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\$470m investment to build Australia's first heart hospital

VIC NEWS

Big-hearted investment: \$470m funding boost brings Victorian Heart Hospital to life

GRANT McARTHUR, HEALTH EDITOR, Sunday Herald Sun

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A REVOLUTIONARY new heart hospital left in limbo because of a funding shortfall will now be built, thanks to a \$470 million state government commitment.

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📷 An early artist's impression of what the new Victorian Heart Hospital could look like. Picture: Supplied

But Premier Daniel Andrews will today announce the dramatic increase in the government's stake which allows construction to start.

"The Heart Hospital will be the jewel in the crown in our efforts to combat and treat cardiac diseases. It will save and change thousands of lives," Mr Andrews said.

"Victoria is already home to some of the world's best cardiac doctors, clinicians and researchers — and now we're building them the world-class facilities to match."

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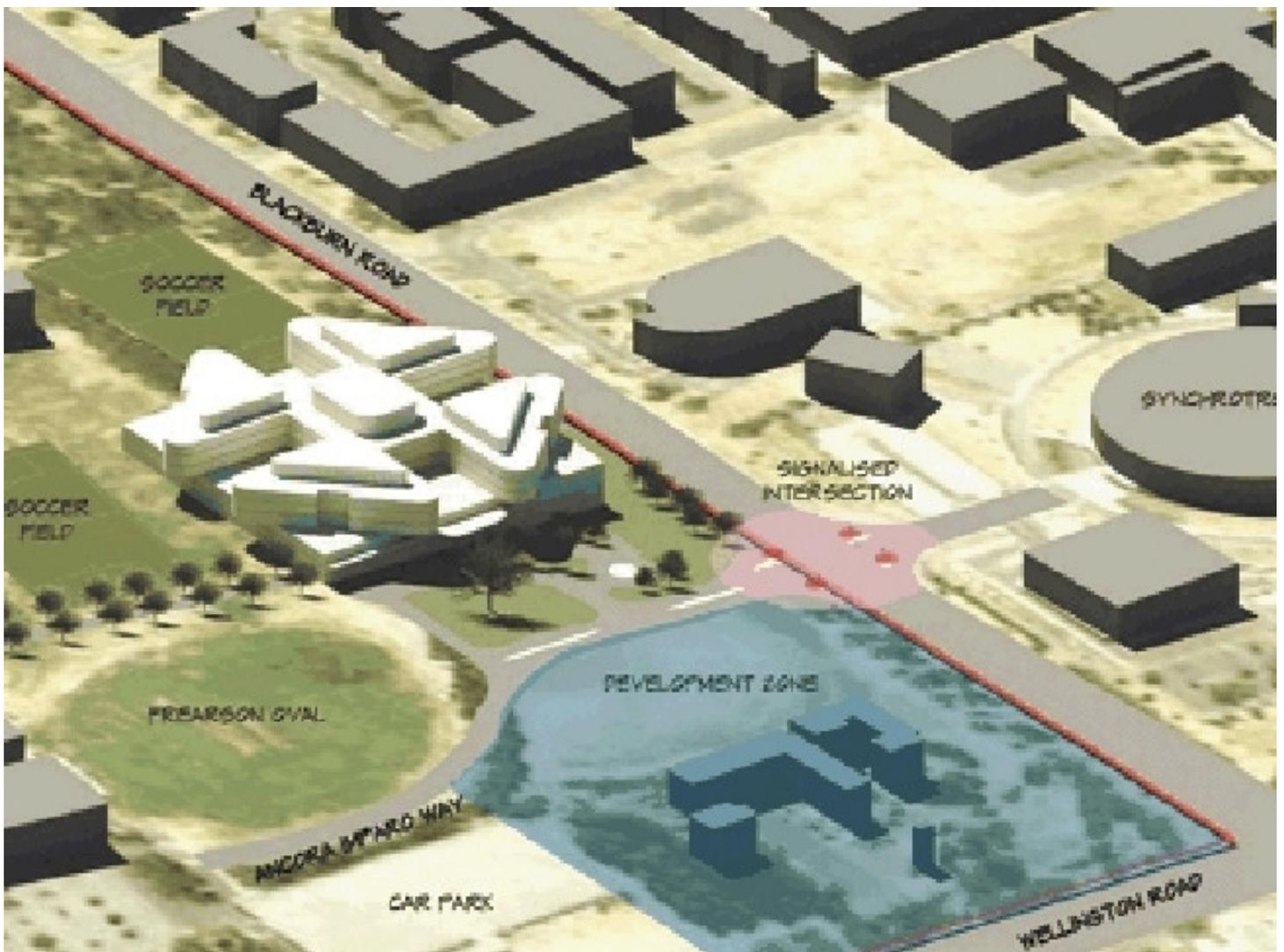
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surgeries each year as well as 13,500 cardiac catheterisation procedures and 108,000 consultations and outpatient appointments.

