



**WICS**

**SOUTHERN  
MELBOURNE  
INTEGRATED  
CANCER SERVICE**

**Annual Report**

**2024-2025**

## Acknowledgments

The Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service (SMICS) and The Victorian Integrated Cancer Services (VICS) acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledge and pay respect to their Elders, past and present. We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

### Our thanks

The Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service is one of nine Integrated Cancer Services supported by the Victorian Government. We are proud to be part of a statewide network united by a shared vision: to improve patient experiences and outcomes by connecting cancer care and driving best practice.

Established by the Victorian Government 20 years ago to strengthen cancer services in south-east Melbourne, SMICS has worked in close partnership with its member health services; Alfred Health, Cabrini Health, Monash Health, and Peninsula Health, to enhance the quality and coordination of cancer care.

We are deeply grateful for the support and engagement of our member health services, as well as the many healthcare professionals and people with lived experience of cancer who contribute to our projects.

Thank you to all who share their stories, expertise, experience, time, and skills to help ensure SMICS initiatives achieve the best possible outcomes for patients and their families receiving care and treatment across south-east Melbourne.

Finally, to our small but dedicated SMICS team. Thank you for your commitment, integrity, and enthusiasm for every project and initiative.

This Annual Report outlines the operational and financial performance of the Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

The Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Services are supported by the Victorian Government.



*Cover image credit: Santiago Gonzalez Redondo. Work is supplied courtesy of Visit Victoria.*

# Contents

About the Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service .....	4
About our region .....	5
About the Victorian Integrated Cancer Services .....	6
Leadership Team Update.....	9
SMICS highlights from 2024 – 2025.....	11
SMICS Funding Program update .....	15
Future Planning and Strategic Alignment .....	19
Financial Report.....	21

# About the Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service

The Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service (SMICS) is one of nine Integrated Cancer Services that together form the Victorian Integrated Cancer Services (VICS).

SMICS delivers quality improvement at the local level and is embedded within south-east Melbourne – one of Victoria’s fastest-growing and most diverse population regions.

We work in partnership with our four-member health services to promote quality improvement of cancer services, develop better care models, and ensure the continuity of patient care.

Our work contributes to the implementation of the Victorian Cancer Plan by fostering system integration across structural boundaries, strengthen access to equitable cancer care and promoting collaborative, evidence-based approaches to service development.

At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to improving outcomes for everyone affected by cancer within the SMICS catchment, as well as those who travel to our region for treatment and support.

## Our Member Health Services:

Alfred Health  
Cabrini Health  
Monash Health  
Peninsula Health

## Our Vision

Improving patient experience and outcomes by connecting cancer care and driving best practice.

## Our Mission

We work to support the implementation of the Victorian Cancer Plan.

## Our priorities

- strengthen access to equitable, timely and consumer-centred cancer care
- drive optimal, integrated and sustainable cancer care
- improve wellbeing and support for people affected by cancer.

Cancer treatment and care is often a complex, lengthy experience involving several clinical specialties. Coordination of this is crucial—not only because it helps patients and families manage through the experience, but because outcomes are likely to be enhanced through carefully structured systems of care. During the many years I have been involved in SMICS as a Consumer Advisor, one of the areas I have been particularly impressed by is the focus on facilitating treatment and care coordination. It is key to linking evidence, clinical practice, and patient experience.

*Jane Williams - Lived Experience Advisor*

## About our region

The SMICS region is a rapidly-growing and diverse population area. Our catchment covers a total area of 2,967km<sup>2</sup> and aligns with 11 local government areas, including:

Bayside City	Kingston City
Cardinia Shire	Monash City
Casey City	Mornington Peninsula Shire
Frankston City	Port Philip City
Glen Eira City	Stonnington City
Greater Dandenong City	

### Southern Melbourne Cancer profile

Victorian Admitted Episode Data (VAED), Victorian Cancer Registry (VCR) and Cancer services performance indicator (CSPI) data provide insight into the incidence and impact of cancer in the SMICS region.

