

# Annual Report 2020-21

## HIGHLIGHTS



### Message from the Board

In a highly disrupted and challenging year as the COVID-19 pandemic changed life as we knew it, one of the positives was the resilience and cohesion of this alliance.

We celebrated the achievements of the Strategic Research Plan and submitted a successful business case that resulted in a further \$27 million investment from the Victorian Government. Hundreds of people collaborated to craft an ambitious new Strategic Program Plan for 2021-24 and we demonstrated our value as a collective impact organisation, rapidly rallying efforts to support the cancer workforce and patients through the Victorian COVID-19 Cancer Network.

Throughout the year, our staff and communities never lost sight of the urgency of the work we are doing and set about creating the shared agenda and goals for the next step-change in research-led, consumer-engaged, cancer education, prevention, detection, treatment and care.

We've been heartened by the major advances in science achieved this past year—a true triumph of research collaboration, affirming the importance of community and connection: two things at the heart of this alliance.

**Professor Grant McArthur**  
Executive Director

**Emeritus Professor Linda Kristjanson AO**  
Chair



VCCC Alliance members



### Overcoming cancer together

The mission of the VCCC Alliance is to harness the capabilities of our members to position Victoria as a trailblazer in research-led, consumer-engaged, cancer education, prevention, detection, treatment and care.

In November 2020, the Victorian Government committed \$27 million to the development and execution of the new VCCC Alliance Strategic Program Plan 2021-24, which sets out a roadmap of integrated, innovative and ambitious programs that tackle the complexities of cancer outcomes in Victoria.

For insights into VCCC Alliance activities and impacts, including the 2020-21 Financial Report: [viccompcancerctr.org/annual-report](http://viccompcancerctr.org/annual-report).

## Key milestones

### Strategic Research Plan 2017-20

The VCCC Alliance Strategic Research Plan 2017-20 (SRP), supported by a \$30 million investment from the Victorian Government in 2016, galvanised a groundbreaking collaborative response and delivered some important outcomes that have paved the way for many of the programs in the new Strategic Program Plan 2021-24. The final evaluation report for the SRP was submitted to the Victorian Department of Health in October 2020.



### Five year milestone

2021 marked the five-year anniversary of Australia's first ever, purpose-built comprehensive cancer centre facility. The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer was built with the vision to save lives by connecting the world's best cancer research, education, treatment, and care under one roof.

The vision for the building has become an exciting reality with a multitude of achievements realised under its amazing glass roof.



### Funding boost to improve outcomes for all

The 2020-21 Victorian Budget included \$33.1 million over three and a half years for the alliance to continue its work to improve cancer outcomes across the state. \$27 million of this supports the new Strategic Program Plan 2021-24.

A new digital oncology learning hub, improved data linkage, translational research and health equity initiatives will be among the areas prioritised through the vital funding support. The priorities leverage the strengths of VCCC Alliance members and are aligned with the Victorian Cancer Plan 2020-24.





## 2020-21 impacts



Dr Eric Winer from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute USA at a Research and Education Lead Breast Cancer program symposium in early 2020.

### Leadership

Systemised collaboration is our greatest advantage and opportunity. It is demonstrated across almost everything we do, notably through the VCCC Alliance distributed leadership model, which facilitates multidisciplinary, multi-site research opportunities. Our people work together to identify key clinical challenges, creating conditions that are an increasingly common prerequisite for funding.

The VCCC Alliance Distributed Leadership Summit early this year reviewed the strategic roadmaps that have been developed for all major cancers, cancer nursing, primary care, and regional and rural initiatives.

[viccompcancerctr.org/  
leadership-model](https://viccompcancerctr.org/leadership-model)

### What matters to consumers?

How will we know what matters to patients unless we ask? This year, our expanding consumer network assisted us to understand and improve the patient experience of people affected by cancer and helped to create a research-informed roadmap to significant quality and safety improvements in cancer care.

Throughout the turmoil of the pandemic, consumers have worked alongside us, adding value, advocating for consumer involvement, contributing to strategic planning, and amplifying the voice of those affected by the additional challenges of COVID-19.

