

# Epworth examiner

SUMMER EDITION  
2021

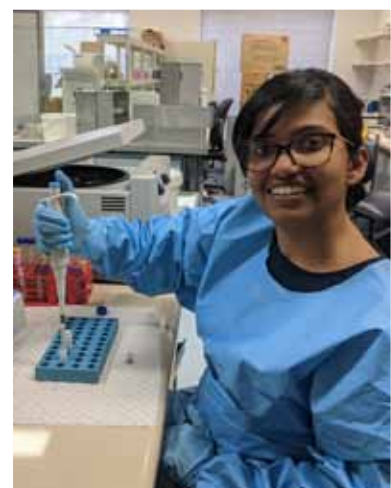


*La Trobe Financial President and CEO Greg O'Neill OAM (right) with Epworth HealthCare Cardiologist A/Prof Ron Dick at the launch of the La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit.*



## In this issue:

- Epworth continues its 40-year tradition of world-class cardiac care
- New technology accelerating patient recovery
- Providing hope for patients with blood cancer



Dear Friends,

Rarely has the world anticipated the new year more than we do right now. I am looking forward to 2021 with a great deal of optimism – an emotion I hope you will share when you read the uplifting stories in this newsletter, and learn about the exciting events we have planned for the coming months.

After all, we were apart for much of the past year but now we can safely come together again (both in person and online), and what a year 2021 is already shaping up to be!

This month we opened the doors to the state-of-the-art new La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit, the latest advance in Epworth's 40-year history of providing excellence in cardiac care. Epworth is enormously grateful and indebted to La Trobe Financial for their incredible support in creating this Unit; it simply would not exist without them. It is my pleasure to invite you to a tour of this centre – from the safety of your own home. There's a QR code on page 5 of this newsletter that will take you to the tour.

Throughout the month of March, we will celebrate and share the stories of men and women who have chosen to give to Epworth via bequests in their Wills. This is a powerful way to leave a legacy of care in your name, and many people choose to give via bequests because it enables them to have a greater impact than they are able to make during their lifetimes.

The Foundation will host a range of activities that celebrate our bequest-givers during March, and we have prepared some fantastic resources for you to use when you prepare your own Estate.

Meanwhile, this newsletter is also filled with a host of useful resources, including tips for heart health, and ways to manage your risk of stroke. And we share exciting new technologies, research projects and building renovations that have been made possible through your generous donations; alongside insights into what Epworth's COVID response looked like, from the inside.

And finally, I am thrilled to announce the launch of our book, "Built on Giving," which tells the 100-year story of Epworth HealthCare, through the lens of philanthropy, and the generous and far-sighted men, women, and sometimes even children who believed in the idea of our great hospital, and helped to bring it to life. There's an opportunity to register to receive a FREE copy of this book, at the end of this newsletter.

The team at Epworth – our doctors, nurses and allied health staff – have lots of big ideas that I know will make an enormous difference to our patients, both now and in the future. It is my fervent hope that in 2021, you and I together will find ways to turn those big ideas into reality.

Let's make 2021 our best year yet!

*With my warmest thanks and best wishes for your health and happiness,*



**Scott Bulger**  
Executive Director, Epworth Medical Foundation



## Eyeing the future with optimism at Epworth Richmond

Epworth Richmond is a place like no other. Our community of employees, doctors, donors and volunteers generate solidarity and hope, while the countless patients and loving families who walk our corridors each day give us purpose.

When, in early late 2019, I was appointed Executive General Manager of Epworth Richmond I was incredibly honoured and excited. What a privilege to be able to lead such a wonderful hospital and the many people who make Epworth Richmond what it is.

Heading into a centenary year there was much to look forward to and whilst it was not quite what we expected, a rewarding year all the same. Much of the year has been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic and I am so proud of how our dedicated and passionate people rose to the many challenges this created. Flexibility and agility became the gold standard.

This positive approach has shone throughout Epworth Richmond and I am proud to be a part of such a hardworking team of professionals.

Much of our success in responding to the pandemic was made possible thanks to the support of our generous donors and supporters who enabled us to:

- purchase critical and life-saving equipment including ventilators, ICU beds and glidescopes to manage difficult airways and air respirators
- purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to keep our staff safe and
- expand telehealth services to ensure patients could continue to receive care in their own homes.

Spirits were kept strong by treats, food and hot drinks donated by our donors and community, as part of the Epworth Kindness Movement.

For this and everything you have done to support us during this turbulent time – thank you!