**80,048 hospital admissions for acute care in the SMICS region per annum.**  
\*VAED data

**74% of cancer patients who reside within the SMICS region survive for five years post diagnosis.**  
\*VRC data

**86% of newly diagnosed cancer patients have their treatment plan discussed at a Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDT).**  
\*CSPI 2024 audit data

### New incidents of cancer in the SMICS region by tumour stream

Tumour	New Incidence	Five-year survival
Genitourinary	2314	92%
Breast	1450	93%
Haematological	1107	77%
Colorectal	1005	73%
Upper gastrointestinal	989	29%
Lung	934	33%
Skin (melanoma)	819	95%
Gynaecological	467	73%
Hand & neck	336	76%
Endocrine glands & thyroid	296	96%
Central nervous system	163	34%

*The above table displays 2024 VRC data.*

## About the Victorian Integrated Cancer Services

The Victorian Integrated Cancer Services (VICS) network is Victoria’s government-funded mechanism for cancer service improvement, comprising nine Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) across the state.

We support the Victorian Cancer Plan 2024–2028 by working with health services and other stakeholders to:

- strengthen access to equitable, timely and consumer-centred cancer care (with a focus on priority populations),
- drive optimal, integrated and sustainable cancer care,
- improve wellbeing and support for people affected by cancer.

The metro and regional Integrated Cancer Services collaborate to lead a number of projects aimed at improving cancer services across the state.

For more details, see [www.vics.org.au/about](http://www.vics.org.au/about).

### Our network

Barwon South Western Regional ICS (BSWRICS)	Grampians ICS (GICS)	Gippsland Regional ICS (GRICS)
Hume Regional ICS (HRICS)	Loddon Mallee ICS (LMICS)	North Eastern Melbourne ICS (NEMICS)
Paediatric ICS (PICS) (statewide)	Southern Melbourne ICS (SMICS)	Western & Central Melbourne ICS (WCMICS)

## VICS statewide priorities

### Strengthening access to equitable, timely and consumer-centred cancer care

The VICS **Care of the Older Person with Cancer toolkit** and the statewide working group behind it support the implementation of a new Optimal Care Pathway (OCP) for older people with cancer, launched by Cancer Australia and the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) in November 2025. We have been reviewing our toolkit to support implementation of the new OCP, by addressing barriers and adding real-world examples of service delivery.

To support the launch of **National Lung Cancer Screening Program** the VICS have been helping health services across Victoria to:

- plan to manage anticipated volume and deliver timely interventions
- integrate screening participants into hospital workflows
- optimise models of care to support participant flow from screening into respiratory/lung nodule/lung cancer clinics and onward to multidisciplinary team meetings (MDMs) where appropriate.

Project Managers at several of our Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) have engaged directly with their member health services to support site-specific readiness planning.

#### Driving optimal, integrated and sustainable cancer care

The **VICS Optimal Care Summits** program continues to deliver impacts that support more optimal cancer care, informed by data on unwarranted variations across the state:

In our 2024 consultation on oesophagogastric cancer, low support for patients' dietary needs emerged as a key concern. Through their involvement in the consultation, the Pancare Foundation recognised this gap and subsequently secured funding from the Australian Department of Health & Aged Care to develop an 'Upper GI Cancer Diet Information Hub'. This online hub will provide evidence-based dietary resources for patients. The VICS will contribute to the project as part of its advisory committee.

Data on unwarranted variations in care and outcomes has also helped Victorian public health services to secure new cancer nurse coordinator resources. Under the Australian Cancer Nursing and Navigation Program, the McGrath Foundation is leading delivery of a new nationwide Cancer Care Nurse Service. With the VICS' support, many of our member health services have successfully applied for inclusion in this new service.

The statewide **Multidisciplinary Meeting (MDM) Quality Program** has identified key areas for improvement in MDM quality, by drawing upon:

- the MDM Framework audit report released in January 2024
- a cross-VICS MDM quality workshop in July 2024
- consultation with multidisciplinary clinicians through the VICS Optimal Care Summits program
- data and outcomes collected from local ICS project activities
- further consultation with clinicians involved in MDMs, including ICS Clinical Directors.

By codesigning and piloting innovative tools, reviewing the MDM Quality Framework, and promoting clinician-led solutions, this initiative will drive sustainable, system-wide improvements in cancer care across Victoria.

