Wednesday 2 October

Vernon Collins Oration 2024

‘The power of paediatrics to address child health inequity within a generation: reality or fantasy?’

Speaker: Professor Sharon Goldfeld, AM

Director, RCH Centre for Community Child Health,
Co-Group Leader MCRI Policy and Equity Research Group,
Theme Director, MCRI Population Health

Vernon Collins Oration

The Vernon Collins Oration was established in 1981 to honour the memory of Professor Vernon Collins.

The Oration was held bi-annually until 1989, and annually since 1990 and has been an important part of The Royal Children's Hospital's 151 year history.

It is conducted under the auspices of The Royal Children's Hospital Executive, the RCH Medical Staff Association, The University of Melbourne and the RCH Alumni.

The annual Vernon Collins Oration celebrates the legacy of a gifted clinician, and a great educator and mentor.

The 2024 Vernon Collins Oration is presented by Professor Sharon Goldfeld AM, Director, RCH Centre for Community Child Health, Co-Group Leader, MCRI Policy and Equity Research Group, Theme Director for MCRI Population Health

Professor Vernon Collins

Professor Vernon Collins was the first Medical Director of The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) in Melbourne, a position he held from 1949–60. He then became the Professor of Child Health at The University of Melbourne until his retirement in 1974.

Affectionately known as VLC, he was studying at Horsham High when a perceptive headmaster suggested he should study medicine. He graduated MB BS in 1933, obtaining further degrees in Melbourne (MD, 1936) and London (MRCP and DCH, 1940).

Professor Collins later became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Two of his contributions to literature deserve special mention: Education of the Physician and Teacher in the Total Care of the Child (Medical Journal of Australia, 1953) and The Child in Hospital, (Medical Journal of Australia, 1954). His small practical book Infant Feeding gained a wide readership among general practitioners, nurses and parents.

Professor Collins was a good role model to the many residents, registrars, students and educators at the hospital, and was an early proponent of patient and family-centred care.

Professor Sharon Goldfeld, AM

Professor Sharon Goldfeld, AM is the Director of The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne Centre for Community Child Health, the Co-Group Leader, Murdoch Children's Research Institute Policy and Equity Research Group, and the Theme Director, Murdoch Children's Research Institute Population Health.

As a community paediatrician and public health physician who grew up on the Melbourne Children's Campus, Professor Goldfeld focused her research on reducing inequities among children, particularly in Australia. Her work has led to significant advancements in early childhood interventions, directly influencing policies and practices to improve the health, development, and educational outcomes for children living in disadvantage.

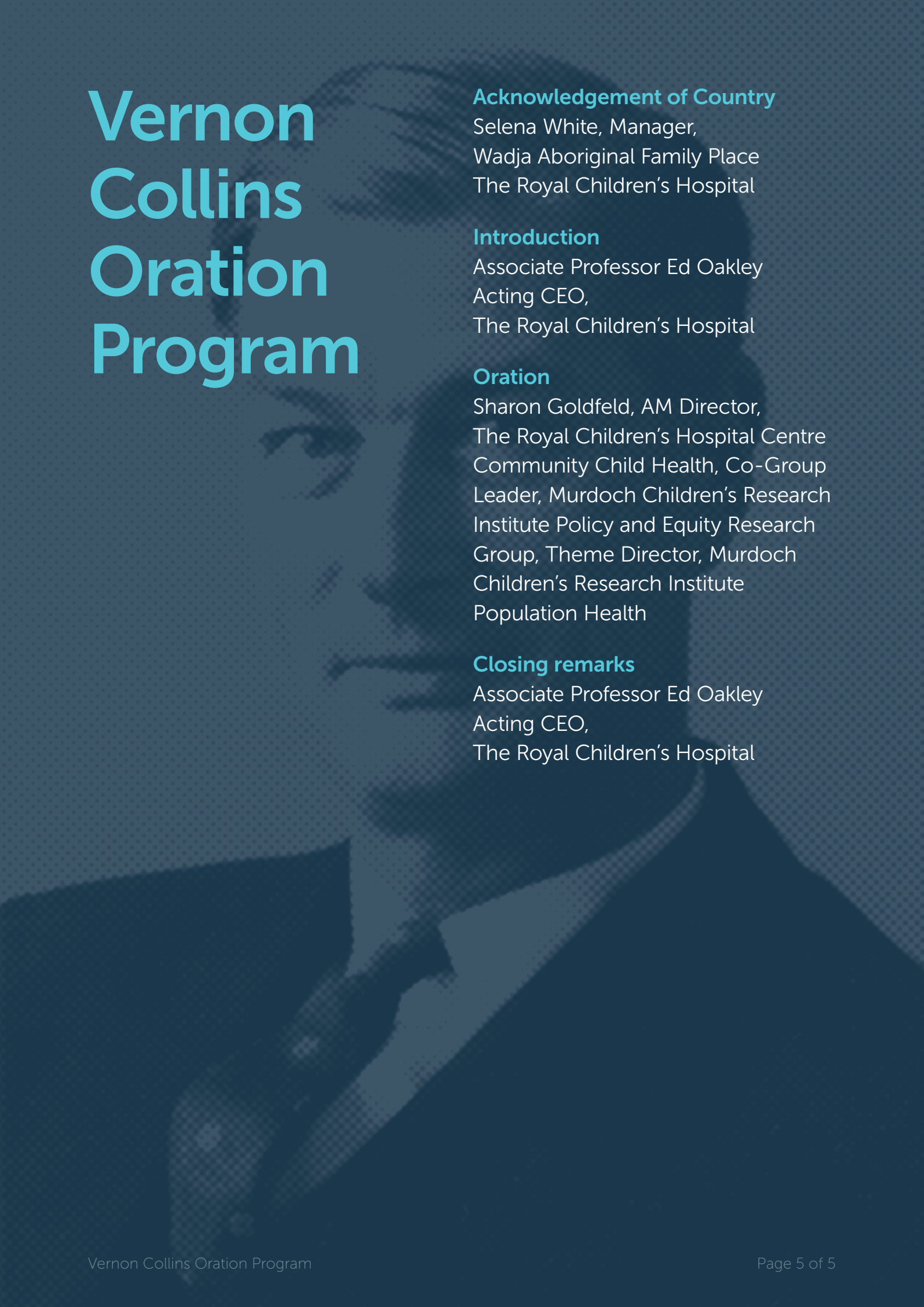
Professor Goldfeld has contributed to policy development through her research and a decade of work in state government, including as Principal Medical Advisor in the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

In 2024, Professor Goldfeld was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for her service to paediatric medicine and public health research.

Her contributions have been recognised with numerous awards, including the inaugural 2020 University of Melbourne Marles Medal in STEM for outstanding achievement in research impact.



Vernon Collins Oration Program



Acknowledgement of Country

Selena White, Manager,
Wadja Aboriginal Family Place
The Royal Children's Hospital

Introduction

Associate Professor Ed Oakley
Acting CEO,
The Royal Children's Hospital

Oration

Sharon Goldfeld, AM Director,
The Royal Children's Hospital Centre
Community Child Health, Co-Group
Leader, Murdoch Children's Research
Institute Policy and Equity Research
Group, Theme Director, Murdoch
Children's Research Institute
Population Health

Closing remarks

Associate Professor Ed Oakley
Acting CEO,
The Royal Children's Hospital