



Victor Chang
Cardiac Research Institute

Delivering our vision through 2030

Strategic Plan



Acknowledgement of Country

The Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

We proudly recognise the ongoing spiritual and cultural custodians of the lands where we make our discoveries – which at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute in Darlinghurst is the Gadigal of the Eora Nation and at the main Crawley campus of the University of Western Australia the Whadjuk Noongar people.

At the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, we are committed to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Foreword

Welcome to our 2022 – 2030 Strategic Plan. Emerging from COVID and with our new Executive Director Prof. Jason Kovacic leading the Institute for just over 2 years, now is the time to set forth a bold new vision for the next chapter of this iconic Institute.

Founded in 1994, the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute was established in honour of the legendary heart transplant surgeon Dr Victor Chang.

Now regarded as Australia's home of heart research the Institute has earned its place as one of the most respected and technologically advanced medical research facilities in the world.

Now is the time to build on that legacy to turn the tide on the world's biggest killer – cardiovascular disease. Our 200 scientists and researchers are united in their mission to deliver innovative new strategies, treatments, and technologies for heart disease.

Our vision and strategies will see the Institute embark on new research and commercial partnerships both in Australia and internationally, establish a world-class pre-clinical advanced translational facility, grow our national footprint and expand our Innovation Centre.

By continuing to grow in strength, size, and stature we will ensure our breakthroughs reach patients, GPs and hospitals faster than ever before. We hope you enjoy reading and learning about how in the next decade the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute will accelerate its discoveries, deliver clinical impact, improve health outcomes, and save lives.



Message from our Executive Director

Over the last three decades the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute has delivered world-class research which has produced many ground-breaking discoveries.

But we can and must do more as a global leader in the fight against heart disease.

Tackling this problem needs a comprehensive, big picture approach both nationally and globally, it requires:

- A new translational research approach to allow us to fast-track the development of novel clinical therapies
- A growing national footprint that will benefit all Australians and deliver international impact
- New collaborations with research labs and industry on a state, national and global level

This work is already underway with the establishment of the Institute's world-class Innovation Centre, a growing base in Western Australia and new global partnerships with MedTech companies and other research institutions.

Our scientists are engaged in incredible projects that have the potential to transform our understanding of heart disease. A new drug to prevent damage from heart attack, studies that will help accelerate the arrival of the world's first durable artificial heart, detailed research on the top gene in vascular disease, and genetic screening for congenital heart disease...just to name a few of the projects currently underway.

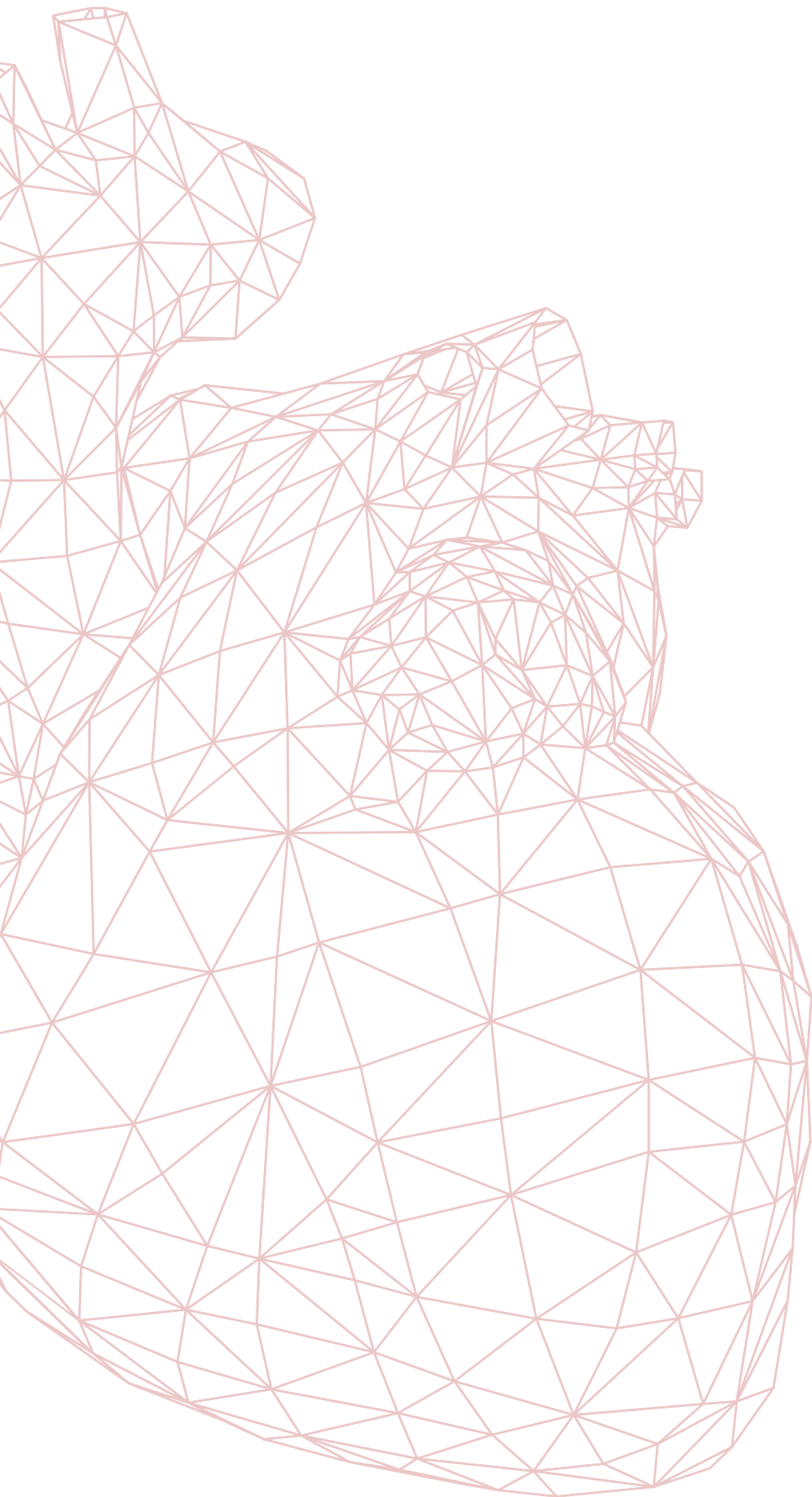
But this is just the start of a whole new way of working.

