoholism and obesity."

Western Health is at the frontline of rolling out the new drug treatment to patients. Western Health and Monash Health treat the highest numbers of Hepatitis C patients in Victoria.

Patients at Western Health's specialist Hepatitis C clinic at Footscray Hospital are already noticing the new drug's benefits, compared with the previous treatment regime. They take the drug orally, as a tablet, instead of receiving an injection.

Their treatment takes between two to six months, instead of a minimum six months, depending on their type of Hepatitis C, the severity of liver disease and whether they have been treated previously. ❤️

## Elderly heart patients staying healthy at home

**Elderly patients with heart problems are being helped to avoid multiple readmissions to hospital thanks to a new service.**



*Western Health Hepatologist, Dr Ian Kronborg and nurse Marian Croft with a patient in the hepatitis clinic.*

Cardiology and aged-care specialists at Western Health created the service to provide a better, co-ordinated approach to treating elderly heart patients in hospital and later, when they are discharged to their homes.

Nationally, about 25-35 per cent of elderly heart patients have multiple readmissions to hospital due to their complex needs.

However, since Western Health developed its service in 2014, hospital readmission rates among its elderly heart patients have dropped markedly.

Patients and their carers get advice on how to avoid preventable incidents at home that often lead to a patient being readmitted to hospital.

Specialist nurses teach the patients and their carers how to avoid falls, manage their medications and fluid restrictions and to recognise early warning signs that their health may be worsening.

Patients at home are able to phone a specialist nurse to discuss their concerns and the service provides a rapid-access clinic for patients.

"The feedback we've had from patients and carers has been very positive," said Liz Scholes, clinical nurse consultant of the Cardiogeriatric Heart Failure Service.

"They tell us how nice it is to be able to have a consistent person to speak to on the phone or in outpatients. Patients are becoming more skilled at dealing with their chronic health conditions because we're giving them knowledge about their disease and strategies to manage it."

Elderly patients with heart problems often suffer from other chronic illnesses such as diabetes and kidney disease. Consequently they are often admitted to general medical wards, which sometimes makes it difficult for them to receive specialist cardiac care in a timely manner.

Under Western Health's new collaborative service elderly heart patients are managed by the specialist cardiogeriatric team and reviewed daily by a cardiologist and a geriatrician. The service is overseen by Dr Claire Long, a geriatrician, and Dr Nicholas Cox, director of cardiology at Western Health. Dr Long helped develop the service as part of an initiative with the Victorian Cardiac Clinical Network and the National Heart Foundation. ❤️

# The People's Hospital - Tales from the surgeon's table

**The stories of trailblazing surgeons who worked at Footscray Hospital in its earliest days have been celebrated in a new book.**

The People's Hospital – Tales from the surgeon's table also charts the grassroots campaign by community leaders and local factory workers in the early 1900s to get the hospital built.

The local campaigners, known as the "The Hospital Movement," bought the large Eleanor Street site for the hospital in 1920 and then struggled for several decades lobbying governments to get the public hospital built.

They finally won their battle when the hospital opened in 1953.

It was the first acute care general hospital to be built in suburban Melbourne.

The book describes how surgeons worked in public hospitals in unpaid "honorary" positions and earned their living from private patients in the era before universal health insurance was introduced in 1975.

John Thomson, one of many surgeons and medical staff interviewed in the book, joined the hospital in 1955.

"As honorary surgeons we had an understanding with the hospital's staff and management to give service and to help people," Mr Thomson said.

"It was a gentleman's arrangement."

During that era the City of Footscray was the heartland of Melbourne's heavy agricultural industries.

It teemed with abattoirs, rope works, steel foundries, chemical works and many other factories.

It was densely populated and industrial accidents were common.

"It was a very poor district and people often suffered and put up with things," Mr Thomson said. "You felt the need, you felt it all over you."

The book was published by Western Health and written by Caroline Milburn, a former journalist with The Age newspaper.

Associate Professor Alex Cockram, Western Health's Chief Executive, said Footscray Hospital's early surgeons and staff laid the foundation for Western Health's ethos and its mission to respond to the palpable need of western suburbs residents.