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 An early artist's impression of what the new Victorian Heart Hospital could look like. Picture: Supplied

A Monash University business case shows the hospital will also;

CUT outpatient waiting times by 18 weeks;

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Federal Government refused to fund the project and plans for private backers were also unsuccessful.

With the project's initial cost also blowing out by up to \$200 million, the Andrews Government was forced to consider a scaled-back version with fewer patient beds and procedure rooms, and a reduced research capacity.

[Monash University leading international trial into sudden cardiac arrests](#)



 Charlotte Shea, born last New Year's Eve has already had to undergo two huge open heart surgeries.
Picture: Ian Currie

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Monash University Pro Vice-Chancellor Sarah Newton said more than 150 research scientists and 64 clinician scientists would be based at the Victorian Heart Hospital.

“This means that patients will have direct and immediate access to cutting-edge therapies and devices as well as clinical trials,” she said.

“The VHH, with its research focus, as well as being situated on the university campus with its hi-tech research infrastructure, will also act as an accelerator of the medical technology and pharmaceutical sectors in Victoria.”

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 Flynne Tytherleigh, 21, has lived with a pacemaker most of her life and understands the importance of Victoria getting a new heart hospital and research centre. Picture: Ian Currie

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Eight Australian babies are born each day with heart defects and in four out of every five cases experts have been unable to identify which gene has caused their issue.

Monash University researcher Dr Mirana Ramialison said it was vital treatments and research could feed off each other.

“This is the best way to do it because interaction and proximity means better understanding of each patient and what they have, and for the researchers as well to make our discovery more applicable to the patient,” she said.

“It is fantastic because it will accelerate the translation of our discovery to the clinic.”

In their latest breakthrough Dr Ramialison’s team has developed a technology to help surgeons rapidly identify genes acting in specific regions of the heart when a defect is found at birth.

The 3D images allow families to test for the mutated gene in other pregnancies and older family members, potentially saving them from disease and sudden heart failure.

As surgical advances allowed many children with heart conditions to survive into adulthood, Dr Ramialison said it was important for such breakthroughs to progress so treatments could be developed to combat the newly identified conditions.

“In the longer term, knowing which genes cause which congenital heart diseases means we can develop treatments sooner,” she said.

Dancing to a different beat

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Little Charlotte Shea and parents Joe and Sara. Picture: Ian Currie

CHARLOTTE Shea and Flynne Tytherleigh are just two of the reasons why the Victorian Heart Hospital is so important — though they would prefer they didn't have to go there.

Born with a malformed valve on New Year's Eve, Charlotte had her life saved on her first day, followed by open heart surgery on her fifth day.

Five months later the Chelsea baby again needed open heart surgery to redirect blood flow around her tiny body, and her recovery was so traumatic she became too scared to roll or do things other babies need for development.

Her parents, Joe and Sara, are bracing for the likelihood she will soon need more surgery, hopeful it will be in a new world-leading hospital.

Even more excitingly, they are hoping advances made at the new Victorian Heart Hospital will save her from greater issues in future years.

"In January when we visit the doctor again, we are probably not going to get fantastic news.

She is looking pretty good, but she does still have the purple hands and purple feet," Mr Shea said.

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beat get scrambled, and she is hoping the new specialised centre will not only be able to treat her, but provide the answers.

“It is a condition I will live with for my life,” she said.

“The research may be able to give me more of an idea if I may one day have a baby that would have the gene for a heart condition. The advancements in technology for things like my pacemaker can give me longer battery life, be more durable, and these are all really good things.”

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New key to beating heart disease



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