

Fuelled by generosity

Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth 2024 Impact Report

Every breakthrough made possible by donor support.

JREISSATI
Pancreatic
Centre



Thank you



On behalf of the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth, it is my sincere privilege to thank you for your unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for people facing a pancreatic cancer diagnosis. Since our launch in 2021, we have come a long way, and your generosity has played a critical role in every milestone we've reached.

Over the past year, our Centre has continued to grow in strength and purpose. We've established a team of exceptionally talented researchers, compassionate and highly qualified pancreatic nurses, a dedicated specialist dietitian, and experienced clinical trial staff—all working together to provide world-class care and to push the boundaries of what's possible in pancreatic cancer diagnosis, treatment, and support.

Professor Andrew Metz

Jreissati Pancreatic Centre
at Epworth

In addition to remarkable research initiatives, one of the most exciting developments this year is the opening of our new premises at 19 Erin Street. This purpose-designed space gives a face to the Centre—a tangible symbol of hope, innovation, and care. It provides a permanent home for our team to collaborate and flourish, and just as importantly, it offers a safe and calming environment for patients and their families to receive the support they need.

Thank you for believing in the vision of a Centre solely focused on pancreatic cancer—one that is determined to change the outlook for this disease through early diagnosis, investment in research, and awareness and education. Your support continues to be the foundation of our progress.

We hope you enjoy reading about the impact we've made this year, and seeing how your generosity has enabled compound achievements that continue to grow. Together, we are going from strength to strength—not just locally, but now nationally—and we couldn't have done it without you.

Professor Andrew Metz

Director, Jreissati Pancreatic Centre
at Epworth

2024:

A year of momentum and impact in review

In 2024, the Centre made bold strides in research, care and community engagement. From the inspiring success of the Walk for Rita Step Challenge to a standout campus-wide initiative on World Pancreatic Cancer Day, awareness and advocacy reached new heights. We deepened national research collaborations, expanded our expert team and supported the next generation of PhD researchers. A dynamic fundraising lunch united supporters around a powerful cause and the launch of our multilingual centralised web resource marked a major leap in accessibility. These achievements—and many more in education, diagnostics, and clinical support—reflect the real impact of your continued support.

We invite you to explore the highlights and milestones that shaped 2024 and brought us closer to changing the future of pancreatic cancer.



230

Patients participated in research projects and clinical trials.



170

Patients have received free molecular testing



97

Subsidised scans and counselling sessions



88 days

Free accommodation



7915

Clinical visits since launch



833

Query instances since launch



1701

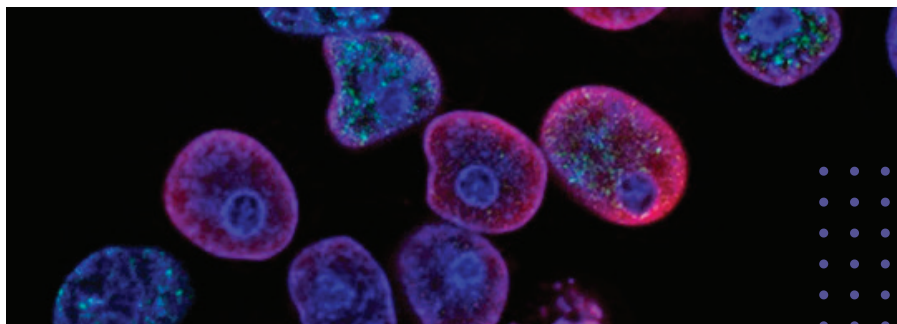
Research visits since launch



698

Referrals since launch

Transforming the future of pancreatic cancer detection and prevention



Tackling pre-cancerous cysts: The Australasian Pancreatic Cyst Registry (APCR)

Intraductal papillary mucinous neoplasms (IPMNs) are the most common form of pancreatic cyst—and the only known pre-cancerous lesion of the pancreas. While early treatment can prevent cancer from developing, knowing which IPMNs may turn into a cancer is difficult, as data is lacking.

Thanks to a **Tour De Cure Prevention Grant** and a **Perpetual IMPACT Grant**, Professor Andrew Metz has launched the Australasian Pancreatic Cyst Registry—an ambitious initiative that aims to improve care for patients with these high-risk cysts. Now active across more than 13 hospitals, the registry collects real-world, longitudinal data to support consistent, evidence-based decision-making.