Over the next 10 years it's our goal to ensure that we earnestly work to develop a comprehensive, end-to-end, discovery-to-bedside translational 'pipeline' – to ensure that all our discoveries realise their full clinical potential.

By embracing and expanding our translational capacity, coupled with our continued excellence as Australia's home of heart research, we will see real change and lives saved far sooner than we ever thought possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason'.

Professor Jason Kovacic



Our Purpose

To undertake innovative, inclusive, collaborative, and cutting-edge medical research that improves understanding, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease.

Our Vision

To be recognised globally for excellence in delivery of a complete cardiovascular investigational pipeline that spans fundamental basic science discovery and translational studies through to pre-clinical and clinical trials.

Our Objective

Our ultimate objective is to positively impact clinical patient care and to save lives.



Our Strategic Plan



1. Foster excellence

The overarching tenet of this next phase of growth is to enhance our leadership position as an internationally regarded research institute that is making a major impact by advancing our fundamental understanding of the biology and mechanisms related to cardiovascular diseases. We will build on that understanding by developing a translational pipeline through to pre-clinical research and clinical implementation.



Key strategies

- Recognise, develop, and reward excellence – scientific and operational
- Attract and retain diverse, high-calibre people by providing access to world class capabilities and investing in cutting edge technology and development and support programs
- Identify and build depth in key priority research areas, including to invest in early-stage research
- Invest in excellent people
- Actively translate our key discoveries to achieve improved patient care and clinical outcomes

Performance measures

- Maintain and grow our leadership position as benchmarked against top national/international institutes
- Quality of scientific output (measured total citations, collaboration and other metrics) – maintain for Faculty, increase for Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs)
- Grow clinical faculty appointments
- Grow joint infrastructure programs and interdisciplinary engagements



2. Undertake research with impact

The Institute is sharply focused on the challenge of achieving translational and clinical research outcomes, as an enhancement to the world recognised discovery research that underpins our global reputation. By establishing a pre-clinical advanced translational facility, we will create an intersection point and catalyst for student-physician-scientist-industry-government interactions, energising and transforming our research and education, and delivering economic efficiencies and growth in industry job creation and improved patient care. We will also accelerate the translation of our collective research discoveries into effective prevention and treatment strategies that extend and improve quality of life for cardiac patients globally.




Key strategies

- Identify opportunities to include a focus in research programs on translation and encourage collaboration on grant opportunities to address important clinical questions
- Undertake research of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- Continue to build on our research that recognises gender diversity in patients, conditions, and treatments
- Engage with consumers and the community on cardiovascular health concerns
- Focus on establishing commercialisation partnerships, while protecting our IP and ensuring the realisation of the full scientific, commercial and clinical potential of our discoveries

Performance measures

- Increasing number of researchers engaged as clinical faculty and engaged in active clinical trials
- Increasing number of researchers/Early and Mid-Career Researchers collaborating with industry and funded by industry
- Increasing number of researchers participating in translational training programs
- Establish and support research programs with Indigenous researchers, and grow year on year
- Establish a state-of-the-art advanced translational facility on site, co-located within a centre focussed on collaboration, education and translational research and innovation

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a white lab coat over a dark top and a gold necklace. She is looking slightly to the left with a gentle expression. The background is a blurred clinical setting.

3. Educate and train the next generation of leaders in cardiovascular research and medicine

Career development of our junior Faculty and Early and Mid-Career Researchers is key to ensuring the Institute continues to be recognised as a world leader in cardiovascular research.