Despite COVID-19, we forged ahead. We accelerated use of technology to enable more flexible work practices and found new ways to care for our patients. It is with the deepest gratitude that I acknowledge philanthropic contributions towards:

- 169 research studies, many of which are funded by our community, to pursue new and better ways to diagnose and treat patients (one of these trials is a new form of spray-on chemotherapy, developed in Germany, to lessen side effects and slow cancer growth in oncology patients)
- the recent purchase and renovation of a second apartment near Epworth Richmond, to ease the financial burden of accommodation for regional and interstate patients and their families, and
- the launch of the stunning La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit, which will see us continue to be at the forefront of technology, with three laboratories fitted with new x-ray machines, CT scanning, ultrasound and cardiac imaging technology, integrated with a new Cardiac Diagnostic Services Unit to improve efficiency and patient care.

For these and all that the community has done to support Epworth Richmond, my sincerest thanks.

As we move forward into a new year, with our donors by our side, we embrace the possibilities of what 2021 and beyond will hold. With our community, Epworth Richmond will emerge even stronger and more committed to innovation, research and our patients as we look forward to an incredibly bright future and the next 100 years.

*Warmest regards*



**Allison Evans**  
Executive General Manager  
Epworth Richmond





# Epworth continues its 30-year tradition of world-class cardiac care



**The technology within the new laboratories allows for greater visualisation.**

**Dr Martin Hiscock,**  
EPWORTH INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGIST

The La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit is now open at Epworth Richmond, reflecting Epworth's commitment to investing in the latest technologies, world-class clinical facilities, and the most nurturing environments for patients to receive the best possible care.

It is thanks to the generosity of La Trobe Financial that the new catheterisation unit was built, incorporating three new cardiac catheterisation laboratories integrated with a new Cardiac Diagnostic Unit.

The three laboratories are equipped with world-class equipment and imaging technology, ensuring that Epworth's cardiologists can undertake critical medical procedures. This includes **Optical coherence tomography**, a type of medical imaging that uses light waves to take near-photographic quality images of living tissue around the heart during an angiogram, the **Echo Navigator** which fuses live 3D transoesophageal echocardiogram (a test using high-frequency sound waves to examine the structures of the heart) and live X-Ray in real time to help cardiologists guide the catheter tube during an angioplasty, and the **Intravascular Ultrasound** which uses sound waves to see inside blood vessels which is useful when evaluating the health of the coronary arteries that supply the heart.

"The technology within the new laboratories allows for greater visualisation. For our patients with coronary artery lesions, the new imaging available enables us to create the perfect size stent to help keep the artery from narrowing or closing again to ensure sufficient blood flow to the heart," says Epworth Interventional Cardiologist Dr Martin Hiscock.

The opening of the La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit marks the 40th anniversary of cardiac care at Epworth. In 1981, Epworth became the first private hospital in Victoria to have a cardiology unit that combined both cardiac care and surgery.

When cardiologist Dr Graeme Sloman AO joined Epworth, coronary care was still in its infancy.

"We developed a coronary care ward and a good cardiac catheterisation laboratory," Dr Sloman said.

"As the years have gone by, these have both flourished and now we are a leading hospital internationally in aggressive treatment of people with various forms of heart disease, particularly coronary artery disease."

As Dr Martin Hiscock reflects, "Today's cardiac procedures are becoming more technical and complex. To be able to work within the new Unit, with the best technology at our fingertips means we can provide the advanced care our patients need."

"Epworth is at the cutting-edge of medical treatment, and the La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit demonstrates this. We are never afraid to embrace new technology, and La Trobe Financial is helping us continue on that journey of innovation for which we are all very grateful."

Greg O'Neill OAM, La Trobe Financial President and CEO, reflects on the partnership with Epworth.

"Through the work of the La Trobe Financial Foundation we are committed to investing in the advancement and wellbeing of our broader community and Australians from all walks of life.

"We are proud to partner with Epworth to improve the wellbeing of our community and make a difference to the lives of others."

Scan the QR code to:

- Watch: introducing the La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit
- Read: how you can keep your heart healthy with some healthy heart tips



1. Open the camera application on your phone.
2. Hover your camera over the QR code ensuring the whole code fits within your screen and tap the link.
3. Alternatively, visit <https://bit.ly/3nqg3H6>



**"We are proud to partner with Epworth"**

Greg O'Neill, La Trobe Financial President and CEO (right) with Nicole Waldron, Epworth HealthCare Chief Operating Officer, Hospitals.