By enabling clinicians to share insights and track patient outcomes in a unified system, this project will help reduce variance in patient management and accelerate the detection of malignant changes across urban and rural settings alike. It represents a critical step toward standardising pancreatic cyst care nationally.

Detecting cancer before it starts: The APRISE Screening Program

The Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth is leading the **Australian Pancreatic Cancer High-Risk Screening (APRISE) Program**—a first-of-its-kind national study that will follow 1,000 individuals with a family history or genetic risk for pancreatic cancer over five years.

With confirmed participation from over 15 major hospitals across the country, APRISE is designed to evaluate and refine screening strategies for early cancer detection in high-risk groups. The study has been developed in consultation with leading national experts and aligns with Cancer Australia's early detection guidelines.

Crucially, APRISE also connects Australia to a global research effort through its inclusion in the Pancreatic Cancer Early Detection (PRECEDE) Consortium, led by New York University. This collaboration with more than 30 world-leading institutions positions the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth as a global leader in prevention-focused pancreatic cancer research.

With generous support from the **Pankind – Pancreatic Cancer Australia**— who has pledged \$500,000 over five years— further buoyed by contributions from the **Viridian Foundation** and individual donors, this program will give primary care providers powerful tools to identify patients who need screening and potentially life-saving interventions. Recruitment opens in June 2025.

Together, these two groundbreaking studies are creating a future where more lives can be saved through early diagnosis, smarter management and consistent, nationwide care.



Empowering patients through knowledge

In response to the growing need for clear, compassionate information, the Centre released a new series of eight educational videos, building on the success of our original 14-part series—which has already reached over 90,000 viewers.

Created to help patients and their families navigate the complexities of pancreatic cancer treatment, these videos offer practical guidance and reassurance during an often-overwhelming time. Covering key stages of the patient journey, the series is freely accessible on our website and designed to reduce uncertainty, support informed decision-making and instil confidence. Thanks to donor support, we continue to empower individuals facing pancreatic cancer with the knowledge they need to feel more in control and better prepared.

The videos cover information related to pancreatic cancer:

1. What to expect: Chemotherapy
2. What to expect: Surgery
3. What to expect: Scans
4. Early symptoms and warning signs
5. Clinical trials
6. Pain management
7. Caring for a loved one
8. Allied health

Improving access for all communities

To better support Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the Centre has **translated our most-visited website pages into Arabic, Vietnamese, and Mandarin.**

These easy-to-read, printable fact sheets provide vital information on diagnosis, treatment, and support services, helping more patients and families access the care they need in a language they understand. Thanks to donor support, these resources are now freely available on our website for communities and clinicians nationwide.

Empowering GPs to detect pancreatic cancer earlier

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, the Centre is developing a ground-breaking **clinical decision support tool** to assist GPs in identifying patients who may be at risk of pancreatic cancer.

Funded by grants from the **Telematics Trust** and Epworth Medical Foundation, this freely accessible, online tool will guide GPs through a structured assessment of symptoms and risk factors, using a validated model developed by Australian experts. By generating tailored clinical recommendations—such as when to order tests or refer to a specialist—the tool aims to fast-track diagnosis and improve outcomes for patients.

Pilot testing with GPs is about to commence, with a full launch anticipated in mid-2025.

Expanding access to life-changing therapies

Thanks to the continued generosity of our donor community, we've **expanded the Centre's Patient Access Fund to include support for personalised therapies** like Olaparib and Penpulimab—targeted treatments for patients with specific molecular vulnerabilities.

This vital change was driven by the voices of patients and families who courageously shared their experiences and advocated for access to promising therapies beyond standard care.

Their insights underscored the financial barriers many face when seeking these options. In response, we are proud to offer greater subsidy support, helping more patients access the treatments they need, when they need them. This expansion not only brings hope for longer survival, but also the potential for a significantly better quality of life.

“Michael constantly shares how much better he feels: better circulation, less numbness and fewer skin irritations. His zest for life has returned. He is back in the kitchen cooking; his appetite has returned. He has regained a healthy weight, so no longer looks deathly thin and pale. All of this is because he no longer has to endure intravenous chemotherapy or suffer from extreme fatigue due to chemo. He happily looks forward to travelling to holiday destinations instead of to the hospital.”

