

Celebrating 50 years of supporting exceptional care.

**In this edition:
Explore incredible
stories of impact
from throughout
our history.**



**Thank you for being
part of our story.**



A Message From Ross Verschoor

As we mark 50 years of Flinders Foundation and Flinders Medical Centre (FMC), I reflect not only on our history, but on my own personal connection. I was born at FMC just a few years after it opened. While I'm not quite 50 myself, it has been a constant for my family and our community.

Flinders Foundation was officially incorporated in 1977, just one year after the hospital opened. But its origins go back further — to clinicians who believed community support could take research and care further. That belief still drives us today.

Before joining the Foundation, I spent many years working within the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network, alongside the teams delivering care every day. During that time, I saw the impact of philanthropy accelerating research, funding equipment, and improving patient outcomes. That's what drew me here.

I'm proud to be part of an organisation that connects community generosity with exceptional care. As we celebrate this milestone, we honour those who shaped our beginnings and the supporters who continue to make this work possible.

Please enjoy some key stories from our history on the pages to follow, and scan the QR code to explore the full timeline on our website.

With your support, we will continue to back the people behind the care and ensure exceptional care is available, without exceptions, for the next 50 years.

Thank you for being part of this story.

Ross Verschoor
Executive Director, Flinders Foundation



Above: Ross Verschoor was born at Flinders Medical Centre a few years after it opened.

Scan to discover

Scan the QR code to discover the full history of the Flinders Foundation, thanks to supporters like you.



The Foundation expands

After Flinders Medical Centre opened its doors to southern Adelaide, the idea for a Foundation to connect community philanthropy with the hospital quickly took shape, strongly encouraged by Norman Popplewell, the FMC Administrator.

In **1977**, a group of founding professors officially incorporated the Flinders Foundation, then known as the Flinders Medical Centre Research Foundation, with an early focus on supporting research and innovation.

The interim committee for the Foundation was made up of Norman Popplewell, Professor Gus Fraenkel, Professor Andrew Rogers, Professor Geoff Benness, Dr Phillip Barter and Professor John Chalmers.

Over the following years, the Foundation grew rapidly, creating a need for dedicated staff and office space. Sylvia Murray was appointed as the Foundation's first Secretary, while VellieCare (then known as the Volunteer Service for Flinders Medical Centre) funded the fit-out of the Foundation's very first office, tucked beneath the stairs near the old main entrance.



The first Flinders Foundation office.

1977



Our flagship cancer fundraising event is born

In **1989**, the Lyn Wrigley Trust Dinner was established to raise vital funds for breast cancer research, later expanding to support all cancer types under several names, including the Pink Yellow Blue Ball.

Lyn Wrigley, a wife, mother and nurse, was just 44 when she diagnosed with breast cancer and given months to live. Determined to help others facing the disease, she dedicated herself to raising funds and awareness.



What began as one woman's determination to help others has become a lasting legacy of community-led impact, helping generations of patients and families access better cancer care and research-driven treatment advances.

Top: Lyn Wrigley and her sister Bronwyn.

Bottom: Lyn Wrigley.

1989

A landmark investment in research



In **1991**, strong support from corporate partners and the community, including significant support from philanthropist Jack Loader and Mary Overton AM, helped deliver a \$5 million Research Laboratory wing at FMC, one of the largest investments in the Flinders precinct at the time.

As fundraising momentum grew during construction, it became clear the project could proceed without the need for a government loan, a significant milestone for Flinders Foundation and its supporters.

The new Research Laboratory wing strengthened research capability across the Flinders precinct, creating space for leading researchers and accelerating medical discovery and translational healthcare outcomes for the South Australian community.



A new era in cancer care

Opened in **2012**, the Flinders Centre for Innovation in Cancer (FCIC) became South Australia's first integrated cancer centre, bringing together world-class research, clinical trials and compassionate care under one roof.

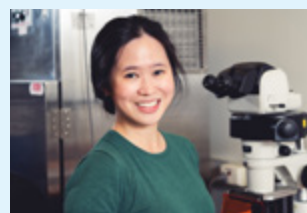
More than just a building, FCIC connects researchers, clinicians and patients to drive innovation in prevention, treatment and survivorship. Today, it continues to support thousands of patients and families each year while contributing to cancer research and discoveries with impact extending beyond South Australia to the global healthcare community, demonstrating the lasting power of community support through Flinders Foundation.

A lasting legacy for neuroscience

Long-time Flinders Foundation supporter Mary Overton AM had a deep passion for neuroscience and a strong belief in advancing research and care.

Following her passing in **2002**, Mary left more than \$2.3 million to the Foundation through a gift in her Will, creating a transformational legacy for neuroscience at Flinders.

Since then, the Mary Overton Fellowship has funded four positions, bringing leading international neuroscience experts to Flinders for five-year appointments. Her generosity continues to support groundbreaking research to improve understanding, treatment, and care for neurological conditions.



Top: Mary Overton AM.

Bottom: Dr Yee Lian Chew.

1991

2002

2012

Giving our smallest patients the best start



In **2021**, Flinders Foundation supporters funded vital new equipment for the Flinders Neonatal Unit, one of many investments made across the hospital and neonatal services to improve care for vulnerable babies and families. The support helped deliver advanced technology for the more than 1,400 sick and premature babies cared for each year.

Among the equipment was the Giraffe OmniBed Carestation, now in constant use for infants requiring intensive care. Designed to mimic womb-like conditions, it supports faster healing and includes built-in scales so babies don't need to be moved for weighing.

Neonatal Associate Nurse Unit Manager Jacquie Glazbrook notes the impact: with multiple monitors and often ventilators attached, moving a baby can require several staff and risks heat loss. The new system helps keep babies warm, stable and safely cared for.

A home built on generosity



In **2022**, the Simonds Charity Home went under the hammer in Lightsview, attracting more than 90 bids before selling for just over \$477,000 to support South Australian children and their families.

Generously donated by Simonds Homes, the brand-new two-storey property was styled by BoConcept and auctioned by TOOP+TOOP, with proceeds directly supporting the Child Safety and Wellbeing Health Service.

The result is a powerful example of what can be achieved when community, businesses and supporters come together for a shared cause.

2021

2022

Looking back to move forward

Emeritus Professor John Willoughby has dedicated decades to the fields of neurology and neuroscience, and served as Chair of the Flinders Foundation from 1983 to 1988. We recently caught up with John to reflect on the Foundation's early days and hear his thoughts on its future.

Looking back, he recalls moments that highlighted the real impact of the Foundation's work.

"In the early days, we felt a great sense of achievement as projects began to receive funding," he said. "Through our newly established Board, we were also able to secure government funding to match Mrs Mary Overton AM's generous gift for the Research Foundation Laboratories building at FMC."

His time as Chair helped shape his views on the role of philanthropy in healthcare.

"It was clear from the beginning that patients and their families, grateful for the care they received at Flinders, wanted to give back," he said. "Supporting research became a meaningful way for them to do that."

When asked how he would like his contribution and that of the Foundation's early leaders to be remembered, his response was characteristically humble:

"Nothing more than being genuinely concerned, ethical and passionate people committed to supporting medical science. I'm proud to have been part of its earliest growth and successes."



Top: John Willoughby with Sally Cook.

Bottom: John Willoughby with Sir Mark Oliphant and Mrs Helen Watts at the opening of the new office, January 1986.

Supporting exceptional care for 50 years — help us be there for the next 50.

Enable us to provide exceptional research and care for another 50 years.

Your support helps fund:

- Life-saving research
- World-class medical equipment
- Patient-centred programs
- Future healthcare innovation



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