HOPE MADE POSSIBLE
Philanthropy delivering world-class research
Philanthropy has always been a key ingredient in Australia’s medical research success. It was a bequest from racehorse trainer Jack Holt that founded SVI, and support from other generous donors has allowed the subsequent expansion of the Institute, the development of ground-breaking research and the acquisition of cutting-edge technology for our research.

Australia’s medical research excellence is acknowledged world-wide, and in large part this is thanks to these generous individuals who unwaveringly support research. The role of philanthropy is even more important at the moment, with the sector particularly vulnerable to inconsistent funding.

No matter what the coming year brings, philanthropy will continue to play a vital role at SVI, with generous individuals and organisations helping to sustain one of Australia’s most vibrant and successful sectors. I would like to wish happy holidays to all of you and thank you for your support in 2014. I look forward to keeping in touch with you in the New Year.

In 2014, philanthropy has been crucial in helping SVI achieve its goals of improved health through medical research. Some of the highlights of 2014 are listed below.

- Originally seed-funded by a $5 million donation from Susan Alberti, the Nationally Funded Centre for Islet Transplantation at St Vincent’s was opened in 2014 by Health Minister Peter Dutton.
- Funding from the Marian and E.H. Flack Trust allowed the completion of SVI’s Biobank project, also supported by a $300,000 donation from the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust in 2011.
- The Susan Alberti Medical Research Foundation’s Mother’s Day Luncheon raised money in May for the 2014 Women in Research Award, presented to Dr Sophie Broughton from the Structural Biology Unit.
- Funds raised through events held by the SVI Foundation, including the Australia Day celebration at the Bellarine Peninsula and the SVI Charity Golf Day, have raised vital funds to support research at the Institute.
- The $10,000 Discovery Fund has a capital target of $5 million, the income from which will support research at SVI. 2014 saw SVI’s $10,000 Discovery Fund gain six new members, with another two members renewing their pledge of support for a further 5 years. In addition, significant donations to the Fund were made following two superb functions in March and October.
- Support from charity-based organisations such as Diabetes Australia, Australian Cancer Research Foundation, Cure Cancer Australia, Leukaemia Foundation, National Breast Cancer Foundation, JDRF and Cancer Council Victoria continues to be crucial to SVI research.
The year kicked off with SVI’s Professor Michael Parker and colleagues from the Centre for Cancer Biology being awarded a $6.7 million Program Grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council to find new ways to treat leukaemia.

Associate Professor Louise Purton continued work on her project to develop methods of improving the outcome of human stem cell transplants thanks to a $100,000 Adult Stem Cell Grant from the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese.

In April, Health Ministers Peter Dutton and David Davis opened the Institute’s Nationally Funded Centre for Islet Transplantation, which aims to deliver islet transplantation to people across Australia suffering from life-threatening type 1 diabetes.

Highly-publicised work from Dr Stuart Mannering and Professor Tom Kay described how the team from SVI’s Immunology and Diabetes Unit were, for the first time, able to catch the immune cells responsible for causing type 1 diabetes ‘at the scene of the crime’ – by isolating them from the pancreas of an organ donor who had died due to complications of the disease.

Research from Dr Carl Walkley and his team explained how the gene Recql1 works. Responsible for the rare human cancer syndrome, Rothmund-Thomson Syndrome, Carl showed that Recql1 also plays an essential role in the development and maturation of normal blood cells.

On the fundraising front, the SAMRF Gala Ball in August raised $150,000 for diabetes research at SVI, the SVI Support Group raised more than $60,000 at their annual dinner and the 2014 SVI Golf Day in October raised $70,000 for Institute research.

A living legacy

The Marian and E.H. Flack Trust recently announced that SVI had been awarded a $150,000 grant. The grant will help to complete the SVI Biobank Project, which was kicked off in 2011 with a $300,000 donation from the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust.

The Marian and E.H. Flack Trust was established upon Flack’s death in 1935, and in the last 10 years alone has disbursed more than $17 million.

More than a century after their births, and thanks to their foresight and generosity, the legacies of Edwin Flack and Jack Holt live on at SVI.
Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia. More than 300,000 Australians live with dementia today, and the number of people with Alzheimer’s disease is expected to triple by 2050. The financial cost of Alzheimer’s, currently estimated at AU$3.6 billion per year, will continue to grow unless medical research can intervene with new and effective therapies.

With this pressing need in mind, in 2014 the Yulgilbar Foundation, founded and advised by Sarah and Baillieu Myer, announced an initiative to support research aimed at combating Alzheimer’s disease.