– Family member of a patient living with pancreatic cancer



A clearer picture, a better path forward

SpyGlass™ Direct Visualisation System

In early 2024, Epworth introduced a breakthrough in patient care with the arrival of the SpyGlass™ Direct Visualisation System (Boston Scientific)—making us the only private hospital in Victoria, and one of just ten statewide, to offer this cutting-edge technology. Unlike traditional black-and-white imaging methods, this advanced system provides real-time, high-resolution colour images of the pancreatic and bile ducts. For patients, this means more accurate diagnoses, clearer insights into blockages or abnormalities and faster, more targeted treatment decisions.

In August 2024, we performed our first SpyGlass + ERCP procedure using this advanced endoscopic approach—offering patients direct, precise visualisation of their condition. It's **a major step forward in the diagnosis and treatment of complex pancreatic and biliary diseases**, giving people facing a challenging diagnosis greater clarity, confidence and hope.

(Above) Affiliated clinician and HPB surgeon, Mr Dan Croagh, performs the first SpyGlass + ERCP case at Epworth.

35

Procedures by
eight specialists.

30

Procedures focused on
pancreatic conditions.

Enhancing diagnosis with cutting-edge technology

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, the Centre has successfully acquired and installed a state-of-the-art **Canon Aplio i800 Endoscopic Ultrasound (EUS) processor** at Epworth Eastern in Box Hill.

In use since February 2025, this advanced equipment delivers high-resolution imaging that significantly improves the ability to detect and assess small pancreatic lesions and surrounding structures. For patients, this means faster, more accurate diagnoses—especially in complex or unclear cases—leading to quicker clinical decisions and more personalised treatment plans. Already used in over 35 procedures by eight specialists, this new technology is making a real difference in the lives of those facing a pancreatic cancer diagnosis.

Collaboration at the core of progress



At the Centre, we believe that meaningful progress in pancreatic cancer research is only possible through strong collaboration.

This year, we were proud to have hosted a dedicated session during Epworth Research Week, bringing together clinicians, researchers, students, and partners to share ideas, explore innovations, and align efforts toward earlier diagnosis and better outcomes. These connections not only fuel discovery—they accelerate it.

“These collaborative efforts are paving the way for earlier detection, better treatments, and stronger patient outcomes. Scientific discovery doesn’t happen in isolation—it happens through connection. The more we share, learn, and support one another, the closer we get to real solutions for pancreatic cancer.” – Professor Andrew Metz, Director, Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth

Epworth Research Week

The event highlighted our involvement in four national, government-funded research studies.

Presentations included:

- **PemOla study** (a novel immunotherapy combination for patients with high mutational burden) in collaboration with Australian GI Trials Group (AGITG)
- **SuperQOL** (nutritional management of pancreatic cancer through supplemental feeding) in collaboration with Monash and Latrobe Universities
- **Fecal Microbiota Transplantation** (reprogramming the tumour microbiome to alleviate symptoms) with University of Adelaide
- **SCANPatient** (improving the accuracy of pancreatic cancer diagnosis through standardised synoptic radiological reports) in conjunction with Monash Health.

The Centre has also partnered with the Pankind – Pancreatic Cancer Australia who have supported the Australian Pancreatic High-Risk Screening (APRISE) study being led by the Centre.



Driving awareness through education: GI for GPs Symposium highlights

The Centre was proud to once again host the highly regarded *GI for GPs Symposium* at Levantine Hill Estate in the Yarra Valley.

In its second year, the symposium focused on **Gastrointestinal disorders: Best practices and multidisciplinary care** and is an event that continues to grow in both impact and attendance. This year's program featured expert-led presentations on pancreatic cyst management, fatty liver disease, and the critical role of nutrition in gastrointestinal health—topics that are deeply relevant to early intervention and prevention, especially in pancreatic cancer.

The symposium plays a vital role in raising awareness among frontline healthcare providers, who are often the first point of contact for patients at risk. With strong attendance and overwhelmingly positive feedback, the event continues to serve as a valuable educational platform.

As demand for this kind of specialised knowledge grows, so too does the need for sustainable funding. We invite those interested in supporting this initiative—through sponsorship or partnership—to help ensure not only its continued success, but its lasting impact in this critical area of care.