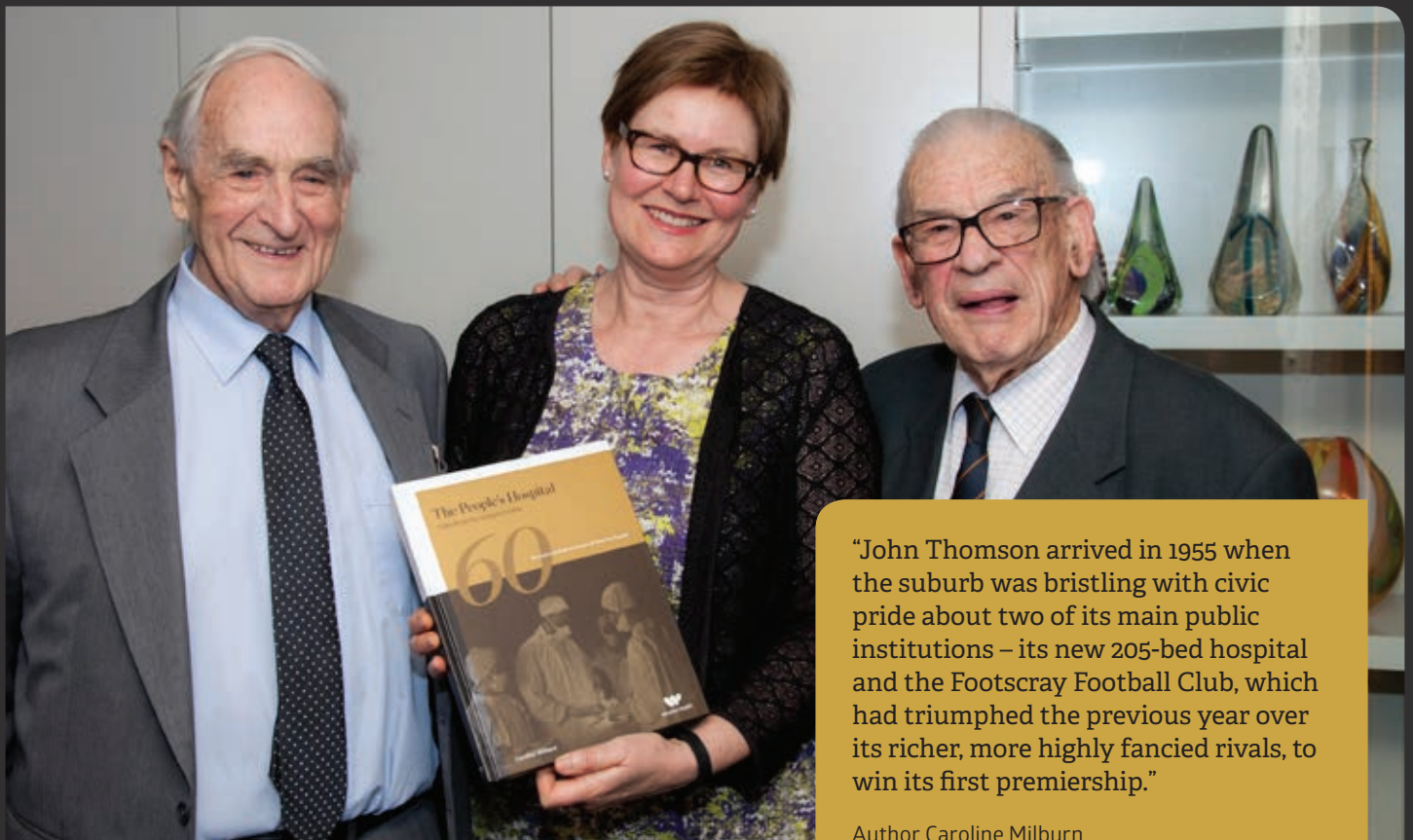
"In 2016, the striking characteristics of this health service and its staff are still very closely aligned to the values and attitudes of its founders," she said.

"There is a phenomenal 'Can Do' and 'Get on With It' attitude and a steely determination to constantly improve the service we provide."

To purchase a copy of the book, visit the dedicated website [www.whpeopleshospital.com.au](http://www.whpeopleshospital.com.au) where you will also find a series of video interviews with a number of the eminent surgeons interviewed for the book.



Former Footscray Hospital surgeons Kendall Francis (left) and John Thomson (right) with author Caroline Milburn at the formal launch of the book.



"John Thomson arrived in 1955 when the suburb was bristling with civic pride about two of its main public institutions – its new 205-bed hospital and the Footscray Football Club, which had triumphed the previous year over its richer, more highly fancied rivals, to win its first premiership."

Author Caroline Milburn



"I fell in love with Footscray because of the clinical variability of the patients and the social variability of the patients. Every wave of migrants came to Melbourne, came to live in the area. The self-reliance of the hospital staff, the multicultural patient mix – were the things that I loved about Footscray. I worked with outstanding clinicians. What was outstanding about them was not just their technical ability, but their attitude to life."

