



The Hospital Research
Foundation Group

YOUR *impact*

Supporting life-changing medical research and patient care in WA

You're helping
people like
Michelle live
the everyday

WA EDITION 1 | APRIL 2026

FIGHTING FOR THE EVERYDAY

TOGETHER. FIGHT.



Your kind donations make this research possible – thank you!

Three new scholarships awarded, thanks to you

Three new scholarships have been awarded to conduct research into areas of unmet need across Western Australia.

The three projects will focus on improving the medical workforce in rural areas, investigating a new blood cancer treatment and supporting breastfeeding in ICU.

The Hospital Research Foundation Group (THRFG) has again collaborated with the WA Government's Future Health Research and Innovation Fund (FHRI) to fund the scholarships, as part of FHRI's Clinician Researcher Training Program.

The program has been designed to build the clinician researcher workforce by encouraging and supporting PhD studies across pre-consultant medical and dental, allied health, nursing and midwifery professionals.

Scholarship recipients receive a support package for up to 3.5 years full-time or equivalent part-time, with funding contributions from both the Fund and THRFG.

Briony Marshall, THRFG Deputy CEO, said the funding allowed all three recipients to conduct research into areas of unmet need across Western Australia.

"This is another important co-funding relationship with the WA Government's FHRI Fund and reflects our ongoing investment in improving the health outcomes of all Western Australians," she said.

The recipients were chosen from a competitive field and underwent a rigorous approval process. Their work reflects a broad spectrum of health needs in Western Australia and align with the WA government's identified priority populations.

The recipients include:



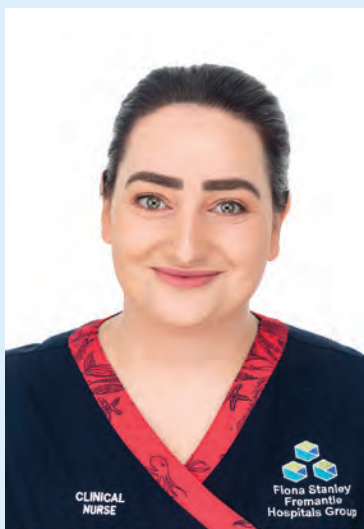
Dr Lachlan O'Sullivan

**WA Country Health Service |
North Metropolitan Health
Service | Curtin University**

Dr O'Sullivan's research will focus on rural medical vocational training to support future senior medical workforce development.

He said it was great to see The Hospital Research Foundation Group supporting research in rural, regional and remote healthcare – one of the WA Government's identified priority populations.

"I am hopeful that this research partnership between The Hospital Research Foundation Group, Department of Health, WA Country Health Service, North Metropolitan Health Service, and Curtin University will produce research that has value to people receiving and providing healthcare across Western Australia," he said.



Danelia Craill

**South Metropolitan Health
Service | UWA**

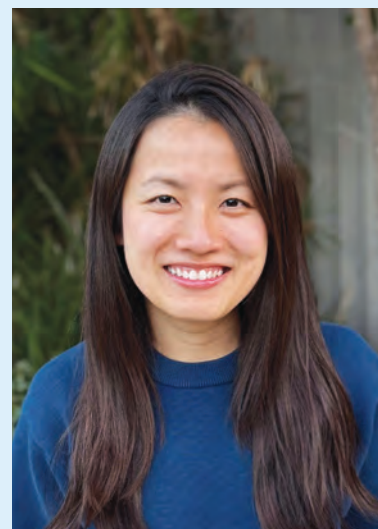
As an intensive care nurse at Fiona Stanley Hospital, Ms Craill's project will investigate breastfeeding initiation and outcomes after a major postpartum haemorrhage or pre-eclampsia admission to ICU.

She described being awarded the Clinician Researcher Training Program Scholarship as "an incredible honour".

"This opportunity allows me to undertake my PhD in my area of clinical practice whilst supporting my role as a mother to my toddler and young baby," she said.

"This group's experiences are often overlooked despite their complexity and vulnerability.

"I am deeply grateful for The Hospital Research Foundation Group's investment in clinician-led research that has the potential to deliver meaningful, real-world change."