**"Great Centre, fantastic work!
More doctors need to know about it!"**

– GI for GPs Symposium attendee



**Would recommend attending
the symposium to a colleague**



**Agreed to apply changes
to their practice based on the
GI for GPs Symposium**

"My GP had attended the conference and had pancreatic cancer on his mind, which made the referral to the Centre so much easier. Within 24 hours I was in contact with a pancreatic nurse, and I can't thank you enough for the great care I have received."

– Grateful patient

World Pancreatic Cancer Day: Sparkling awareness across campuses

World Pancreatic Cancer Day 2024 was a powerful reminder of the impact awareness can have.

By leveraging the Victorian footprint of Epworth HealthCare, we were able to reach a wide and diverse audience, spanning sites in Geelong, Hawthorn, Camberwell, Eastern (Box Hill), Freemasons (East Melbourne) and Richmond—bringing pancreatic cancer to the forefront of conversations among staff, patients and visitors alike.

Educational materials were placed in high-traffic areas across our campuses, and an engaging *Know Your Pancreas* online interactive quiz sparked enthusiasm and curiosity as people learned more about what the pancreas does and its vital role in both health and disease. The buzz created throughout the day and 1,123 quiz participants demonstrated how impactful education can be in driving understanding and ultimately, earlier diagnosis.

Encouraged by the success of this year's efforts, plans are already underway to expand the event in 2025, reaching even more people with vital knowledge and inspiration for change. Your support makes these moments possible and most importantly, meaningful.



Above: JPCE Study Coordinator Sue Thang with consumers and Epworth donors Ellen and James Lew at Epworth Eastern.

DO YOU KNOW?

- What are the different sections of the pancreas?
- What is the function of the pancreas?
- What are the potential complications of pancreatic disease?
- What are the potential side effects of pancreatic disease?
- Why is it hard to diagnose pancreatic cancer?



Supporting patients beyond the diagnosis:

Redeveloping the MyCare Plan diaries

In 2024, we proudly launched the redeveloped our *MyCare Plan Diaries*, aligned with the Cancer Council's Optimal Care Pathways — a practical, patient-centred tool designed to help individuals and families navigate the complexities of a pancreatic cancer diagnosis.

Co-designed with our Community Advisory Panel, the diary reflects real patient experiences and needs, offering a structured, compassionate way to track care, appointments, questions, and reflections.

Available **nationally via our website and free of charge**, every newly diagnosed patient receives a copy as part of their care journey. Alongside our comprehensive Resource Book that addresses commonly raised concerns, including financial assistance, counselling services, and advance care planning, the diary helps people feel more organised, in control and supported during an incredibly challenging time.

“It’s my personal companion and prompts me with the tick-boxes so I can see patterns [with my symptoms].” – Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth patient

With continued donor support, we can expand the reach of this valuable resource even further ensuring that more patients across Australia, regardless of where they are diagnosed, receive the tools they need to feel informed, empowered and cared for.

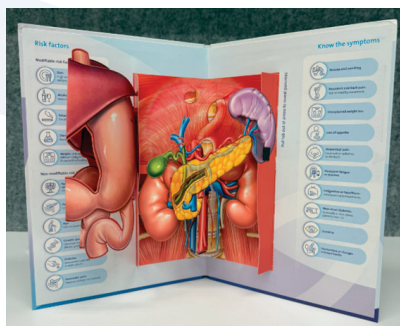
A new tool to support early conversations in primary care



We've reimagined one of our most widely used GP resources—the 3D gastrointestinal tract model, originally conceptualised in collaboration with Dr Andrew Davaris. Distributed to over 3,000 clinics, the model was a valuable visual aid but limited by its plastic design and bulk.



Following positive feedback, we redeveloped a foldable, paper-based pop-up version that's lighter, more compact, has added detail and is environmentally conscious. Featuring an illustrated GI tract and clear information on pancreatic cancer symptoms and risk factors, it's designed to support early, informed conversations between GPs and patients.



Each model includes a QR code linking to our new interactive clinical decision support tool, helping GPs take the next step in assessing patient risk. 3,000 updated models will be distributed in June 2025 as part of a national GP education pack, alongside materials for the APRISE screening program.

