

# vitality

Autumn 2024

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**Austin**  
HEALTH



**Olivia  
Newton-John**  
Cancer Wellness & Research Centre

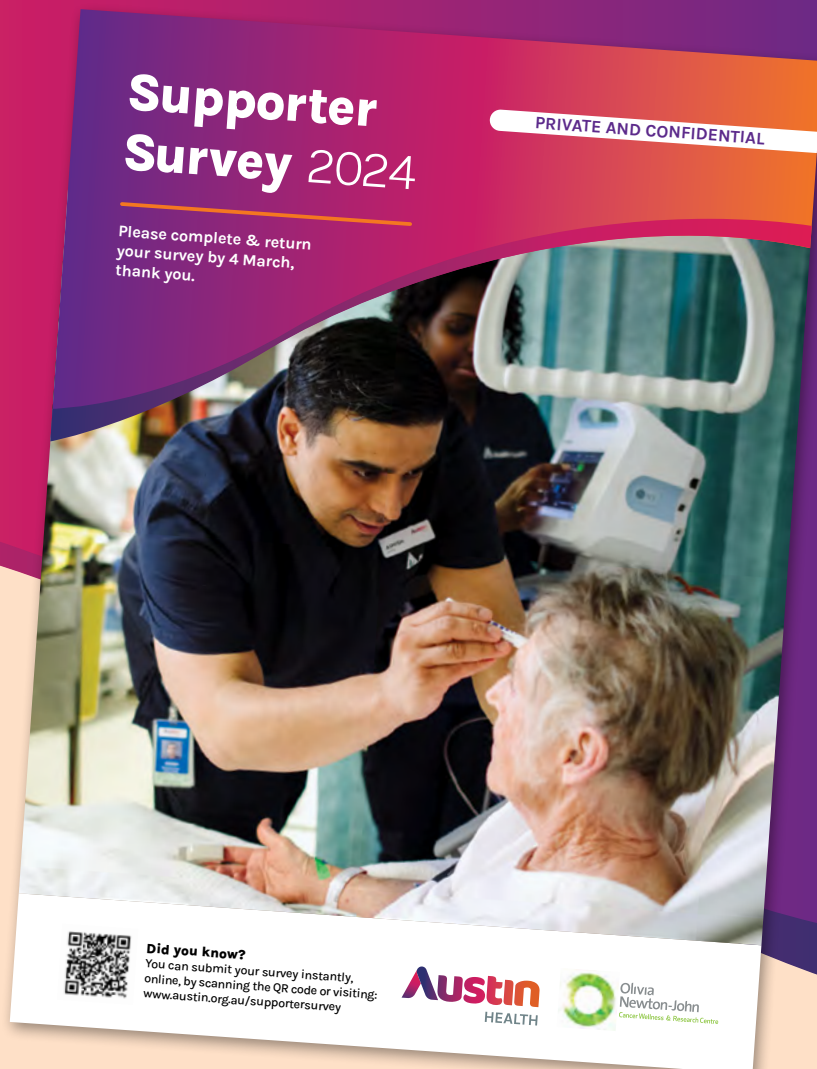


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 [www.austin.org.au](http://www.austin.org.au)



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 [www.austin.org.au/giftshop](http://www.austin.org.au/giftshop)

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\* This offer is available from 9am AEDT 5 February 2024 until end of April. Offer of 10% off applies to all items online with discount applied at checkout.

# A message from Adam Horsburgh

Thank you for making a big difference to our patients by supporting Austin Health and the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness Centre.

Last year, your support made it possible for us to deliver new and life-saving health services, innovative and meaningful research, and additional support for our patients and consumers. Every donation makes a big difference to patients and their families when they are at their most vulnerable.

I am proud to present this edition of Autumn Vitality, where we showcase some of the outstanding activities you have made possible.

In this edition, we feature the exceptional work of the Brain Tumour Support Service, celebrating 15 years of giving with the John Cummins Memorial Fund.

We look back on Olivia's Walk for Wellness in October last year. Through the walk, we continued Olivia's legacy of fundraising for essential wellness programs at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness Centre.

We explore new developments made to patient care, medical technology and other important volunteer, donor and community fundraising stories that reflect your generous contributions.



I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Vitality and seeing the impact your support is making.

With gratitude,

Adam Horsburgh  
Chief Executive Officer

# Recognising 15 years of service and generosity

In December we celebrated the incredible work of Austin Health's Brain Tumour Support Service, sustained thanks to the philanthropic support of the John Cummins Memorial Fund.