A/Prof Joseph Epstein (at Western Health 1966-2016)

*Footscray Hospital in the early days.*



Professor Marshall said the first batch of students to arrive at Footscray had an invigorating effect on the hospital. "The ethos of a hospital is vastly improved by having a young, ragamuffin body of students asking questions".

Prof Vernon Marshall  
(at Western Health 1963-1991)

"The Western (Footscray) was the best hospital I ever worked at because of the camaraderie. The patients were great....It was efficient and it had first class surgical staff, people like Kendall Francis. At the Western, you were dealing with equals, from the orderlies, to the ward staff, to the surgeons."

The late Mr Kevin King  
(at Western Health 1964-1985)



*The late Kevin King (orthopaedic surgeon at Footscray Hospital 1964-1985)*



*A/Prof Trevor Jones (general surgeon at Western Health 1976-2015). The original idea for the book came from Trevor and A/Prof Graeme Thompson.*

Hai Bui is a senior surgeon who arrived in Australia... as a 19 year old refugee from Vietnam (Mr Hai Bui).

"When I look into my patients' eyes, I see my parents sitting across the table from me. I can relate to the hardships in their lives and I can help them improve their lives."

Mr Hai Bui  
(upper GI surgeon at Western Health)

"Moving to the Western was a big deal; I hardly knew where it was. But over the years I've developed a love for the people and the area...I've loved the work and the community, the links with the Footscray Football Club, the Doggies and their struggle. It's been a great journey."

A/Prof Stephen McLaughlin  
(colorectal and general surgeon at Western Health 1986-present)

# Western Health National Volunteer Week celebrations



(Left to right) Western Health Chief Executive, A/Prof Alex Cockram, volunteer Betty Millet and Executive Director Operations, Russell Harrison.

**With nearly half a century of volunteering to her name, it was little wonder June Ivory received a standing ovation when recognised for her outstanding contribution to Western Health.**

As part of this year's Western Health National Volunteer Week celebration in May, June was acknowledged for 45 years of service to the organisation.

"June is a wonder woman and we are all very proud to have her here with us today to acknowledge her contribution to our health service," Western Health's Manager of Community Engagement & Volunteers, Jo Spence said on the day.

"June has many stories about selling fruit from trucks in the car park at Sunshine and Footscray Hospitals to raise money.

"She talks about the amount of bed socks that have been knitted across the years but our favourite times are sitting with June and her husband Vic and hearing about their life together in their local community and their support and dedication to Footscray Hospital.



Husband and wife, Deb and Hilmi Hilmi, who both volunteer at Sunshine Hospital.

"June also has many stories to share about the magnificent care that they have received when they have been in hospital.

"Thank you June for your commitment, enthusiasm and the time that you have given to our organisation," Jo added.

On a recent day, a total of 657 interactions were had between Western Health volunteers and patients.

- Over 700 visitors were assisted with way-finding and checking in for clinics
- 203 people visited the Auxiliary and Opportunity Shops
- 100 patients were assisted with their lunch time meal
- 13 different administration tasks were completed to support our staff
- 30 people visited the Patient Health Information Centres
- 205 tea and coffees were made for patients waiting in outpatient clinics

"As volunteers, you sit with patients and their families and reminisce in our gardens," Jo said.

"You reassure parents when their little ones are about to go into surgery by taking the time to talk and listen to their story and share your own.

"You offer patients a tea or coffee at our clinics or a book, magazine or newspaper via our mobile trolleys.

"You cuddle babies, you hold the hands of anxious and scared patients in cancer




(Left to right) Western Health's Manager of Community Engagement & Volunteers, Jo Spence with volunteers Irene Kayler-Thomson and Gloria Williams.

treatment areas, you listen to how hard it has been to get a car park but still manage to get patients to the right spot on time and in a better frame of mind.

"You wash our community cars, you raise money for us and sell raffle tickets at local shopping centres.

"But most of all you bring yourself and your positive vibe into our workplace and it means a lot when you do this each and every day, no questions asked.

"You turn up and are living in the moment with our staff, our patients and their families," Jo added.

Western Health volunteer Betty Millet was also placed on the honour roll at this year's Minister for Health Volunteer Awards for 50 years of volunteering throughout the community. 



# Breastfeeding resource for Vietnamese women

**Vietnamese women represent one of the largest groups of culturally and linguistically diverse women birthing at Sunshine Hospital, however, as a group, they have significantly lower breastfeeding rates.**

For this reason, a breastfeeding resource for Vietnamese women was launched in April.

It was the culmination of a project aimed at producing a culturally-appropriate resource for Vietnamese-speaking women, midwives and other health professionals to assist with breastfeeding education and support.