#### Improving wellbeing and support for people affected by cancer

In 2024, the VICS examined **supportive care screening practices** across Victorian public and private health services that treat cancer. A cross-ICS working group developed a self-assessment tool for services to identify current screening practices, documentation, barriers and enablers, and opportunities for improvement. We surveyed 45 health services from 7 ICS regions, collecting and sharing valuable insights. Key areas identified for improvement were: standardising supportive care screening practices; enhancing referral documentation and processes; improving use of screening data; and strengthening communication and training (particularly in cultural competency).

The VICS **Statewide Cancer Survivorship Program** aims to strengthen and spread effective models of survivorship care across Victoria, ensuring services can respond to the long-term health and wellbeing needs of cancer survivors. It began with an environmental scan of survivorship models in Victorian acute and community health services. Insights

informed the creation of a statewide directory to support health services in adapting evidence-based approaches to local health settings.

A cancer survivorship grants initiative, begun in 2025, is funding 14 projects across Victoria to embed survivorship care into routine practice. These projects span diverse approaches – from integrated clinical models to community-based supports – and will inform ongoing development of sustainable survivorship care statewide.

# Leadership Team Update

Program Director: Ms Seleena Sherwell

Clinical Director: Associate Professor Michelle White

Clinical Director: Associate Professor Pasquale Fedele

**In 2025, the Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service (SMICS) celebrated 20 years of operation. For two decades, we have been here to advocate, collaborate, and support safety, improvement, and change.**

Our work focuses on service improvement and involves working with health service professionals and administrators to improve outcomes for cancer patients who receive care in the southern Melbourne region.

Our region is home to one of the fastest growing and most diverse population in Victoria. People living in south-east Melbourne access treatment and support for their cancer journeys through our member health services. Many also travel from across Victoria to our region to receive care.

Cancer services in our region are evolving. A growing population, strong representation of priority populations, increased emphasis on preventive screening programs, and the establishment of two new local health service networks, one of which involves a merger, which includes two of our member health services are driving significant change. These developments present unique challenges and opportunities for southern Melbourne.

As a localised cancer service improvement network, SMICS has a deep commitment to our region. With 20 years of experience and strong partnerships with member health services, we are well positioned to support and shape cancer service improvements within our region. Our work ensures that our member cancer

services are responsive to both current needs and emerging challenges.

SMICS plays a key role to support the implementation of the Victorian Cancer Plan 2024–2028. Through collaboration, data-driven insights, and targeted initiatives, we help translate the plan's priorities into practical improvements that enhance patient care, strengthen service delivery, and promote equity across our region.

Our vision, *Improving patient experience and outcomes by connecting cancer care and driving best practice*, remains as vital as ever.

This Annual Report demonstrates our commitment to safety, service improvement, and patient outcomes. It highlights the work and dedication of our team and the efforts of the passionate health professionals who serve our region.

Our work would not be possible without the invaluable support of people with lived experience of cancer who contribute to our projects by sharing their stories and insights. Input from our *Lived Experience Advisors* helps us design changes that meet the needs of our diverse region. We are deeply grateful for their ongoing commitment and the time and energy they dedicate to improving services for all.

Our report serves as a reminder that to meet the needs of our community, both

now and into the future, we must constantly monitor, evaluate, and strive for improvement.

Being part of SMICS has been deeply meaningful. Personally, it's about giving back. Cancer can feel incredibly isolating, but working with SMICS has allowed me to transform that experience into something constructive. I'm truly grateful for the opportunities SMICS has provided—not just to me, but to all consumers over the years—to have a voice in improving patient navigation through the cancer care system. The collaboration, empathy, and unwavering commitment to enhancing cancer services have made me feel not just heard, but genuinely valued.

Professionally, this journey has shaped how I articulate what matters most in my work. It's taught me to be precise and intentional, while always leading with compassion and empathy. I'm thankful for the opportunity to continue learning and growing—as a SMICS consumer, as a Monash Health consumer, as Chair of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and as a member of the Victorian Cancer Advisory Committee (VCAC).