Looking out for **you**®

"In addition to funding the development of the La Trobe Financial Cardiac Catheterisation Unit, La Trobe Financial proudly supported the purchase of six state-of-the-art da Vinci surgical robots and donated \$1 million to help Epworth respond to the COVID-19 pandemic."

**Greg O'Neill OAM**

LA TROBE FINANCIAL PRESIDENT AND CEO

# How a rapid response is saving lives

Dr Amanda Gilligan, Director of the Epworth Neurosciences Clinical Institute, is fascinated by the intricacies of the human brain.



Dr Amanda Gilligan visits a patient who has just experienced a TIA.

“There is something incredibly complex about the brain, much more complex than any other organ in the body. It’s part of the reason I chose to specialise in neurology.”

As a Stroke Neurologist, Dr Gilligan has worked in hospitals in Australia and internationally, bringing her experience to Epworth in 2016 to establish the innovative Rapid Access TIA Service to provide immediate care to patients experiencing a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA). As part of this service, she initiated the TIA access number, 1800 792 778 to have a 24 hour on call neurologist who can arrange urgent admission and investigation.

A TIA occurs when the blood supply to your brain is blocked temporarily. When the blood supply is stopped, the brain cells in the area lack oxygen and start dying, and you experience transient signs of stroke.

The transient nature of TIA symptoms means that they can disappear quickly. So many people can ignore them. However, they are the warning sign that someone is at high risk of stroke in the near future. “The biggest risk to a patient who has had a TIA, is within the first 48 hours after initial symptoms.”

The education campaigns have encouraged patients to call triple zero for rapid transfer to emergency departments for assessment and treatment. When patients present to an Emergency Department, they are often discharged home for follow up tests and review as an outpatient which can take weeks to schedule.

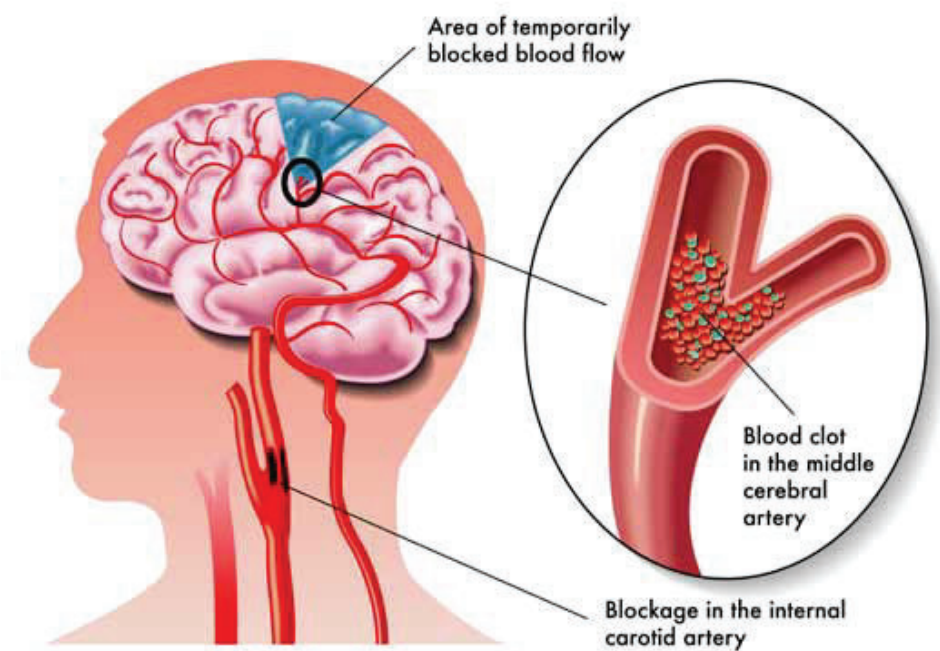
“I established the Rapid Access TIA Service at Epworth because I felt we could give patients better quality care by running the necessary tests within that first 24 to 48 hours to find out exactly what is causing their symptoms, giving them access to world class specialists and preventing major strokes by putting the right preventative strategies in place as quickly as possible.

“Recent international studies determined that rapid assessment and treatment can reduce the risk of stroke by 80%.”

“In Australia, one in six people have a stroke, and a stroke kills more women than breast cancer and more men than prostate cancer.”