In 2008 the John Cummins Memorial Fund (JCMF) partnered with Austin Health to create a support service for people affected by a primary malignant brain tumour diagnosis, and over the last 15 years JCMF has generously donated \$1.4 million to the Brain Tumour Support Service.

The service now supports around 180 families every year, connecting with people from when they are first diagnosed, through their entire cancer journey. As well as tailored support, it runs regular support groups, has developed resources and held information seminars for patients, families and health professionals - all possible thanks to the funds donated by the JCMF.

## Continuity patients can depend on

Brain cancer is a serious illness and while treatable, it often limits people's lives. Brain Tumour Support Coordinator, Dianne Legge has worked at the service since its early days. She says many of the people she sees diagnosed are in the peak of life.

She explains the service acts as a port in a sea of information for patients facing this life-changing diagnosis. "We look at someone's unique situation, and tailor information, services and support to meet their needs over time," says Dianne. "We aim to support people, help them connect with others in a similar situation and provide some much-needed psychosocial support."

The support service is responsive and flexible to patients' changing needs. During the pandemic the service was offered online and at various points there have been groups aimed at carers, parents of young children and other common experiences.

The service has been important for people like Tess Richardson, who suddenly became unwell and was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2018. Tess was a healthy young teacher in her late 20s, and the diagnosis turned life upside down.

Brain tumour support played an important role for her in those early days, providing information about treatment and the all-important opportunity to meet others in the same situation.

***"I was in complete shock. But when I went to my first support group, I met people with brain cancer who were doing well. And most importantly, everyone in the room 100% understood what I was going through."***

Today, Tess is the mother of three-year-old twins and works part time, but finds time to join a monthly support group for mums with brain cancer. "It's an opportunity to link with other mums who are going through the same thing. We talk about our fears and anxieties, how we are feeling and how the kids have been."



## A leader in supportive care

The Brain Tumour Support Service was one of the first of its kind in Australia. “When I first started, support for brain cancer wasn’t there like it is today. Now there’s a lot more research, activity and training of staff. The Austin and John Cummins Memorial Fund enabled us to establish a clear service model, early on, that other services would benchmark against,” says Dianne.

She says one of the biggest achievements of the service has been developing ‘Building the bridge to life with brain cancer’, a support guide co-designed with patients. It focuses on helping people get back to life after diagnosis and treatment. This important resource is being updated currently, with support from the JCMF.

## John Cummins Memorial Fund’s impact

The JCMF honours the legacy of John Cummins, who died of a brain tumour in 2006. John was a leader in the construction industry and President of Victorian Branch CFMEU for a decade.

The fund was initiated by John’s loved ones and has continued to raise money from members of the Victorian CFMEU’s Construction & General Division, other construction unions and industry-related organisations. Managed by the Australian Communities Foundation, the Fund has several charitable interests, with its partnership with Austin Health one of the primary aims.

John’s wife Di Cummins, who is the Chairperson of the Fund, visited in December to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Brain Tumour Support Service with the Austin team. “The partnership has allowed us to address the gaps in support we experienced (when John was a patient). It’s all thanks to this team,” she said.

Medical Oncologist Dr Lawrence Cher, who treated John, said, “With Di’s amazing efforts and wide network, the brain tumour support team has been running now for 15 years. Our ability to provide the care we do has been immeasurably amplified by this service and improved the lives of patients and their loved ones.”

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**To find out more or support the Brain Tumour Support Service, contact the Austin Health Foundation at [foundation@austin.org.au](mailto:foundation@austin.org.au).**



Pictured: Dianne Legge, Tess Richardson, Di Cummins, Helen Panotopoulos.

# Thousands take part in Olivia's Walk for Wellness

More than a year after the passing of Dame Olivia Newton-John, thousands gathered to walk in support of people with cancer.

On Sunday 8 October 2023, more than 4,000 people took part in Olivia's Walk for Wellness in Melbourne and around the world, with an interim result of \$1.6 million raised for wellness programs at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre (ONJ Centre).

These funds will support the wellness programs Olivia championed, such as mindfulness, massage and acupuncture, which have been proven to reduce the pain and side effects of cancer treatment. Helping people with cancer to thrive and providing access to wellness therapies was Olivia's passion.



It was an emotional day, as thousands came together to walk for their loved ones and in honour of Olivia's legacy of love and light. Tottie Goldsmith, Olivia's niece and the ONJ Centre Ambassador, walked alongside Olivia's husband John and daughter Chloe, who both came to Melbourne for the walk.