One moment that stands out was contributing to the 2024–2025 SMICS Funding Program. Sharing my lived experience as a patient to support the grants process was incredibly powerful. It gave me hope—hope in the innovative, impactful projects being developed for cancer patients, and hope that one day, cancer will no longer steal our lives or the precious time we have with our loved ones.

I am deeply grateful for SMICS—for the care, the opportunity, and most of all, the vision of a cancer-free world.

*Vivienne Interrigi - Lived Experience Advisor*

# SMICS highlights from 2024 – 2025

The achievements captured in the 2024–2025 Annual Report reflect another year of meaningful progress in cancer service improvement across the SMICS region.

In 2024–2025, SMICS completed 10 local projects, progressed 20 additional initiatives, and co-led three statewide programs on behalf of the VICS. Here are a selection of our highlights from the last year.

## Medical Alert Card for Febrile Neutropenia launched at Monash Health

SMICS recently supported the launch of a Medical Alert Card for febrile neutropenia at Monash Health, designed for haematology and oncology patients undergoing chemotherapy. The card helps patients quickly identify symptoms of potential infection and ensures timely care in emergency settings. Presentations of the card at a Monash Health Emergency Department, helps healthcare professionals immediately recognise the risk of neutropenia and provide appropriate treatment. SMICS piloted the initiative and played a key role in its implementation, helping improve safety and outcomes for vulnerable patients.

## SMICS supporting the implementation of the National Lung Cancer Screening Program

The National Lung Cancer Screening Program (NLCSP) formally launched on 1 July 2025. Prior to launch, SMICS had been actively supporting member health services in preparing for the program's rollout. Throughout 2024 and 2025, SMICS conducted modelling to estimate the expected increase in patient numbers requiring screening, diagnostic investigations, and treatment across our catchment. The SMICS team also assessed the potential impact on multidisciplinary meetings (MDM), clinic presentations, access to diagnostic tests, and overall screening capacity. Since the NLCSP launch, SMICS has shifted its

focus to monitoring its progress and continuing to support member health services as they respond to increased demand. Our goal is to ensure the delivery of high-quality, coordinated care for patients identified as part of the NLCSP across the southern Melbourne region.

## SMICS online learning package on Optimal Cancer Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Developed through a collaboration between SMICS, Grampians Integrated Cancer Service (GRICS), Aboriginal health and cancer services, the *Optimal Cancer Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (OCCAP) online course* was published in late 2024 via the Victorian Centre for Cancer Education (VCCC Alliance). This course equips participants with the knowledge and skills to deliver culturally sensitive cancer care, addressing the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In 2025 work has begun to expand upon this course and create a master class series.

## Statewide Multidisciplinary Meeting (MDM) Review Workshop

In collaboration with Hume Regional Integrated Cancer Service (HRICS), SMICS led a statewide Multidisciplinary Meeting (MDM) Review Workshop in July 2024. This workshop brought together representatives from all Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) to develop a strategy for MDM quality improvement. It marks the

beginning of the MDM Quality Improvement Program, a new statewide initiative led by SMICS and HRICS aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, consistency, and impact of multidisciplinary cancer care across Victoria.

**Establishing a coordinated approach to Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Care**  
Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) cancer patients have complex medical and psychosocial needs that require a tailored, multidisciplinary approach. In response, a SMICS funded project, with support from PICS, and GRICS led to the development of a coordinated AYA cancer service aligned with the AYA Optimal Care Pathway and the Australian Youth Cancer Framework. While Victoria's ONTrac program at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre provided specialised support, it was unable to fully meet the needs of patients in the southern Melbourne and Gippsland regions. To address gaps in care, a dedicated AYA cancer working group was formed, bringing together clinicians from Monash Children's Cancer Centre and adult haematology and oncology teams. The group aimed to improve care coordination, psychosocial support, and access to services such as fertility preservation and vocational assistance. The project focused on benchmarking current practices against the AYA Optimal Care Pathway and improving outcomes for patients aged 15–30, including the vulnerable 25–30 age group. Now 100% of AYA patients undergo a formal psychosocial AYA needs assessment and receive tailored care specific to their individual needs. The service now provides consistent and coordinated care and the identification of unmet needs has resulted in a 4x increase

in appropriate referrals to support services.