[viccompcancerctr.org/  
consumers-what-matters](https://viccompcancerctr.org/consumers-what-matters)



Consumer representative, George Kiosoglou with Dr Keely Bumsted O'Brien, Head Scientific Education WEHI and Dr Stephen Mieruszynski, Senior Postdoctoral Fellow, WEHI

### COVID-19 response

In March 2020, the VCCC Alliance and Monash Partners Comprehensive Cancer Consortium formed the Victorian COVID-19 Cancer Network (VCCN) to empower health professionals to support each other to deliver optimal care for people with cancer during the pandemic. The Victorian Integrated Cancer Services and Cancer Council Victoria are key collaborators in the initiative.

As the indirect and unintended consequences of COVID-19 and its management continue, the VCCN plays an important role in leading, advocating and coordinating responses, as well as supporting the cancer workforce.

[viccompcancerctr.org/  
vccn-response](https://viccompcancerctr.org/vccn-response)



Members of the VCCN taskforce A/Prof Zee Wan Wong, Peninsula Health, A/Prof Sue-Anne McLachlan, St Vincent's Hospital, Prof Grant McArthur, VCCC Alliance and A/Prof Phillip Parente, Eastern Health.

### Research

The Data-Driven Research Program conducted the first large-scale linkage of primary care and hospital data in 2017 and has been building its infrastructure to enable novel, longitudinal health services research across the continuum of care.

The program combines the infrastructure, linked data, and expertise of the alliance to create a research-ready data platform. This new informational insight is helping to drive advances in multiple areas that can enable dedicated programs of work, including value-based healthcare and targeted initiatives to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

[viccompcancerctr.org/  
research-acceleration](https://viccompcancerctr.org/research-acceleration)



### Clinical trials

In early 2020, the VCCC Alliance partnered with the Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH), with assistance from the Melbourne Children's Trials Centre, to develop a suite of resources to support researchers conducting investigator-initiated trials.

The IIT toolkit – built by a powerful collaboration of authors and contributors from across the sector provides Victorian clinical trials professionals with a one-stop-shop, from research question to protocol, conducting the trial, analysing, and sharing the results. It offers clear guidance for the trial team on roles and responsibilities and provides resources to enable adherence to regulatory requirements and best practice.

[viccompcancerctr.org/  
clinical-trials-innovations](https://viccompcancerctr.org/clinical-trials-innovations)

### Education

Education is vital to the translation of new research evidence into routine clinical practice. Our educational programming meets identified needs in professional development and education, consistent with the aspirations of the cancer workforce and the objectives of the alliance. Over the past financial year, the VCCC Alliance has conducted 140 programs with 12,170 people online and 91 in person. That's a total of 12,261 people who have participated in alliance-led learning and development opportunities.

[viccompcancerctr.org/  
education-power-of](https://viccompcancerctr.org/education-power-of)



Farah Mian presents her research project at the Master of Cancer Sciences showcase in May this year.



# 2020-21 change-makers

## Overcoming barriers for young Australians

Adolescents and young adults (AYA) can get 'lost' in the divide between paediatric and adult cancer care, and barriers in access to clinical trials is just one consequence. The Increasing AYA Access to Clinical Trials program made significant headway in implementing system-level change to address this problem. Findings published in the *Journal of Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology* have the potential to change the game for this cohort in Australia.

## Mastering Cancer Science

At the end of 2020, Australia's first cancer sciences specialists graduated from the VCCC Alliance and University of Melbourne's Master of Cancer Sciences online postgraduate program. The program is one of only a few cancer-specific online degrees worldwide. Study options ensure students understand the seminal work that has constructed the current biological, treatment, behavioural and societal paradigms in oncology. The teaching team are researchers, clinicians, and educators from the coalface of cancer discovery and care.

Beginning with 33 students two years ago, we surpassed 200 enrolled in a Graduate Certificate, Specialist Certificate or Master's pathway during the 2021 academic year.

## Centre for Cancer Immunotherapy hits world stage

The Centre for Cancer Immunotherapy (CCI) – a joint initiative by Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, The University of Melbourne and the VCCC Alliance – is an incubator space for 10 research groups totalling around 60 researchers. VCCC Alliance lab groups currently occupying the space represent Peter Mac, Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital and WEHI, with more set to join soon. Multiple research projects are underway, encompassing both adult and paediatric cancer immunotherapy.