*"The wellness programs at the ONJ Centre were a dream realised for Olivia. Let's keep her dream thriving, providing quality of life and healing for anyone with cancer."*

- John Easterling, Olivia's husband

The crowd was entertained with incredible performances from GREASE The Musical, David Campbell, Phil Burton and Christ Church Grammar School Choir. Olivia's music was celebrated with sing-alongs by Shanae Watson and Tottie Goldsmith.







We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the participants, supporters, partners, fundraisers and donors who are the driving force behind this incredible event. This day simply wouldn't be possible without the support and generosity of the entire community.

You can support Olivia's legacy and bring love and light to those with cancer by continuing to donate online. Fundraising will remain open until the launch of Olivia's Walk for Wellness 2024.

**Keep Olivia's legacy alive at:  
[walkforwellness.com.au](http://walkforwellness.com.au)**

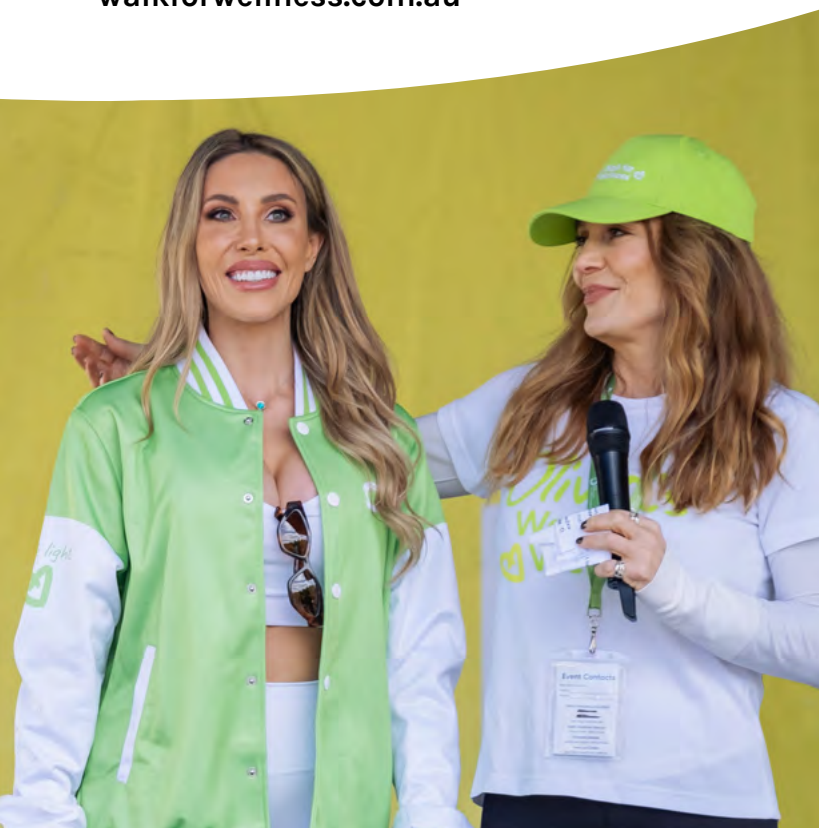
## **Congratulations to the top fundraiser**

Megan Castran was the top individual fundraiser, raising \$33,566, and was also the leader of the top fundraising team 'Jewelchic Rainbow Team', which raised \$54,042.

Megan is a designer and friend of Olivia's who created a special Love and Light t-shirt in collaboration with Kind Is Cool. Megan donated all proceeds from the t-shirt towards her fundraising and Kind Is Cool gave a further 5%.

Megan also donated all profits from a collaboration rainbow jumper with Zaket and Plover, that Olivia loved. "We loved we could donate everything to the walk," Megan said.

Thank you to Megan, her incredible team, and to everyone who raised funds this year.