Key strategies

- ✦ Establish a Training and Competency program for all positions, from induction through staged career progression
- ✦ Expand the Mentor and Supervision programs, with structured programs for staged career progression, including eliminating barriers based on gender
- ✦ Establish a specialised on-site research training program for cardiology trainees
- ✦ Review and expand the VCCRI Scientific Career Handbook to include programs on leadership development and entrepreneurship
- ✦ Establish a student engagement program, with an annual student open day, to inform and attract high quality students

Performance measures

- ✦ Increasing the number of recruits of all career stages (trainees and Faculty), particularly female clinical recruits, measuring retention
- ✦ Career progression reporting against participation in mentoring and career development programs
- ✦ Increasing the number of externally awarded prizes and honours for Early and Mid-Career Researchers
- ✦ Increasing student numbers and PhD completions, reporting on retention and career progression



4. Strengthen and expand partnerships

Success is increasingly dependent on the collaborations, affiliations, and partnerships we establish across the precinct, the state, nationally and internationally. We must continue to consider political, environmental, socio-cultural and technical factors to ensure we are delivering outcomes to achieve our goals.



Key strategies

- Deepen the strong relationships with St Vincent's Research and Innovation Precinct partners and our affiliated universities, UNSW Sydney and University of Western Australia
- Expand collaborations, affiliations, and partnerships to include direct engagement with other innovation and health precincts and medical research institutes, including developing greater links with other NSW, national, and international research laboratories
- Expand collaborations, affiliations, and partnerships to include direct engagement with technology providers and industry
- Actively pursue a seat at the table of government working groups and areas of policy review related to medical research
- Continue to grow and expand our public education and outreach programs that seek to raise public awareness about cardiovascular disease, and also about the Institute

Performance measures

- Increasing invitations to speak at national and international conferences
- Increasing number of co-publications and joint grant applications
- Increasing number of funding support programs and onsite collaborations with industry
- Increasing media engagement and corporate partnerships
- Increasing number and diversity of high-profile visits and tours of the Institute, including from government, industry, MRI peers and international researchers
- Increasing the public profile of the Institute, including by increasing the activity of the Victor Chang Heart Health Check and via our range of media channels (website, social media, TV and digital media)

5. Grow as an innovative, sustainable, diverse organisation of leaders in cardiovascular research and medicine

To succeed with our bold program, an integrated strategy is required, focused on personnel, infrastructure, expertise and financial support.



Key strategies

- Diversify and expand funding sources
- Sustain philanthropic campaigns and include planned capital campaigns
- Increase investment in market leading talent
- Increase investment in the Innovation Centre, cutting edge equipment and expertise
- Continue to evolve people and culture focus to provide a workplace that values safety, diversity, inclusion, health and wellbeing
- Continue to challenge ourselves to eliminate barriers to workplace equality
- Ensure efficiency across all operations, with a focus on sustainability
- Continued harmonisation and streamlining of core facilities and core funding structures under the umbrella of the VCCRI Innovation Centre

Performance measures

- Increasing philanthropic income, commercial income and grant funding
- Achieving a workplace culture that eliminates gender stereotypes and barriers, and embraces diversity and inclusion
- Achieving gender equity, including on committees, for speakers/chairs at seminars and in employment
- Achieve sustainability targets, including reducing energy and water consumption and waste output
- Establish and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan
- Increasing growth and utilisation of the VCCRI Innovation Centre

A man with a shaved head, wearing safety glasses and a white lab coat, is working in a laboratory. He is looking down at something out of frame. The background shows laboratory equipment, including a Biomek FX^P Laboratory Automation workstation.

6. Monitor and measure performance through regular assessment and reporting to ensure continuing excellence

Ongoing and regular assessment of the environment in which we are operating, and our performance, will position us to leverage opportunities, navigate challenges, and manage key risks. This will ensure the Institute continues to thrive and grow.



Key areas to assess and monitor

- Research standards – a fall in research or ethical standards, or problems experienced in a clinical trial or experimental research would result in reputational damage
- Research funding – re-focusing of national or state research funding, donor support or a drop in competitive grant funding success would result in a reduction in research programs and lost opportunities
- Research support – failure to invest in provision of compliance, governance, training, personnel and IT support would result in a reduction in standards and increased risk, and negatively impact reputation
- Recruitment and retention – failure to recruit and retain the highest quality researchers and support personnel would result in a reduction in the Institute's reputation for scientific excellence
- Research infrastructure – a decline in the standard of research infrastructure would result in lowered research output and impact



Our Future

Successfully implementing these six strategies, underpinned by a values-driven culture focused on collaboration, will enable us to achieve our vision of delivering excellence in cardiovascular medical research with the ultimate goal of impacting clinical patient care and saving lives.

The Institute's strong foundations provide a solid platform on which to grow our impact while maintaining the flexibility, independence, and reputation of the Institute.

Careful planning, with a clear focus on our core strategic objectives and leveraging all available resources, will ensure a strong and vibrant Institute for the next decade of discovery, through 2030 and beyond.



Victor Chang

Cardiac Research Institute

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