(Top left) Original GI tract model
(Middle left) New pop-up book format
(Bottom left) New GI tract pop-up model

Community united for change: Lunch by the Yarra

The annual Lunch by the Yarra brought together 500 guests—community leaders, business professionals, philanthropists, clinicians and benefactors—for an afternoon of generosity, connection and shared purpose.

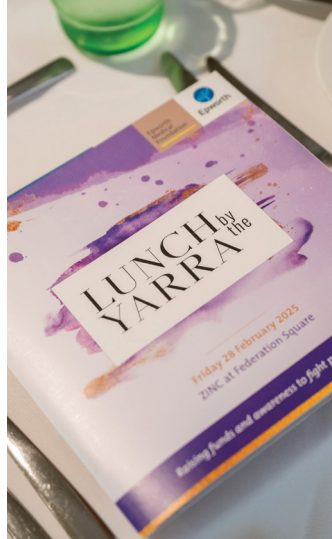
Raising \$1.5 million, the event was a powerful demonstration of Melbourne's compassion and commitment to improving the lives of those affected by pancreatic cancer.

The afternoon was made especially meaningful by the voices of grateful patients who shared their personal experiences, reminding everyone why this cause matters so deeply. Their stories brought urgency and heart to the occasion, inspiring our community to continue raising visibility for this devastating disease and to support the Centre's mission to discover better treatments and care.

[Right: Ken & Helen Turnham]



\$1,5M Raised
in support of
pancreatic cancer





Walk 4 Rita: Step by step, we're changing the story of pancreatic cancer

Launched in 2021 in memory of a beloved Viridian Foundation colleague, the Walk for Rita (W4R) initiative has grown from a grassroots effort into a powerful campaign for awareness, engagement and funding in the fight against pancreatic cancer. Driven by Viridian's commitment to making a difference in the moments that matter, W4R has united staff, partners, and supporters in a month-long walking challenge every July.



In 2024, the initiative once again inspired widespread participation, raising funds that directly supported key programs within the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth, including the Australian Pancreatic High-Risk Screening study, the GI for GPs Symposium, and the production of MyCare Plan diaries—each advancing early detection, clinical education, and patient care.

The ongoing success of W4R reflects the strength of community and the enduring impact of Rita's story. The Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth is proud to continue our support in the next financial year, with teams once again stepping up to walk, raise awareness and help change outcomes for those facing pancreatic cancer.



"Our thanks to the Viridian Foundation for their commitment and contribution to the fight against pancreatic cancer. Their support makes a real difference to our ability to change outcomes for people fighting this terrible disease."

– Scott Bulger, Executive Director,
Epworth Medical Foundation

Investing in the future: Supporting the next generation

Empowered by philanthropic support, we awarded four PhD top-up scholarships to outstanding students in Victoria, who are focused on pancreatic cancer research. These scholarships provide essential financial support, enabling passionate emerging researchers to dedicate themselves fully to projects aimed at improving outcomes and quality of life for people living with pancreatic cancer. This investment is helping to build the next generation of experts committed to driving meaningful progress in a field that urgently needs innovation and care.



Dr. Purva Trivedi
Olivia Newton-John
Cancer Research Institute

Project title: Understanding how myeloid HCK activity corrupts the tumour microenvironment



Phoebe Dunbar
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Project title: CRISPR/Cas9 mediated generation of armoured TCR-T cells in the treatment of pancreatic cancer.



Kate Connell
La Trobe University

Project title: Exploring the management of nutrition impact symptoms associated with advanced pancreatic cancer and its treatment



Saeed Aslani
Monash University

Project title: Assessing the potential of mutant KRAS ctDNA in determining chemotherapy response in pancreatic cancer patients

2023 Recipients



"The top-up scholarship has significantly contributed to my academic and research progress by alleviating financial concerns. This support allowed me to focus entirely on my studies, particularly during the critical phase of my PhD. Additionally, the financial relief enabled me to visit my parents overseas and manage personal commitments, including my wedding. This financial stability has been invaluable in helping me balance both my academic and personal responsibilities, ultimately enhancing my overall productivity and well-being."

- Sakshi Arora, 2023 Epworth scholarship recipient



"The top-up scholarship has been instrumental in supporting my studies by alleviating financial pressures, allowing me to dedicate my full attention to research. Conducting animal experiments and in vitro studies requires significant time commitment, often extending to weekends, leaving no opportunity for additional work outside my PhD.