Zo Ee Wong

PathWest | UWA

Ms Wong's research aims to improve cutting-edge CAR T-cell therapy (where a patient's own cancer-fighting T-cells are genetically engineered to better target cancer) as a treatment for blood cancers and make stem cell transplantation safer and more effective.

"This scholarship gives me the chance to study a new type of treatment that uses a person's own immune cells to fight disease," she said.

"This kind of therapy is already helping some people with blood cancers, but it doesn't work the same way for everyone.

"With this support, our team hopes to find ways to improve these treatments and make them work for more people. I am very grateful for this opportunity and excited to be part of work that could make a real difference to patients' lives."



Engaging Aboriginal dads in pregnancy

Supporting Aboriginal fathers during pregnancy and birth is the focus of new research being rolled out in WA, thanks to your donations.

Dr Bernardo Dewey from the Indigenous Health Research Program at Curtin University's Medical School was awarded an Early-to-Mid Career Research Fellowship to undertake this work.

The Fellowship is jointly funded by the WA Government's Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund and The Hospital Research Foundation Group, through your generosity.

Dr Dewey will work with Aboriginal Elders, fathers and healthcare workers to help strengthen Aboriginal men's involvement in antenatal care – leading to better outcomes for both parents and babies.

The four-year project will explore why Aboriginal fathers are sometimes not engaged in the antenatal care process, and how this can be improved through greater engagement and more culturally appropriate communication.

"We will be interviewing Aboriginal families and healthcare practitioners from both urban and regional areas – working alongside Aboriginal midwifery teams at King Edward Memorial, Rockingham General Hospital and Armadale Health Services, and in partnership with Gorenang Moortabiin Aboriginal Corporation in Albany," Dr Dewey said.

"Currently we can access a significant amount of data about the health and experiences of mums but not a lot from dads' perspectives.

"We aim to co-design an Aboriginal-specific tool that helps with engaging and educating Aboriginal dads in the antenatal care period. The intervention will be aimed at Aboriginal families, midwives and other healthcare workers."

Dr Dewey's research is being supervised by Rohan Collard, Principal Investigator at the Ngangk Yira Institute for Change, Professor Rhonda Marriott AM from Murdoch University, and

**Thank you
for supporting this
life-changing work!**



Dr Bernardo Dewey

Professor Carrington Shepherd from Curtin Medical School.

It draws on more than two years of extensive consultation with Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal-led academics, healthcare practitioners and Aboriginal fathers.

Identifying this area of unmet need originated from a forum Dr Dewey convened alongside Mr Collard in 2025 that focused on Aboriginal men's health. The forum led to an advisory group being set up, which has helped shape his research project.

Dr Dewey said he had also engaged midwifery teams, who were very keen to see the tool developed.

He said recruitment for the study would begin in July this year, following consultation with the ethics committee within the WA Department of Health.

Dr Dewey said that the multi-year funding guarantee was life-changing – allowing him to make real change in such a vulnerable cohort, which could only happen with this sort of investment.

“I’m beyond grateful to The Hospital Research Foundation Group and the WA Government for being afforded the privilege of being able to conduct this important and needed research full-time, free from worrying about job security,” he said.

“This Fellowship project is just a start, but it will lay the foundation for future evidence-based change that has the potential to help close the gap in Aboriginal parental and newborn health outcomes by improving the way we engage with Aboriginal dads in health settings.”

which breast cancer patients will
drug conjugate (ADC) treatment

ted by
orden



Dr Trisha Khoo and SMHS's Paul Forden

**This research
is only possible
thanks to you!**

Personalising treatments for breast cancer

Local research is looking at better ways to identify breast cancer patients who will benefit from a new type of cancer treatment.

Dr Trisha Khoo from Fiona Stanley Hospital received a grant for this research through The Hospital Research Foundation Group, sponsored by South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) Staff Giving.

Dr Khoo's project involves a new treatment type called an antibody-drug conjugate (ADC) which seeks out and kills cancer cells.

"Currently we have no tests to tell who will benefit and who will not," Dr Khoo said.

"This research aims to develop such tests and to learn why they

sometimes fail so we can adjust them to work for everyone."