#### **Melanoma Optimal Care Pathway project**

The Melanoma Optimal Care Pathway project, led by SMICS in partnership with Monash Health, The Alfred, and Peninsula Health, has successfully concluded in early 2025. The project responded to recommendations from the 2022 Melanoma Optimal Care Summit by implementing tailored improvements across partner services. Key outcomes included the development of consistent, stage-specific follow-up guidelines for melanoma patients and the creation of two standardised patient resources, now available on protocols at Alfred Health, Monash Health, and Peninsula Health. SMICS will continue working with its partners to support a collaborative, data-driven approach to melanoma care, ensuring ongoing improvements in quality, consistency, and patient experience.

#### **Managing Cancer Program in simplified Chinese**

In May, SMICS partnered with Cancer Council Victoria and Monash Health to host the first Managing Cancer Education workshop in Mandarin. Held at Monash Health's Moorabbin Hospital, the workshop provided education and support to patients in their first language.

Presentations given during the workshop covered:

- understanding cancer and its treatment
- medications during treatment
- exercise and managing fatigue
- nutrition and cancer care.

Two professional interpreters supported the event, creating a culturally inclusive environment where participants could engage directly with clinicians in their first

language. The workshop enhanced understanding of cancer care and fostered a sense of community and empowerment.

#### Telehealth Nurse-Led Survivorship Clinic

SMICS, in partnership with Monash Health, launched the Telehealth Nurse-Led Survivorship Clinic (TNLSC) to improve support for early-stage (I and II) colorectal cancer patients transitioning from active treatment to follow-up care. The TNLSC project focuses on delivering survivor-centred, accessible, and coordinated care by establishing an integrated model that addresses the health needs of colorectal cancer survivors:

- improving access to follow-up care through telehealth
- providing specialised post-treatment support via a dedicated intervention nurse
- facilitating timely referrals during nurse-led appointments, and
- empowering survivors with self-management strategies, lifestyle guidance, and reliable resources.

The clinic commenced by seeing six patients a week in 2025

#### Annual CSPI Audit

Since 2007, SMICS has conducted annual Cancer Services Performance Indicator (CSPI) audits to measure and monitor how well cancer services align with Victorian Government policy and the Victorian Cancer Plan. The 2024 audit continued this important work across SMICS member health services. The audit results provide valuable insights inform SMICS member health services to strengthen cancer care delivery and drive continuous improvement across the region.

#### SMICS pilots the Frailty Informed Treatment (FIT) Project

Older cancer patients often face increased risks during treatment due to co-morbidities and age-related impairments. In response, SMICS supported the FIT (Frailty Informed Treatment) pilot at Monash Health, aimed at improving care for patients aged 65 and over receiving systemic therapy for gastrointestinal (GI) cancers. The FIT model integrates geriatric assessment to identify patient vulnerabilities, inform treatment decisions, and make appropriate referrals to supportive care and allied health services. Over the course of the pilot, 64 assessments were completed, leading to 98 referrals to allied health and supportive care services. Compared to usual care, FIT resulted in more early referrals and supportive care screenings, and a reduced average hospital stay. SMICS and Monash Health are now exploring funding models to ensure the sustainability and scalability of FIT as an ongoing model of care.

#### Version 3 of the VICS Care of the Older Person Toolkit published

SMICS, in partnership with HRICS, undertook an extensive review and published an updated version of the VICS Care of the Older Person with Cancer Toolkit. This updated toolkit aims to support health services deliver high-quality, age-appropriate cancer care. It provides a clear framework for comprehensive geriatric assessment, along with practical strategies to address common barriers in caring for older patients with cancer. Ensuring that cancer services are responsive to their individual needs is more important than ever.

Better serving the needs of older cancer patients and providing them with holistic care appears on every institution's checklist but to make the wish a reality takes investment of not only time and effort but also a genuine belief in the mission. Since I started the Geriatric Oncology service at Monash Health in 2018, I have been fortunate to be supported by SMICS. Program Director Seleena Sherwell was an early and thoughtful supporter. The two project managers I have had the pleasure of working with, Tracey Bucki and Jodi Dumbrell, have been simply exceptional in their commitment and practical support. Without them, the Geriatric Oncology Service would not have found its feet. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes into making good ideas come alive and clinicians can be hard-pressed to do all of it. Working with Tracey to embed the service and Jodi to increase our footprint has been an exciting process despite the constant challenge of funding and resourcing. Together, we have shared our knowledge at conferences and workshops to improve cancer care beyond our area.