Thanks to this support, I can focus solely on my research without the need for a casual or part-time job. This focused approach has significantly enhanced my productivity and ability to meet the demanding requirements of my study, ensuring I can make meaningful contributions to my field."

- Arian Ansardamavandi, 2023 Epworth scholarship recipient



"The PhD top-up scholarship has significantly reduced my personal financial burden, allowing me to remain focused on my PhD studies and contributions to the scientific community.

I am grateful for the scholarship and the on-going support of the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre. This alone has motivated my PhD journey and desire to advance not only my own studies, but has also given me the confidence to train the more junior members of my research community."

- Clara Kosasih, 2023 Epworth scholarship recipient

Our team: Advancing personalised nutrition care



Given the important role the pancreas plays in digestion, adequate nutrition and diet management is vital for someone living with and undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.

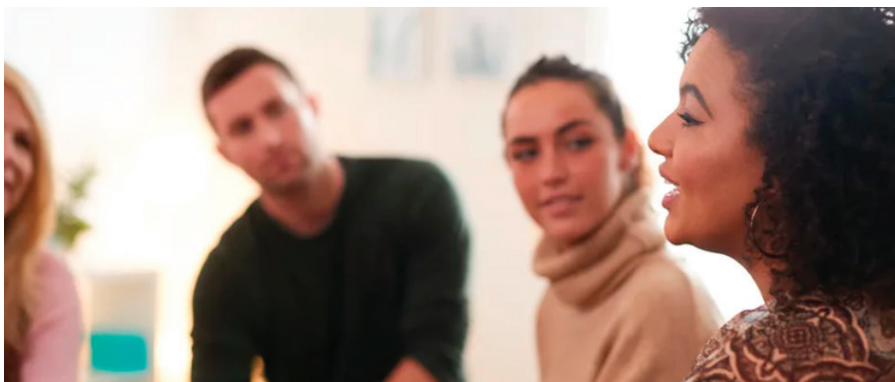
Therefore, we are delighted to welcome Niti to the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth. A highly experienced oncology and hepato-pancreato-biliary dietitian, Niti brings both clinical expertise and deep compassion to her role. Her appointment strengthens our growing multidisciplinary team and marks a significant step toward delivering personalised nutrition support—an often overlooked aspect of pancreatic cancer care.

Niti Rajagopal Senior Dietitian

Working closely with our clinicians, Niti ensures nutritional care is fully integrated, helping patients manage weight loss and digestive challenges, and improving outcomes. She's also driving research forward, leading recruitment for two key studies that will shape the future of nutritional care in pancreatic cancer.

- **SuperQOL study:** This study will assess whether direct tube feeding into the small bowel can improve quality of life, maintain chemotherapy dosing and potentially extend survival in patients with advanced pancreatic cancer. This research is a collaborative effort with Monash University and is supported by funding from the Medical Research Future Fund.
- **DINE-PC study:** This study evaluates the feasibility of an outpatient dietetics program to improve nutritional status and quality of life in people with pancreatic cancer. Guided by evidence-based recommendations for early, individualised support, the program ensures specialised oncology dietitians provide care from diagnosis through treatment.

“Our thanks to Cherie Cork for her support of this important study. Nutrition plays a pivotal role in the lives of people undergoing chemotherapy and treatment for pancreatic cancer. This support makes an enormous difference. Thank you.” – Niti Rajagopal



Looking ahead: Our goals for the coming year

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our donors—your generosity continues to drive research, innovation, and care that are reshaping the future of pancreatic cancer.

As we look ahead, we're excited to build on this momentum. Key priorities include expanding digital access to clinical trials, launching supportive workshops for carers and growing our Walk for Rita (W4R) community to foster advocacy and visibility.

In 2025, we'll mark a major milestone with the opening of our new building—a symbol of the hope and determination that fuels our mission. We warmly invite you to be part of this celebration and all that lies ahead.

Your ongoing support is vital. Together, we are creating real, lasting change for people affected by pancreatic cancer. Thank you for being part of this journey.



Contact us



0436 279 203



heather.maynier@epworth.org.au



pancreaticcentre.org.au



19 Erin Street, Richmond, VIC

Thank you for your support!