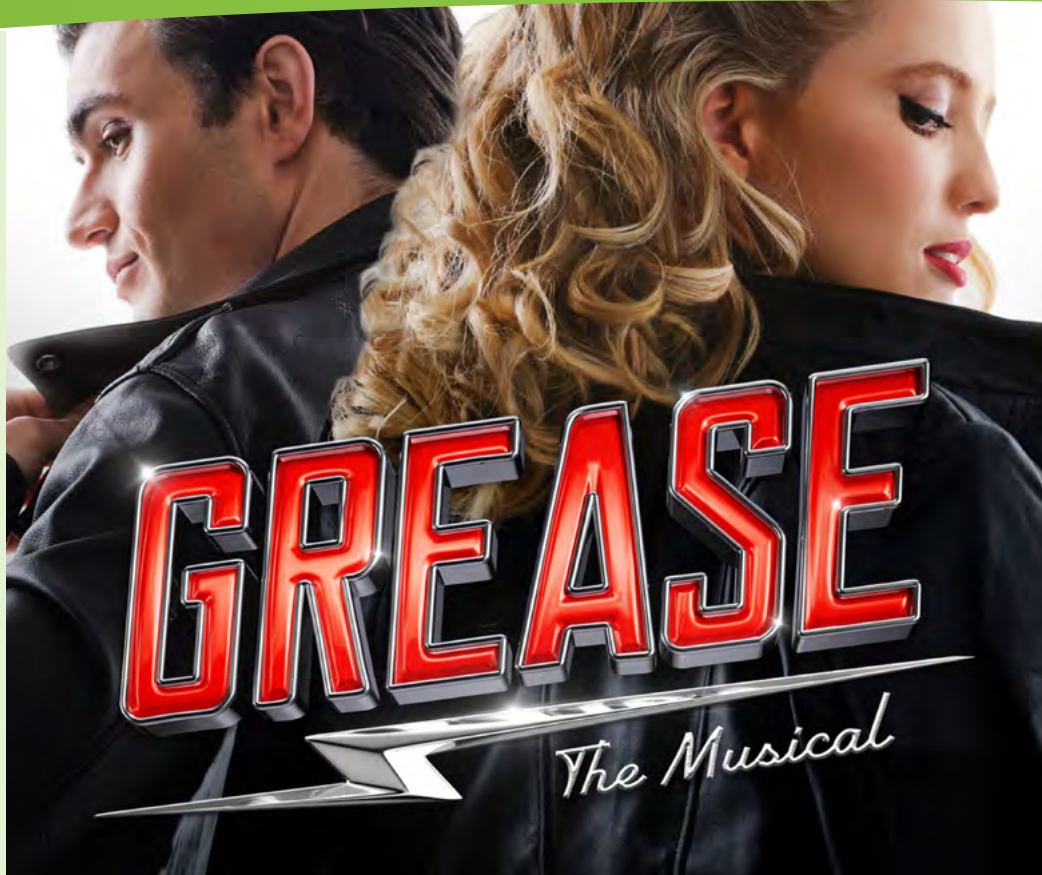
# More ways to support the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre

## Don't miss GREASE The Musical

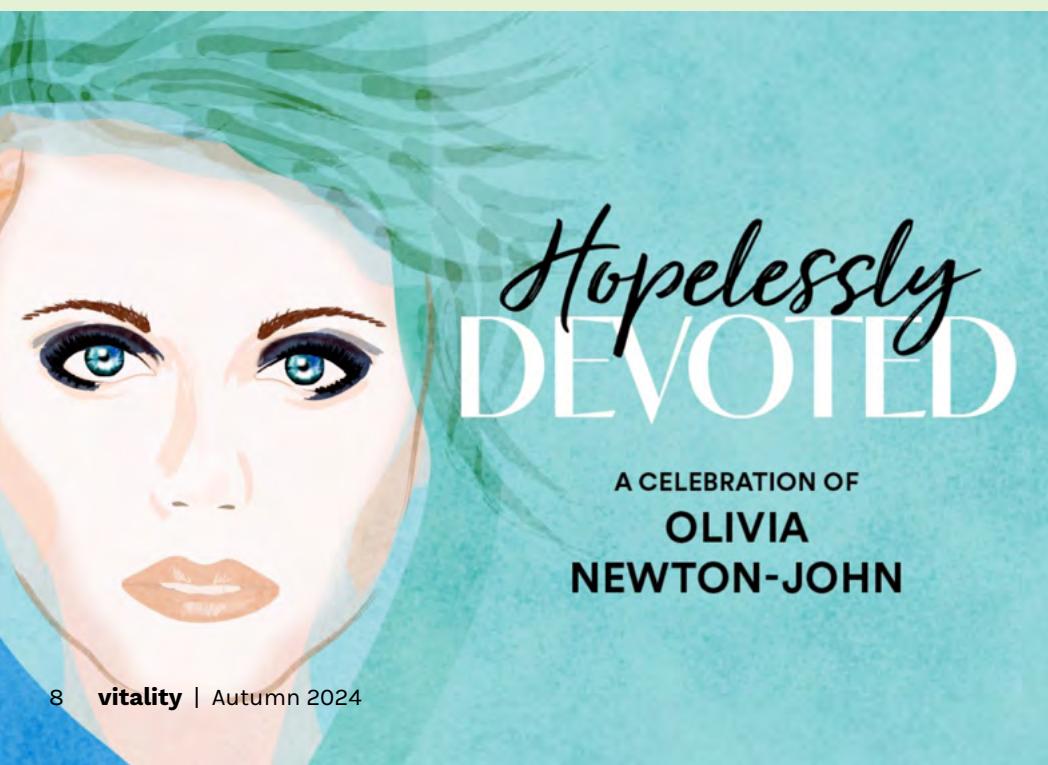
On now at Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne until March 2024.