In October, the Foundation awarded a $170,000, 2-year grant to SVI’s Professor Michael Parker and Dr Luke Miles. Luke says that their research is focused on the early stage discovery of drugs to stop the accumulation of toxic peptides that drive the disease.

“The brain of someone with Alzheimer’s is characterised early in the disease by deposits of a short peptide called beta-amyloid, and later by tangles of densely packed filaments made of a large protein called tau” he explains. “These are thought to be the ‘trigger and bullet’ of the disease – accumulation of beta-amyloid (the trigger) causes changes to tau (the bullet), which together result in the deterioration seen in Alzheimer’s.”

Luke explains that their project focuses on a protein called CD33, which is thought to inhibit the clearing of beta-amyloid accumulation in the brain. The team will use their expertise in determining the 3D structure of proteins to guide the development of drugs to block CD33 and hopefully halt progress of the disease.

Considering the burden that Alzheimer’s places on society, developing therapies is a priority. An Australian is diagnosed with the disease every 6 minutes, according to Baillieu Myer. “We aim to assist in the discovery of drugs that will prevent, delay the onset, slow down the progress and ultimately, cure Alzheimer’s disease.”

The determination of philanthropic organisations like the Yulgilbar Foundation, combined with support from the government in the form of a recently announced $200 million funding boost, greatly increase our chances of finding new treatments for Alzheimer’s.
Now the worst had happened. However, following his rigid dietary guidelines led to severe bouts of gout (ouch!), so I had relapsed into my former habits. Before diagnosis, I suffered semi-regular dizzy spells, ocular disturbances and significant leg pain.

As far as my family history is concerned, all I know is that my father (same body shape, same penchant for snacking, same avoidance of health check-ups) died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 69, and I feel that he may have been an undiagnosed diabetic.

I accepted the diagnosis and consider it a controllable medical condition. Life goes on. Medication twice daily, and frequent finger-pricks are just a part of my daily routine. The condition seems to be reasonably controlled and I do have regular medical check-ups, including visits to the podiatrist and eye specialist. Incidentally, I have never smoked and rarely drink alcohol, and neither did my father.

Interestingly, my bout of prostate cancer in 2008 really did scare me. Without even trying, I lost a significant amount of weight and became relatively fit – so much so that the diabetes educator at the hospital said I no longer came under the ‘diabetes umbrella’. I am now cancer free, but the diabetic indicators returned with a vengeance. I know if I lost weight (maybe up to 15 kg), exercised more and managed my diet more carefully, I might not have to take as much medication. I am trying but I feel quite fine and as I said before, life goes on.

I live in hope that medical research will find a cure for diabetes.

Researchers in SVI’s Protein Chemistry and Metabolism Unit are working towards new treatments for type 2 diabetes, focusing on a protein called AMPK. Simply put, AMPK passes a “make more energy” message to the cell when needed. By doing so, it regulates the burning and storage of fats and sugars, and affects the level of sugars and cholesterol in the bloodstream. This is what makes it such a promising target for the treatment of metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes. Professor Bruce Kemp and his team are at the forefront of this research.
This year’s SVI/Macquarie Leasing 2014 Charity Golf Day, held on Monday 20 October, raised an incredible $70,000 for SVI research.

The event was held at Albert Park Golf Course on what turned out to be a beautiful spring day, with 19 teams taking full advantage of the sunny skies and soft breeze.

The Australian Reliance team of Matthew Kohler, Michael Roberts, Gareth Nicholls and Jarrod Watson won the Jack Holt trophy for finishing first on the day. Runners up were Carrie Pleasance, Chris Howord, Peter Benrossen and Garth Ridd from Garuda Indonesia. The Michael Dwyer Memorial Trophy was won by Chris Holroyd from Charter Keck Cramer, for the long drive on Hole 6.

“It was a great turn out,” said SVI Director, Professor Tom Kay. “We’re really grateful to Macquarie Leasing, Platinum Sponsor for this year’s event, and to all sponsors and players for the enthusiasm and sportsmanship shown on the day.”

The funds raised will support SVI research in areas such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Our researchers, and those in Australia dealing with the challenge of some of these common diseases, will benefit from the day’s fundraising efforts.”

Silver sponsors for this year’s event included Garuda Indonesia, Maxxia, PanPacific and Jayco.

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2015 EVENTS DIARY

March 1
10,000 Discovery Fund Annual Luncheon, Invitation Only

March 31
Friends of SVI, Food Matters Event

May 7
SAMRF Mother’s Day Luncheon

June
George Carson Cardiac Dinner and Tour

August 22
SAMRF 30th Anniversary Signature Ball at Crown Casino

September
$10,000 Discovery Fund Annual Dinner at SVI, Invitation only

October
SVI Support Group Black Tie Dinner
SVI Charity Golf Day
Jack Holt Charity Luncheon (October 23)

November
Friends of SVI Thanksgiving Function

December
Jack Holt Society Morning Tea
The Inaugural Jack Holt Charity Breakfast on Friday 24 October at the RACV Club in Melbourne was, by all definitions, a great success.