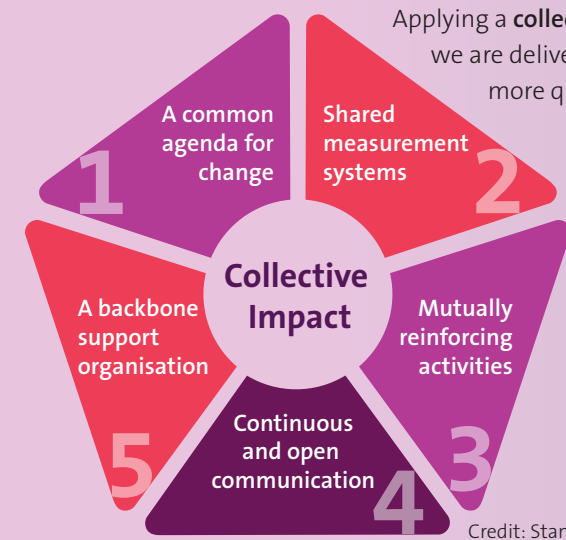
CCI research was thrust into the spotlight in July 2021, when CRISPR gene editing technology made international news as a potential treatment for COVID-19 – this finding evolved from cancer research undertaken in the CCI lab by Peter Mac and The Doherty Institute.

## Guaranteeing a bright future for clinical trials

The MTPConnect Researcher Exchange and Development within Industry (REDI) initiative promotes partnership with research, training and industry organisations, including the VCCC Alliance to implement an integrated plan driving skills development and workforce training.

Our prestigious SKILLED internship program, supported by MTPConnect and jointly funded by the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions attracts some of the brightest scientific minds each year, allowing them to gain real-world experience in clinical trials. Benefits are two-fold. The program offers talented scientists and cancer researchers a pathway into the competitive clinical trials field, but crucially it builds capacity in regional hospitals and cancer centres to deliver best-practice clinical trials.

# Collaboration in action



Applying a **collective impact framework**, we are delivering far greater benefits more quickly than an individual organisation could achieve alone.

Credit: Stanford Social Innovation Review

## Victorian COVID-19 Cancer Network



**21 expert taskforce members.** Dedicated advocacy, education and support for cancer workforce and patients across the state.

## Strategic Research Plan 2021-24

250 contributors,  
35 organisations

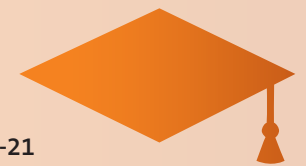
10 programs,  
40+ projects

\$27 million investment  
by Victorian Government

CONSUMER DRIVEN

## A strong workforce

**140** education programs 20-21



↑ Masters' qualified cancer specialists  
200+ enrolments  
2021 academic year.

↑ Clinical trials metropolitan and regional study coordinators and assistants.

↑ Three nurse researcher projects completed and published.

↑ 12,000+ education participants.

## System changing initiatives

genomic literacy  
data-linkage  
research  
novel therapies  
personalised cancer care  
value based healthcare  
consumer-driven research

→ IIT Toolkit  
15,000+ website views.

→ Breaking down clinical trials barriers for adolescents and young adults.

→ Consumer engagement toolkit  
12,000+ website views.

→ Molecular tumour board meetings.

## Strategic pillars



[viccompcancerctr.org/next-horizon-spp](http://viccompcancerctr.org/next-horizon-spp)

## Evolving to the VCCC Alliance

This year the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre joint venture changed its name to officially be known as the VCCC Alliance.

The move recognises the maturation of the alliance of institutes that came together to foster collaboration, it distinguishes the alliance from the building of the same name in Parkville, and acknowledges members outside the precinct and the growth of statewide activities involving regional affiliates and others.



Overcoming cancer together

### VCCC Alliance

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Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Ltd trading as  
VCCC Alliance ABN 84 140 233 790



## Acknowledgement

The VCCC Alliance acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we carry out our work across Victoria and we recognise and value their continuing cultural heritage, beliefs and deep connection with the land and waters.

## Financial reports

The financial and auditor's reports for Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Ltd., trading as VCCC Alliance are published on the website [viccompcancerctr.org/annual-report](http://viccompcancerctr.org/annual-report).

[www.viccompcancerctr.org](http://www.viccompcancerctr.org)