## Transient Ischemic Attack



**The signs of a Transient Ischemic Attack are the same as a stroke, but they disappear within a short space of time. These symptoms can include sudden onset of:**

- Weakness, numbness or clumsiness of the face, arm or leg, on one or both sides
- Dizziness, vertigo (in particular ‘head spins’), loss of balance or an unexplained fall
- Nausea or vomiting with a change in balance
- Slurred or garbled speech or difficulties understanding others
- Loss of vision in one or both eyes

**“It is one of the biggest fears for people as they age. There’s a sense that they can live with other illnesses, but nobody wants to have a stroke.”**

Dr Gilligan recently referred a patient with TIA symptoms who urgently was admitted to Epworth Eastern for rapid assessment.

“On admission, he had a MRI brain scan to rule out other causes and a carotid doppler ultrasound scan to examine his carotid arteries in the neck to assess for blockages. Cardiac investigations ruled out a cardiac source for his stroke like symptoms.

“The radiologist rang me directly as he had a very tight narrowing in his internal carotid artery on the relevant side. We consulted with the vascular surgeon that saw him within hours of arrival and booked him in for urgent surgery to unblock the artery the next day.”

“This is a world-class TIA response and represents the gold standard in TIA care.”

Scan the QR code to:

Read: how you can manage your risk of a stroke



1. Open the camera application on your phone.
2. Hover your camera over the QR code ensuring the whole code fits within your screen and tap the link.
3. Alternatively, visit <https://bit.ly/3nqg3H6>



# New technology accelerating patient recovery



**It's almost like having a second pair of eyes which can see what you can't see during very difficult surgeries.**

**A/Prof Yi Yang**

As a spinal surgeon, A/Prof Yi Yang treats a range of spinal conditions and injuries for adults and children including scoliosis, spinal deformity, degenerative spinal conditions and disc herniation.

The use of the BodyTom CT, funded by the generosity of donors, is combined with computer navigation and guidance technology to enable surgeries that were once deemed too difficult and dangerous to be safer and more efficient, reducing the risk of complications.

"The CT scanner allows us to take intraoperative 3D imaging and get a real-time map of the patient's spine. We then use navigation to guide our way through very intricate and delicate structures of the spine with millimetre accuracy."

"It's like having a second pair of eyes which help you to see structures which can't normally be seen during difficult surgeries."

As the strength of spinal implants increases, and they are placed with improved accuracy thanks to the new technology, patients are able to get out of bed quicker after surgery and their recovery is accelerated.

"As a result, the average length of stay after major spinal surgery has been reduced."

"We're building on our previous experiences and applying new technologies that allow us to treat the patient as safely as possible, helping them get back on their feet faster and back to their normal activities as quickly as possible."

"The advances I've witnessed in spinal surgery are ensuring the best outcomes for our patients, and these are the most important advances."

# New chemotherapy providing hope



**It is thanks to the generosity of donors to the Epworth Medical Foundation that we could purchase this specialised device.**

**A/Prof Craig Lynch**

Epworth is currently trialling Pressurised Intraperitoneal Aerosol Chemotherapy to treat peritoneal cancer, led by Colorectal Surgeon A/Prof Craig Lynch.

The trial involves patients with peritoneal cancer from bowel cancer who had not responded to traditional chemotherapy.

"There aren't many treatment options for people with peritoneal cancer."

"The intravenous chemotherapy doesn't work for that long, and it makes people feel terrible."

Pressurised Intraperitoneal Aerosol Chemotherapy is provided as another option for palliative treatment, however it is not seen as a cure for peritoneal cancer.

The therapy administers cancer-fighting drugs directly to the tumour site using an aerosol spray instead of being injected into the bloodstream, with patients reporting fewer side effects such as nausea and vomiting.

"When we spray the chemotherapy into the abdomen we need an aerosol device which emits a specific particle size to optimise distribution of the drug."

"It is thanks to the ongoing generosity of donors to the Epworth Medical Foundation that we can provide this specialised therapy"

Each patient in the trial received between two and four rounds of aerosol chemotherapy which are administered during laparoscopic surgery under anaesthetic six weeks apart.

"If a patient responds well, we can repeat this treatment as needed."

"We want to give people a better quality of life."



# Epworth staff's rapid response to COVID

Our donor community has helped underpin Epworth's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Epworth's history, donors have provided support at every major milestone, during the good times and the difficult times, and this tradition of support has continued during the pandemic for which we are very grateful.

Over the past months we have expanded our Intensive Care Units and set aside designated COVID-19 wards and operating theatres. Thanks to our generous donors, we have also been able to purchase extra equipment to care for these patients and protect our staff.