GREASE The Musical is supporting the ONJ Centre as its charity partner and donating proceeds from a charity performance.

Learn more at [greasemusical.com.au](http://greasemusical.com.au)



## Celebrate Olivia with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra



Hopelessly Devoted: A Celebration of Olivia Newton-John is on from 7-9 March at Hamer Hall in Melbourne.

The MSO is making a donation to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre.

Learn more at [mso.com.au](http://mso.com.au)



# One grant makes a hospital-wide impact

A generous grant from the H.T. Pamphilon Fund has enabled the Austin Health Anaesthesia Unit to purchase two new cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) pumps - a first in Australia.

The LiquoGuard 7 pump simultaneously monitors pressure and drains the fluid that flows in and around the brain and spinal cord. Dr Shervin Tosif, Staff Cardiac Anaesthetist, says automating CSF drainage reduces the workload in the perioperative period.

“Now nursing staff don’t have to commit 5 to 10 minutes per hour to draining and checking CSF pressure. It allows us to focus our attention on other priorities in patient care and management,” says Dr Tosif.

The devices have been used in anaesthesia, cardiac surgery, neurosurgery and the Intensive Care Unit. “This is a great example of the importance of collaborative relationships within the hospital for the conduct of major surgeries,” says Dr Tosif.

This grant addressed a requirement for specialised equipment in a niche area of clinical practice, in which Austin Health is a leader.



## Celebrating our volunteers at Diamond Creek Op Shop

A group of extraordinary volunteers at the Diamond Creek Opportunity Shop recently celebrated 50 years of support for Austin Health.

This humble suburban op shop has raised over \$4 million over five decades - from the initial sum of \$86 in 1974, to \$247,356 last year.

A cornerstone of the Diamond Creek Auxiliary under Friends of Austin Health, the shop recently celebrated with the extraordinary volunteers. Some, such as Yvonne Dunt and Claire Weaver, have been volunteering for 50 years.

CEO Adam Horsburgh, pictured above with shop staff, expressed his gratitude, saying, “This remarkable milestone not only underscores the shop’s enduring commitment but also celebrates the extraordinary volunteers who have been the backbone of this initiative.”

The funds raised have been instrumental in supporting Austin Health to purchase essential medical equipment, including the Kidney Perfusion Machine, a surgical microscope and three anaesthetic machines.

Thank you to the Diamond Creek Op Shop and Friends of Austin. You are a shining example of the power of community.



# The lasting impact of a Gift in Will

Nicholas Gillis is the nephew of the late Phillip Gillis, who left a significant gift to Austin Health in his Will. We spoke with Nicholas about fulfilling his uncle's wishes.

## **Tell us about Phillip and why he made this gift?**

Phillip was born in 1946 and spent his childhood in Kew and Ivanhoe East. He was a lifelong bachelor and respected mechanic with a love of motorcycles. He became very sick and quickly died in 2019 in the ONJ Centre Palliative Care Unit. My stepfather also died of cancer and was treated at the ONJ Centre. It was their local hospital.

Phillip hated hospitals and check-ups, stemming from negative experiences as a child. By the time they found it, he had cancer in almost every organ.

His gift to Austin Health came as a total surprise. But we later realised he'd been a regular donor to health-related causes. This was a side to him none of us knew about.

***He'd done very well for himself and in his Will he provided for his family. He wanted to put the rest towards doing good for others.***

I am the executor of the Will – it's been a long process working with the solicitor to get to this point where we can direct the funds to the Austin.

## **What will Phillip's gift be used for?**

Phillip died very quickly – almost without a Will – and I wish I could have had more conversations with him about his intentions. He left an 'untied' gift, which means the money can go where it's needed most. He was a practical person and I know he would have wanted it to be useful, and he would have wanted a lasting legacy.

I had a discussion with the Austin Health Foundation, and they explained possible strategic priorities Phillip's gift could support, and went with an upcoming project related to transplants.