Dr Khoo's research will be conducted in two parts. The first is laboratory based, with the second requiring more active participation from current patients who are battling metastatic breast cancer.

Dr Khoo said more personalised treatments were the new frontier in cancer care. They also increase the options for those who don't respond to current or standard treatment regimes.

She said most of the tests being investigated did not require

any special infrastructure, and could rapidly be brought into trials, laboratories and routine screening processes.

"If successful, these tests could also be applied to other cancers such as lung and gastric cancer."

Dr Khoo acknowledges that ongoing support for medical research is critical to improve survival rates. She said without it, advances in care would simply never happen.

"Funding for research is like the gift that keeps on giving – nothing is wasted even in trials that ultimately don't work."



Military and emergency services health

The Hospital Research Foundation Group – Military & Emergency Services Health Australia (MESH) is expanding its lifesaving services into WA.

But what exactly does MESH do?

MESH supports the mental health and wellbeing of current and former Australian military members, emergency service personnel and their families.

In WA, they will be running a range of programs to support service personnel with transition to civilian life, understanding identity, improving mental health, as well as training for employers and service providers to support their understanding of culture and identity in these populations and how this impacts engagement.

MESH's well-regarded MindRight and StoryRight programs will be the first to roll out.

MindRight is a one-day workshop that provides service members with the tools to understand their values and personal identity separate to their service identity – finding a new purpose after service.

StoryRight is also a one-day workshop that assists members to prepare for post-service employment, by providing the tools to translate their specialisations, trades, rank, skills and experiences into language that civilians can understand.

Importantly, both programs are run by lived-experience facilitators. In Perth, this will be Dylan

Williams, Jo Crittenden and Taylor Finlay, who all bring extensive backgrounds in defence service and will help deliver authentic, experience-informed programs.

Planning is also underway to deliver the **GEARS program** (Group Emotional and Relationship Skills) in WA, which is a 12-week psychoeducation and skills-based course, with sessions lasting two hours each week.

Developed and facilitated by lived experience peers with service backgrounds, this program aims to enhance mood regulation, interpersonal communication and relationship skills through the unique perspective of service life.

Participants from police, fire, ambulance, corrections, rescue and defence backgrounds tell us this program is like no other, to help overcome mental health symptoms and struggles.

Visit mesha.org.au to learn more about these programs, or contact (08) 7002 0880 or programs@mesha.org.au



The impact
of your
support

Meet Michelle, a miraculous survivor

Perth grandmother Michelle Slabbert is the very definition of a survivor.

Nearly 25 years after first being diagnosed with melanoma – and fighting 10 tumours in total – she is now living well and enjoying everyday moments with her family.

The journey wasn't easy though. Originally diagnosed in 2002 with metastatic melanoma on her scalp, Michelle was referred to an oncologist, however no scans were ever done.

It wasn't until six years later in 2008, while holidaying in Europe, that she noticed a lump in her breast. Michelle assumed it was breast cancer, which was devastating enough, but was surprised to receive another melanoma diagnosis.

What followed was a series of further shocks as more tumours were found in her lungs, shoulder and brain. She said sharing the news of each diagnosis with her family were among the hardest conversations of her life.

“My children thought they were going to lose their mother and my husband was expecting to lose his wife,” she said.

“We have always been a close family but this has definitely brought us closer and allowed me to enjoy my grandchildren in a way I thought might never be possible,” she said.

Most of her tumours were able to be successfully removed through surgery and she also underwent six weeks of full-brain radiation, causing her hair to fall out.

Also during this time, she participated in an immunotherapy trial at Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, and later received a personalised vaccine developed specifically for her cancer.

She is convinced the immunotherapy and vaccine trial played a significant part in her survival – a real-world example of the power of medical research.

“I will be on medication for the rest of my life, but I'm alive and living a good life. And investment and access to medical research and care has given me that.”

“Every day I wake up is a blessing.”

The Hospital Research Foundation Group is proud to support melanoma research in Western Australia, to give hope to people like Michelle.

But we still need your help.

To further support this work, please consider a donation via the enclosed coupon, phone (08) 6215 8940 or www.hospitalresearch.org.au/donate

Innovative new pain research underway

Helping people manage their musculoskeletal pain is the aim of new research supported by The Hospital Research Foundation Group through the Nicholas Way Fund.