On its 20th anniversary, I congratulate the whole team at SMICS! I hope to keep working together to benefit all elderly patients.

***Dr Ranjana Srivastava - Medical Oncologist, Monash Health***

I greatly appreciate all the support and the amazing fantastic projects and opportunities SMICS has given us over the years that have allowed us to build and improve our BAU service delivery at Peninsula Health

Joan Thomas, Nurse Manager, Peninsula Health

## SMICS Funding Program update

The SMICS Funding Program supports time-limited, innovative cancer service improvement projects across Southern Melbourne, aligned with the Victorian Cancer Plan and VICS priorities. Over three rounds (2021–2025), SMICS allocated \$1.53 million to 13 projects from 44 applications, focusing on equity, care closer to home, supportive care, survivorship, palliative care, and multidisciplinary care.

I have loved being able to have an input, via SMICS, to improving cancer care, and the integration of services, for people needing cancer treatments. I have particularly enjoyed being involved with the SMICS grant program, as it gave me the opportunity to appreciate the caring staff who want to make cancer treatment better and easier. I feel that all the SMICS projects and working groups that I have been involved with, have listened and considered my thoughts and ideas. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016, which required chemotherapy for 6 months, 2 lots of surgery, and radiation therapy. Whilst my treatment went smoothly, assisted by the amazing staff at Monash Moorabbin Hospital, not everyone has the same experience that I did. My goal with all my interactions with SMICS and Monash Health is to hopefully make the treatment path smoother, better, and easier for others now and in the future.

*Debbie Packham - Lived Experience Advisor*

## 2024-2025 Funding Program projects

The 2024-2025 the SMICS Funding Program provided \$575,000 for four projects.

A pilot project developing a Haematology Symptom Urgent Review Clinic (Haem-SURC) utilising a decentralised model. Monash Health Haematology has a large malignant haematology portfolio providing a comprehensive haematology service including delivery of complex chemoimmunotherapy regimens, autologous stem cell transplantation and CAR-T therapies. One of the unique challenges faced by Monash Haematology is ensuring adequate and equitable provision of care to all patients living within Monash Health's large catchment area.

One of the key gaps in the malignant haematology model-of-care was the absence of a dedicated Symptom and Urgent Review Clinic (SURC) for our patients with blood cancers. There are no streamlined pathways for patients who develop symptoms from their anti-cancer treatment to seek urgent review. Patients present either to their closest Emergency Department or contact the on-call haematology registrar or haematology nurse coordinator. There is limited ability to perform ad hoc reviews. It is not practical or patient-centred to expect all patients to travel to Monash medical

Centre (MMC) in Clayton when they develop symptoms requiring urgent assessment.

Due for completion in December 2025, this project establishes a dedicated SURC clinic for patients with blood cancers receiving anticancer treatment (Haem-SURC), with a focus on patient safety, implementing a decentralised model-of-care, enabling broader reach and more equitable access for patients living within the Monash Health catchment area.

#### Establishing a Molecular Oncology Care Pathway at Peninsula Health

While molecular profiling is routinely incorporated into patient management. Prior to this project this occurred across multiple platforms. There was no dedicated point of access to these reports and no formal system to identify results requiring review by molecular tumour boards (MTBs) or familial cancer clinics (FCCs), leading to inefficiencies and potential inequities in local precision oncology care.

This project establishes and benchmarks the gaps in the current molecular oncology practice at Peninsula Health, to implement a single and consistent point of storage of molecular reporting in the electronic health record, and to implement a clear care pathway to formalise referral to molecular tumour boards.

This will facilitate improved patient access to targeted therapies (and ultimately improved patient outcomes) via access schemes or clinical trials at Peninsula Health and across partner networks.