## **What advice do you have for others?**

The benefit of making a non-binding request is that the money goes where it's most needed, so it will do the most good.

## **This is an incredibly generous contribution. How do you feel about its impact?**

This has been a long process and I have felt a sense of responsibility to ensure his legacy is known and to execute the Will thoughtfully. I think we've finally accomplished that.

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**Gifts in Wills are a powerful way to support Austin Health. Find out more at [www.austin.org.au/leave-a-gift-in-your-will](http://www.austin.org.au/leave-a-gift-in-your-will) or contact us at [bequests@austin.org.au](mailto:bequests@austin.org.au) or 03 9496 5753.**

## **Donate in memory of a loved one**

A gift in memoriam is a special way to honour the life of a loved one and support patient care at Austin Health. Many families give in memoriam in lieu of flowers after a loved one passes away, using our simple online form. Learn more at [austin.org.au/give-in-memorial](http://austin.org.au/give-in-memorial).



# Your support helps enhance our Paediatric Emergency Department

Your kindness during our Christmas Appeal 2023 was overwhelming and will help transform our dated Paediatric Emergency Department into a space of colour, wonder and calm.

Donors like you helped raise more than \$183,600 to upgrade the Paediatric Emergency Department into a warm and welcoming environment tailored to children's unique needs.

Our vision of a more child-friendly emergency department can now be realised, thanks to you.

## A much-needed update

After nearly 20 years of service, our department needed a makeover to help us continue to provide the best care possible, while we meet the growing demand for paediatric emergency care in our community.

The Paediatric Emergency Department will be transformed with additions such as colourful imagery, dimmable lights, digital toys, quiet spaces and new medical equipment.

Associate Professor Michael Ben-Meir, Director Emergency Department explains, "We want to bring what we've got into the 21st century. Providing a welcoming, calm, non-threatening environment diminishes anxiety and enables good medicine. Part of that is creating an environment with interesting sights and sounds, that is peaceful and private when needed."

## Creating calm during a crisis

As a parent, Emily (pictured) understands the need for a calm, quiet space. Her daughter Nora was just 12 months old when she became awfully sick with a virus called RSV. By the time they got to Austin Health's Paediatric Emergency Department, Nora was so dehydrated she had to have a nasal gastric tube to get fluids.

It's a difficult procedure and Nora quickly became distressed, "It's pretty invasive. I had to hold her down to do it, so that was really traumatising. She had blood tests and x-rays - they just did everything they could," says Emily.

Emily knew they were in the best possible place to help Nora, but the busy, bright, loud environment terrified her little girl. "It made everything so much harder," she says.

Paediatric Emergency Physician Dr Robert Millar explains a calm environment helps both patient and clinician. "Having a calmer child and carer can give clinicians more confidence that they are making the right treatment decisions, and they are better able to monitor changes in the patient's condition," says Dr Millar.

With your kind donations, we will now be able to provide our youngest patients with much-needed calm during a crisis. We look forward to updating you on this work.



# A delivery of Christmas cheer to kids in hospital

A stay in hospital over the festive season can be challenging, especially for children. That's why Austin Gifts donated a bundle of toys and activities to the Paediatric Ward just before Christmas.

All proceeds from our gift store, Austin Gifts, are generously donated to Austin Health. Last year, Austin Gifts directed their fundraising to the Paediatric Ward, providing a range of activities for our youngest patients.

Toys, crafts, educational games and more were delivered to the ward in December and happily received. "We are so glad we can support the kids staying in hospital with activities to keep them busy – after all, it is Christmas," said Austin Gifts manager Desley McMullin.

In addition to Austin Gifts, Hey Caddy Preston are planning to hold a community fundraising activity to supply the Paediatric Ward with outdoor equipment.

Consultant Paediatrician Dr Suba Rudolph says, "These gorgeous toys not only help our young patients to stay occupied, calm and happier during often distressing and frightening periods in hospital, but they also allow the children to continue to play,



which is so important for their ongoing development and emotional wellbeing given they are out of their usual social and educational settings."

Combining the generosity in each purchase at Austin Gifts with a grassroots community fundraiser, we have been able to provide the Paediatric Ward with a fantastic range of activities.

## Community fundraising groups

This year our community fundraised over \$60,000 for Austin Health, generously donating their time to ensure our patients continue to receive exceptional care. From movie nights to Christmas light displays, golf tournaments and more, every local fundraiser makes a big impact on our treatment and care services.



**Thank you for making a difference!**