The Victorian Government called upon Epworth to provide care and support to some of the community's most vulnerable, residents of aged care facilities. In addition to patients being cared for at our hospital sites, a team of Epworth Doctors and Nurses worked on the

ground at nursing homes across Melbourne. They cared for patients and helped educate nursing home staff on the correct use of personal protective equipment.

COVID-19 has required many Epworth staff to work in very different ways, and for some, in completely different roles altogether. We are incredibly proud of the way our Epworth team has banded together to ensure that our patients and their families continue to receive the best possible care during such a difficult time. Here are some such examples:

## Bronwyn Webster, Epworth Richmond

Epworth Anaesthetist Bronwyn Webster has worked in theatres for 18 years at Epworth. During COVID, she worked on an Epworth Richmond COVID-19 isolation ward.

**"It's been challenging and humbling.....as anaesthetists we're used to controlling everything in our environment. It was my role for 6 Lee Wing to phone all the families of nursing home patients every day and to keep them updated – the families really appreciated it!"**

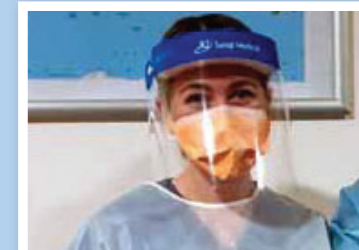


**It's been challenging and humbling.**

Bronwyn Webster

## Lisa Douglas, Epworth Freemasons

Lisa Douglas is a Registered Nurse and currently working as a Nurse Educator.



**We came to know the residents and develop bonds.** Lisa Douglas

**"I put up my hand to be seconded to aged care earlier this year and it was a unique experience due to working so closely with COVID-19 positive residents. It was a very rewarding experience as we came to know the residents and develop bonds with them."**

## The Epworth Brighton Team

In August, the Epworth Brighton team supported patients from several aged care facilities. As Anna Scott, Associate Director of Clinical Services at Epworth Brighton reflects:

**"Our staff have been absolutely amazing in the care they've provided. The aged-care residents don't need physio or OT but our Allied Health staff have been rostered on the ward every day to help nursing staff with feeding patients, setting up zoom calls with families, anything they can**



**to take the pressure off nursing staff; they have been invaluable."**

**Our staff have been absolutely amazing in the care they've provided.**

Anna Scott

## Jonathan Barrett, Epworth Richmond ICU Director

Jonathan Barrett was concerned that if Australia experienced a COVID-19 spike, it would put pressure on PPE supplies. Jonathan found positive air purifying respirators (PAPR) that can be worn during an entire shift.

**"Staff in ICU would use 50 facemasks per patient per day. When staff are wearing the PAPRs, it saves thousands of masks each week. Normally in training, we'd use training personal**

**protective equipment (PPE) that's slightly different to what is used in the ICU, so we can preserve PPE supplies for use on patients. Having the PAPRs early meant we were able to undertake training before the second wave, using the**

**same respirators that we are wearing every day in the ICU. As a result, staff were quite comfortable and confident in using them."**

**When staff are wearing the PAPRs, it saves thousands of masks each week.**

Jonathan Barrett





# Providing hope for patients with blood cancer



Epworth Medical Foundation is proud to partner with Snowdome Foundation to launch the Epworth Centre for Immunotherapies and Snowdome Laboratories, supporting blood cancer patients at Epworth to gain access to the very best possible care, guided by innovative treatments and technology.

Epworth is recognised as one of Australia's leading centres of excellence in oncology and haematology, and is developing a Cellular Therapies Service at Epworth.

One of the most revolutionary advances in medical science in recent years has been the use of cell therapy to treat blood cancers. Epworth is establishing a cellular therapies service so we can commence CAR-T cell therapy for cancer patients.

"We're proud to partner with Snowdome Foundation," says Scott Bulger, Executive Director of Epworth Medical Foundation.

"Snowdome Foundation shares Epworth's vision to give hope to every blood cancer patient, and together, we hope to find a cure and change the face of cancer treatment forever."

Snowdome Foundation Chief Executive Officer, Kirstee Macbeth, reflects that blood cancer doesn't discriminate.

"Men, women and children are all affected equally. And unlike other cancers, routine screening and public health awareness campaigns won't reduce anyone's risk of developing blood cancer.



Tour of the new world-class laboratory with (l to r) Dr Costas Yannakou, Sherryn Bowker, Simon Benedict, Vivek Nigam, Professor Miles Prince and Robert McIlwraith.

"With blood cancer diagnosis rising, there is an even more urgent need to seek a greater understanding of blood cancers and find new treatments and cures."