The project consisted of two stages: the exploratory research and the resource development.

In order to gain insight into local Vietnamese women's attitudes to and experiences of breastfeeding in the Vietnamese culture, interviews with 29 women and one focus group with ten Vietnamese elders were conducted.

With strong consumer involvement, cultural sensitivity and an evidence-informed base, the resource has been designed as a package titled "SỮA MẸ – Hướng dẫn phụ nữ Việt Nam cách cho con bú sữa mẹ" ("Mother's milk – a guide for Vietnamese women to support breastfeeding") and includes a video that can be hosted on a variety of platforms including internet and DVD.

The 24-minute video has been developed with ten modules in Vietnamese with English sub-titles. A booklet that aligns with the video has also been produced and is presented in Vietnamese with English text on the opposing pages.

Dissemination of this resource package will include provision of copies to GP clinics in the Macedon Ranges and North Western Melbourne Medicare Local, Western Health maternity service and via Lactation Consultants.

The resource can be found on the Western Health internet site – [www.westernhealth.org.au](http://www.westernhealth.org.au) under the Women's and Children's – Maternity Services section. 🍷



(Left to right) Midwife Liana Huynh, Research Fellow Deakin University and Western Health A/Prof Cate Nagle, Lactation Consultant Marieta Pring, Midwife Unit Manager Women's Clinic Chris Kerr, Clinical Midwife Specialist Janet Nguyen, and Clinical Midwife Specialist Cathy Le.

# Interpreter service expansion a benefit for patients

**Western Health Interpreters have been helping patients at Western Health for over 30 years.**

The vital service has recently had an expansion to the number of in-house interpreters, much to the benefit of patients.

There are now 18 in-house interpreters for the most common languages spoken by our patients.

Many languages now have more than one interpreter, meaning increased availability. Western Health also accesses interpreters from outside agencies for other languages or when the in-house interpreters are not available.

In addition, phone interpreters are available for short interpreting needs, and are especially helpful outside normal business hours (including overnight).

One patient who has been seen by the interpreters is Nada. Nada was born in Macedonia, left school at 14 and was married at 17 years of age. She came to Australia when her children were young and worked in a factory with many other Macedonian speaking staff.

In January, Nada was admitted to Western Health for investigation of some neurological symptoms including slurred speech and falls. While Nada speaks some English, she had found it very difficult at medical appointments in the past without an interpreter.

"My daughter was with me trying to interpret but she was confusing me even more and I didn't feel relaxed because I didn't know if she was telling me everything the doctor said. There were also some words she didn't know and she was too shy to ask what they meant. I speak a bit of English but I always worry I won't understand everything the doctors say to me. I am always much more relaxed when there is an interpreter," Nada said.

Nada also said that she hadn't told her daughter about how often she falls over at home as she didn't want to worry her. So when Nada was asked if she needed an interpreter during her hospital stay she said "yes".

Interpreters are available for any patient who expresses a need. Nada was admitted to the ward for further tests and was well enough to return home after a three day stay.

During this time, the Macedonian interpreter was called to interpret for Nada on two occasions.

"I was able to understand the reason I had come to the hospital and I was happy with the interpreter. I was able to ask questions and the conversation was flowing well. It is better with an interpreter. I can understand better," Nada said.

"If I am in hospital, I would always want an interpreter so that I know what is going on and what procedures are being planned. I feel safer." 🍷

A NIGHT OF FASHION  
AND CELEBRATION

THURSDAY 18 AUGUST 2016

# Night of Nights

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*Together, caring for the West*

[www.westernhealth.org.au](http://www.westernhealth.org.au)

**Footscray Hospital**

Gordon Street  
Footscray VIC 3011  
Locked Bag 2  
Footscray VIC 3011  
8345 6666

**Sunshine Hospital**

Furlong Road  
St Albans VIC 3021  
PO Box 294  
St Albans VIC 3021  
8345 1333

**Sunshine Hospital  
Radiation Therapy  
Centre**

176 Furlong Road  
St Albans VIC 3021  
8395 9999

**Western Centre  
for Health Research  
& Education**

Sunshine Hospital  
Furlong Road  
St Albans VIC 3021  
8345 1333



**Western Health**

**Sunbury Day Hospital**

7 Macedon Road  
Sunbury VIC 3429  
9732 8600

**Williamstown Hospital**

Railway Crescent  
Williamstown VIC 3016  
9393 0100

**Drug Health Services**

3-7 Eleanor Street  
Footscray VIC 3011  
8345 6682

**Hazeldean  
Transition Care**

211-215 Osborne Street  
Williamstown VIC 3016  
9397 3167