Dr Martin Rabey, a Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist at Royal Perth Hospital, has received the funding to improve how musculoskeletal pain – pain involving muscles, joints and bones – is understood and treated.

Rather than focusing on what goes wrong in the body, Dr Rabey's research will explore the strengths and protective factors that help people cope with pain, stay active, or recover more effectively.

The work will run over three years and shape a new, strengths-based approach to pain care.

It is predominantly funded by the WA Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund and Dr Rabey's Raine Medical Research Foundation Clinical Research Fellowship, with funds received via the Nicholas Way Fund providing vital top-up funds.

Dr Rabey said most research was about trying to find out what's 'wrong' and to 'fix' it with treatment outcomes for pain generally poor.



You can be proud of groundbreaking research like this

"We want to harness people's personal strengths so that it facilitates their recovery.

"Strengths-based approaches to pain are uncommon, so we're starting from the ground up – looking at which strengths might be most important so we can explicitly assess and target them during treatment."

About the Nicholas Way Fund

The Nicholas Way Fund was established by Professor Sue Fletcher to honour the award-winning journalist who died in 2022 from Bulbar Onset Motor Neuron Disease.

The Fund aims to support Early Career Researchers with additional top-up funds to ensure the success of their research projects, encouraging recipients to overcome adversity.

Partner snapshot



The team is excited to be cementing partnerships with key businesses in Western Australia to help expand our impact across the state.

We wish to thank Subi Group, Remondis, Mayday Rentals and the Comedy Lounge for partnering with us recently, to support medical research and patient care in WA.

As a long term Austal charity partner, we were also pleased to be the beneficiary of WA's Business News Success and Leadership Breakfast at the Crown Casino last year.

Ben Wilson, THRF's WA Impact Lead, was thrilled to address the packed audience ahead of the keynote address by Austal CEO Paddy Gregg.

Ben said it was a privilege to speak to Perth's key decision makers and be invited to share information on our Group and growth strategy for WA.

"It was an incredible opportunity to give an insight into the range of research and patient care areas we support in WA and our plans to grow that impact even more," he said.

If you'd like to join our growing list of partners, please don't hesitate to reach out on (08) 6215 8940.

Team and location news

We're also pleased to be welcoming back Sarah Taylor from maternity leave as Corporate Partnerships Manager.

She has joined the rest of our WA team in an exciting new Subiaco location from February 2026.

The move is a reflection of the Group's statewide focus in WA, and will also be big enough for MESHA to deliver its key programs to military and emergency services personnel (see page 7).

You can find us at Suite 1A – 435 Roberts Road, Subiaco. We can't wait to welcome you!





A snapshot of photos from the night

Thank you for joining us!

More than 120 people attended our Impact Showcase in March to celebrate the incredible impact being made in medical research and patient care by The Hospital Research Foundation Group across Western Australia.

Building on the proud legacy of our traditional WA Awards Night, the event brought together supporters, researchers, partners and stakeholders to showcase the incredible achievements over the past 12 months.

Guests heard first-hand from an expert panel featuring our newest Early-to-Mid Career Research Fellows, Dr Bernardo Dewey, Ms Lianne Gilchrist and Dr Kelsey Sewell, who shared insights into their innovative and life-changing work via our moderator and WA Board of Governors' chair Colin La Galia.

The Hon Stephen Dawson, Minister for Medical Research, also addressed the crowd to reinforce the importance of the relationship between the WA Government's Future Health Research and Innovation Fund (FHRI) to improve the health outcomes of all Western Australians across the state.



THANK YOU

to everyone who attended!

To support The Hospital Research Foundation Group's life-changing work, talk to us on (08) 6215 8940 or visit www.hospitalresearch.org.au



The Hospital Research Foundation Group

exists for every Western Australian

Our purpose is simple – to improve the health and wellbeing of the community through life-changing medical research and patient care initiatives.

Did you know?

We are a Group of charities and together we support more than 60 areas of disease and illness, from birth to end-of-life.



TOGETHER. FIGHT.

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