This is due for completion by December 2025

#### Streamlining ambulatory care for patients with myeloid blood cancers

This project, a collaboration between the Haematology units at Monash Health and Peninsula Health, aims to improve ambulatory care for patients with myeloid blood cancers by streamlining processes and enhancing safety for those receiving oral anti-cancer therapies. The initiative focuses on co-developing a care pathway and bringing cancer care closer to home.

Recent Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings of novel oral anti-cancer therapies for myeloid malignancies have introduced new challenges. Despite being orally administered, these therapies carry significant toxicities that require close monitoring comparable to parenteral (SC/IV) treatments. However, this need is often under-recognised, and conventional 'day oncology' models do not adequately cater for patients on oral therapies. This project aims to establish a model of care for these patients in the ambulatory setting.

Myeloid blood cancers predominantly affect older patients (median age 68–72 years), who often require additional support throughout their treatment journey. With Monash Health and Peninsula Health serving a broad geographical catchment in southeast Victoria, patients frequently access services across both networks. While both health services provide haematology clinics, infusion units, and chemotherapy-at-home programs, there were no streamlined processes to direct patients to the most accessible services or to facilitate cross-referrals between health services, creating administrative barriers.

This project seeks to address these gaps by developing a coordinated care pathway that improves patient safety, optimises

service delivery, and ensures equitable access to care closer to home. The project is scheduled for completion by 31 March 2026.

### Implementation of a Nurse-Led Oral Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapy (SACT) clinic for Enhanced Patient Care and Safety

Oral SACT offers patients a targeted and effective treatment option with less clinic visits, a different side effect profile and the ability for patients to have more control over their therapy. While this may be a more attractive option, oral therapies are often quite complex. Some regimens have a complex administration schedule, others have high pill burdens and require daily dosing and strict compliance. Additionally, oral SACTs can lead to significant side effects that require patients to proactively self-manage at home. This puts a great deal of responsibility on the patient and caregiver for maintaining appropriate therapy and addressing side effects as they arise.

The aim of this project is to improve the management, compliance, safety, coordination, and consumer experience of patients receiving oral SACT at Peninsula Health by establishing nurse-led clinics. The project provides comprehensive patient education and supportive care screening, referrals – to appropriate support services, partnering with primary health GPs and community pharmacists, and promotes effective management of

treatment-related side effects, enhancing patient outcomes and consumer satisfaction while reducing emergency department presentations.

All patients scheduled for oral SACT now receive comprehensive education, medication reconciliation by a designated oncology pharmacist and supportive care screening through the implementation of a nurse led oral SACT clinic. The introduction of a set of standardised assessment tools and educational materials for communication with primary healthcare providers helps streamline current procedures. This includes assessment, follow-up, compliance monitoring, and coordination of oral scripts and better management of side effects relating to oral SACT.

79% of patients commencing or established on oral SACT have been seen within the model, with 115 nurse-led treatment reviews, 40 education sessions, and 36 follow-up calls completed.

Pharmacist-led medication reconciliation is provided to 71% of patients, supporting safe and high-quality care. This structured, shared-care approach enhances patient support, improves consistency, and optimises clinic capacity while reducing emergency presentations.

This project due for completion by December 2025

SMICS has been instrumental in supporting and funding programs in The Alfred's Cancer Program that have led to real improvements in the way we deliver care, while saving money for the hospital. The SMICS Symptom and Urgent Review Clinic (SURC) pilot program was a standout delivering impressive patient and financial outcome data that led to the establishment of The Alfred's highly successful SURC clinic, which reduces Emergency Department presentations and improves patient experiences and access to the expertise and care they need.

*Symptom and Urgent Review Clinic (SURC) pilot program was part of the 2019 funding round.*

Prof Mark Shackleton - Director of Oncology, Alfred Health

## Future Planning and Strategic Alignment

At the end of 2024, the Victorian Government released the Victorian Cancer Plan 2024–2028, setting a clear vision for optimal access, equity, and system-wide improvement in cancer care. SMICS has aligned our ongoing work to the plan’s priorities, with a strong focus on:

- Pillar 1: consumers are active partners in their health and wellbeing
- Pillar 3: optimal access and care across the cancer pathway and
- Pillar 5: system design and delivery driven by research, data, and intelligence.