Many guests and participants at the breakfast didn’t know that SVI was established as a direct result of racehorse trainer Jack Holt’s bequest of £200,000 - all acknowledged that his contribution to Victoria’s racing and medical research efforts was inspirational.

Funds raised at the event, organised by Rotary Club of Brighton and the Susan Alberti Medical Research Foundation are to be shared between SVI’s Alzheimer’s research program and the Ardoch Youth Foundation.

MC Simon Marshall hosted an action-packed program, kicked off by race caller Victoria Shaw—Australia’s only female race caller—who got everyone into the racing spirit with a ‘phantom’ race call.

Simon then introduced the star-studded speakers’ panel which included Ron Hutchinson, Michelle Payne and Colin Madden, who shared anecdotes about their experiences in the world of racing from their different perspectives of trainer, jockey and part-owner of a champion race-horse.

The Fashions on the Field judges—Alex Fevola, Alan Pinkus and Richard Nylon—also helped make a colourful and engaging event.

“We are elated that our Inaugural Jack Holt Charity Breakfast was such a success,” said Geoff Bentleigh of Rotary Club of Brighton. “It’s heartening to see so many people participate and help raise funds for two important and worthy charities.”

The SVI Support Group celebrated 25 years since their inauguration at their annual Black Tie Dinner in October at The Athenaeum Club. Their stellar fundraising effort on the night brings the total raised by the Group to close to $350,000.

At the start of the evening, Claire O’Callaghan, Chair of the Group, thanked former SVI Director Professor Jack Martin, who originally suggested that they direct their fundraising towards Student Scholarships.

SVI PhD student, Alvin Ng, who spoke on the night, noted the difference that the SVI Student Scholarships make to students at the Institute.

“Although most PhD students receive a scholarship from the Australian Government or the University, the living allowance is three quarters of the minimum wage. Also, as a PhD student, most of our time is devoted to working on our projects. This means that, even if we need to get paid work, we would be eating into precious time that could be spent on our research.

This is why the SVI Foundation Top Up Scholarships are a lifesaver. With an additional $5000 per year, I do not have to worry about keeping a roof over my head or putting food on the table. Most importantly, I can focus my time on my research projects, which means getting closer to the answers that our research aims to resolve.”

The night also presented an opportunity for SVI to thank the Group, and in particular note the effort of seven members who have been members since the first event at the Regent Hotel in August, 1989.

SVI would like to acknowledge all those who have donated to scholarships at the Institute, and especially thank the SVI Support Group for a quarter of a century of support.

SVI Support Group members:
Mrs Margaret Batrouney
Mrs Colleen Bolton
Mrs Maureen Breheny
Mrs Cathy Clancy
Ms Bernadette Dennis
Mrs Cathy Gilbert
Mrs Angela Griss
Mrs Barbara Handley
Mrs Carole Hart
Mrs Jo Lonergan
Mrs Gail McHale
Mrs Claire O’Callaghan
Mrs Geraldine Peck
Mrs Margaret Reeves
Mrs Dawn Hill-Regan
Mrs Judy Ryan
Mrs Christina Westmore-Peyton
Mrs Therese Whiting
Mrs Thecla Xipell
THE YEAR IN REVIEW

THANKS TO THE SVI SUPPORTERS WHO HAVE MADE 2014 A YEAR TO REMEMBER
DONATING TO SVI

By supporting SVI’s medical research, you can make a difference.

1. Donate a single gift to SVI
   - $50
   - $100
   - $250
   - $500
   - $1000
   - Other $

2. Become a ‘Friend of SVI’
   Donate a regular gift:
   - Monthly gift amount $
   - Annual gift amount $

3. Join the SVI $10,000 Discovery Fund
   An investment in the $10,000 Discovery Fund is an investment in the future of the Institute. For information, contact Dan Mars at the SVI Foundation on (03) 9231 2480.

4. Consider SVI in your Will
   If you would like to talk to SVI about a bequest in your Will, contact Madeleine Whiting on (03) 9231 2480.

See our website, www.svi.edu.au if you would like to make periodic payments from your bank account or credit card.

Donation payment details

- Cheque (please make payable to St Vincent’s Institute)
- Credit card (please tick one of the following cards and complete details)
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  - Visa
  - Mastercard
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Expiry date  Amount being paid $

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