It is thanks to the generosity of Snowdome Foundation that Epworth is launching a dedicated Cellular Therapies Service that will offer more patients access to ground-breaking clinical trials and curative treatments to provide hope to more patients than ever before.

The first step in establishing the Cellular Therapies service is building a world-class laboratory.

"The process of collecting, creating and storing life-saving CAR-T cells requires a dedicated laboratory equipped with highly specialised equipment," says Dr Costas Yannakou, Deputy Medical Director of the Department of Molecular Oncology and Cancer Immunology and Director of the Haematology Clinical Trials Unit at Epworth.

"Soon, we will have a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to Cellular Therapies that will enable Epworth to treat more cancer patients with cutting-edge CAR-T cell therapies and ultimately save more lives."

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Dr Costas Yannakou





**‘Caring for our patients is much more than the chemotherapy that we give.’**

**Colleen O’Hara**

## New Day Oncology Unit

Epworth Freemasons has launched itself into a new era, with the completion of its \$100 million redevelopment. The new facilities within the historic Clarendon Street site will allow the hospital to care for even more Victorians, each year.

Epworth Freemasons has launched itself into a new era, with the completion of its \$100 million redevelopment. The new facilities within the historic Clarendon Street site will allow the hospital to care for even more Victorians, each year.

The relocation of the hospital’s Helen Hains Day Oncology Unit from a stand-alone facility at the Victoria Parade site, into the new Grey Street building, has allowed Epworth to deliver even better care to our patients.

The purpose-built space is filled with natural light, is spacious enough for better patient comfort and privacy while also better supporting our clinical teams in the care they provide each day. A key investment for the hospital, the new Unit directly links to the existing inpatient oncology ward.

Helen Hains Day Oncology Unit Nurse Unit Manager, Colleen O’Hara said they were among the first services to move into the redevelopment.

‘Caring for our patients is much more than the chemotherapy that we give. This new space allows us to provide better individualised care for each patient, depending on their needs. It’s also filled with natural light and has a great feel to it,’ Ms O’Hara said.

‘Having direct access between day oncology and our inpatient ward has also allowed easier transition between the areas for patients, for our doctors and specialist nurses.’

‘We have also been incredibly fortunate to have had the support of generous donors to the Epworth Medical Foundation that has allowed us to purchase extra equipment to help us care for our patients, even better and help them feel as comfortable as possible,’ Ms O’Hara said.



# Expanding our care in the east

Epworth Eastern has embarked on a ground-breaking redevelopment to expand the care we provide to patients in Melbourne’s east.

The redevelopment, which is expected to be completed in 2022, will include additional state-of-the-art operating theatres, three new patient wards and new consulting suites for our doctors and surgeons.

“The new, purpose-built facilities, housed within a 14-storey tower, will allow us to expand our capacity to provide exceptional care for patients requiring care across a range of specialties including oncology, haematology, orthopaedics and cardiology,” says Kerry May, Executive General Manager at Epworth Eastern.

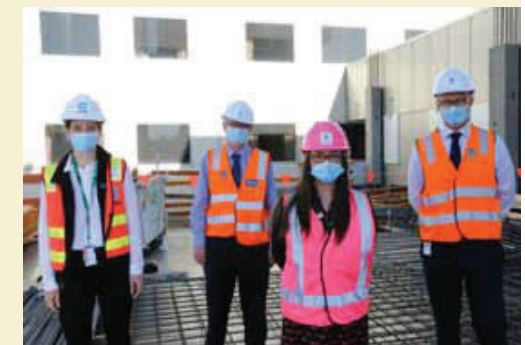
“Despite the many challenges of 2020, we have remained focused on the future, as our redevelopment progresses from a hole in the ground to the beginnings of our new tower.”

“As Melbourne’s east continues to grow, our new emergency department will allow us to provide urgent care to our community in a way we haven’t been able to do before.”

In acknowledgement of the building’s history and its proximity to Box Hill Gardens, the Epworth Eastern Medical Centre will be renamed the Garden Wing. Situated adjacent to the picturesque gardens, the large windows will provide a calming view over the greenery.

“Every day when I come to work I’m excited to see the construction site as it represents the next step forward for our great hospital.

“It’s a very, very exciting time for Epworth Eastern!”



**‘It’s a very, very exciting time for Epworth Eastern!’**

**Kerry May**



## CONTACT DETAILS

If you would like to know more about the activities of Epworth Medical Foundation, please do not hesitate to contact us, as we are always happy to help.

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