In 2025, SMICS launched three new projects in line with the updated Victorian Cancer Plan, reinforcing our commitment to creating a cancer care system that is inclusive, data-driven, and responsive to the needs of all communities.

### First Nations Cancer Navigation Program – Walking alongside mob with cancer

This two-year project aims to transform cancer care for First Nations peoples in Southern Melbourne by informing and implementing culturally safe, First Nations-led approaches across Monash Health, Alfred Health, and Peninsula Health. The project aligns with the Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy (VACJS).

Key outcomes of the project include:

- implementation of a Maturity Assessment Tool to measure cultural safety and accountability
- establishment of First Nations-led governance structures and Governance Committee
- development of a First Nations Cancer Patient Journey Guide and a Recommendations Report for systemic change.

This project is led by the Weenthunga Health Network in partnership with SMICS.

### Cancer Care for People with a Disability Project

Around 18% of Australians—4.4 million people—live with disability, and research shows they experience lower cancer

survival rates compared to people without disability. Contributing factors include delayed diagnosis, delayed treatment, and barriers to accessing care.

To address these inequities, SMICS has initiated the Complete Cancer Care for People with a Disability Project. This project will:

- explore the experiences of cancer patients with a disability at Monash Health
- identify barriers and enablers to accessing cancer services
- develop initiatives aligned with the Victorian Cancer Plan 2024–2028
- co-design solutions with people living with disability who have been impacted by cancer.

This work represents an important step toward creating a more inclusive and equitable cancer care system for all.

Statewide MDM quality program of work  
Multidisciplinary care is a cornerstone of high-quality cancer treatment, bringing together health professionals from different specialties to ensure comprehensive diagnosis, treatment, and support. Evidence highlighted in the Victorian Cancer Plan 2024–2028 shows

that patients managed by multidisciplinary teams experience better health outcomes, higher satisfaction, and improved mental wellbeing.

However, cancer multidisciplinary meetings (MDMs) across Victoria are under increasing pressure due to rising patient numbers and limited resources. To address these challenges, SMICS in partnership with Hume Regional Integrated Cancer Service (HRICS) is leading the MDM Quality Program (2024–2028) on behalf of the Victorian Integrated Cancer Services (VICS). This program aims to enable consistent monitoring of MDMs, drive sustainable system-wide improvements, and support high-quality, patient-centred cancer care across the state.

Working closely with clinicians, the project will design and implement practical tools and processes to strengthen MDMs. Insights gathered will inform the development of a monitoring tool for health services, share examples of good practice, and identify quality-based solutions suitable for all health service sizes. The program will also guide a review of the Victorian Department of Health's MDM Quality Framework to improve its usability and applicability for MDM teams.

Through this initiative, SMICS and VICS are ensuring that multidisciplinary care remains robust, efficient, and responsive to the needs of Victorians affected by cancer.

SMICS plays an important role in bringing together both large and small, and also both public and private health networks operating in their administrative area. This helps to coordinate care. SMICS enables data sharing research collaboration and also provides seed funding for clinician-initiated proposals that will expand into larger grant applications. Senior administrators in SMICS have a lot of experience and are prepared to assist in the development of Standard-of-Care pathways and audits. The state-wide 'ICS' program is enmeshed in the care of patients.

*Prof Harshal Nandurkar - Program Director, Alfred Cancer and Director of Clinical Haematology, Alfred Health*

# Financial Report

## Income

Department of Health Victoria	2,107,462.80
-------------------------------	--------------

## Expenditure

Salaries and wages	1,717,446.20
Operating expenses	20,397.26
Statewide project expenses	207,522.40
Local project expenses	30,701.00

## Balance

Total income	2,107,462.80
Total expenditure	1,976,066.86



Contact SMICS

Phone: 03 9928 8541

Email: [smics@monashhealth.org](mailto:smics@monashhealth.org)

Website: [vics.org.au/smics](https://vics.org.au/smics)

Address Moorabbin Hospital, Monash Cancer Centre,  
823–865 Centre Road,  
East Bentleigh,  
VIC  
3165