



# RESEARCH *impact*



**NEW GRANTS  
ANNOUNCED!**

**TOGETHER. FIGHT.**

## YOUR IMPACT

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**Heartwarming  
impact**

# Welcome to RESEARCH *impact*



Colin La Galia  
WA Chair & THRF Group Director

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## Thank you for your life-changing impact

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**There is a lot to look forward to in 2025 as we embark on an exciting new era of impact.**

Late last year we were thrilled to announce our nine newest grant recipients, as well as a transformational \$3.5 million co-funding agreement between The Hospital Research Foundation Group and the WA Government.

Selecting the researchers whose work we'll fund each year is very time consuming and I would like to thank our WA scientific advisory committee – led by Professor Jim Codde – for their tireless work in this important role.

**We also could not deliver these grants without our generous donors and sponsors – a huge thank you to you!**

The co-funding agreement announced by Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Medical Research, at our WA Awards night is an amazing opportunity for our research community. Learn more on the next page and make sure you sign up to our regular WA e-news to receive the latest updates.

We recently welcomed the Program Director for Military and Emergency Services Health Australia (MESHA – another organisation within our Group) Dr Karen May to Perth to discuss opportunities for bringing MESHA's impactful programs to WA to benefit our military and first responder communities.

Stay tuned for more exciting news on this as the year progresses.

**We are also busy planning our 'Meet the Researcher' events for 2025. Our first event in May will focus on men's health and introduce you to some of the researchers we are supporting in this space.**

I wish to take a moment to pay tribute to Dana Wallace-Campbell, our former WA General Manager, for her tireless efforts over many years to bring impact to our community, and for ensuring a smooth transition to The Hospital Research Foundation Group in WA. We wish Dana well in her future endeavours.

The Board is extremely confident about the future, and we wish to also thank our hardworking team on the ground who are delivering on these exciting plans. All money raised in WA will continue to be invested in WA to drive our commitment and vision.

**Thank you again to all our supporters for your loyal and generous commitment.**

Yours sincerely,

**Colin La Galia**  
WA Chair & Group Director  
The Hospital Research Foundation Group



*Hon Stephen Dawson MLC*

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## Exciting research opportunities in WA

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**A new \$3.5 million funding package will be available for medical research in WA after a co-funding agreement was reached with the State Government's Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund.**

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**An announcement was made by Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Medical Research, at our annual Awards Night which will see the State Government match The Hospital Research Foundation Group's \$1.75 million investment.**

The funding will support up to five three-year fellowships in preventative health across priority populations in WA, with a focus on those in regional and remote areas, Aboriginal populations, culturally diverse communities, men and boys and those facing socioeconomic disadvantage.

**It will also include a range of project and seed grants to further research into personalised treatment programs focused on cancer, neurodegenerative and cardiovascular disease.**

Minister Dawson said the co-funding agreement between the FHRI Fund and THRF Group would provide key fellowships to talented WA researchers

in areas of identified need, and the project and seed grants would advance care and treatment of chronic diseases impacting the lives of thousands of Western Australians.

"We commend The Hospital Research Foundation Group on their commitment to this initiative that builds on their 59-year history of funding innovative medical research in South Australia and nearly 30 years here in WA, and I look forward to following the progress of this innovative and potentially life-changing program," Minister Dawson said.

**Visit our website for more information about these grants, or sign up to receive news directly to your inbox at [www.HospitalResearch.org.au/Subscribe](http://www.HospitalResearch.org.au/Subscribe)**



## Meet our new grant recipients for 2025!

A broad suite of life-changing research projects were announced at The Hospital Research Foundation Group's annual WA Awards ceremony!

The projects target many chronic diseases including melanoma, bladder cancer, mental illness and bowel cancer in Aboriginal Australians.

A huge thank you to our generous donors and sponsors who make these awards possible.

Take a look at the worthy recipients here:

### Early Career Research Stream:



**Dr Trisha Khoo**  
Breast cancer  
South Metropolitan Health Service

Sponsored by: **SMHS Staff Giving**

Dr Khoo will explore a new treatment for breast cancer involving an antibody-drug conjugate (ADC) which seeks out and kills cancer cells.

This study aims to develop a test to predict which breast cancer patients will benefit from ADCs and learn why some fail so they can be adjusted to work for everyone.



**Dr Aaron Beasley**  
Melanoma  
Edith Cowan University

Sponsored by: **AUSTAL**

Combination immunotherapy is the current gold-standard melanoma treatment, however only 50% of patients will respond.

This study will validate a liquid biopsy for predicting melanoma response to immunotherapy, enabling patients to be given the most appropriate treatment.



Our esteemed panelists and Board members at the WA Awards night



**Dr Cynthia Hawks**  
**Bladder cancer**  
South Metropolitan  
Health Service



Sponsored by:

Patients with invasive bladder cancer who are unresponsive to the standard treatment have limited options and are often referred for surgical removal of the bladder.

This study will evaluate the feasibility, safety and tolerability of administering two chemotherapy agents into the bladder as treatment for non-muscle invasive bladder cancer as an alternative to bladder removal surgery.



**Dr Abdul Rahman Ihdayhid**  
**Heart disease**  
South Metropolitan  
Health Service



Sponsored by:

Having a heart health check is important for people with a family history of heart attack at a young age.

This study will determine if CT scans of the heart can help identify whether family members should be recommended for preventive medications to help prevent future heart attacks.



**Dr Michael Kyron**  
**Mental health**  
University of  
Western Australia



Sponsored by:

This project aims to improve the detection and prevention of suicidal ideations among people with mental health concerns via wearable technology that assesses their sleep, physical activity and mental wellbeing.

The goal is to identify those at risk and provide timely support, improving mental health care in schools and hospitals.



## Seed Research Stream:



**Assoc Prof Andrew Redfern**  
**Bowel cancer**  
 South Metropolitan  
 Health Service

Sponsored by: **Fewster Family**

Research shows that Aboriginal Australians have much higher mortality rates for bowel cancer than non-Aboriginal Australians.

This project seeks to understand if the higher death rate from bowel cancer is due to differences in the type of bowel cancer Aboriginal people get, or not enough of the right treatment and is aimed at improving treatment and cure rates for this cohort.



**Dr Kim Rice**  
**Leukaemia**  
 Murdoch University

Sponsored by:



Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML) is the deadliest leukaemia in children, with current treatments often leading to relapse and long-term side effects. LSD1 is a protein overexpressed in about 50% of AML cases and strongly linked to treatment resistance.

This study will guide the development of new LSD1 inhibitors to improve outcomes in childhood AML.



**Dr Lydia Warburton**  
**Melanoma**  
 South Metropolitan  
 Health Service

Sponsored by: **Janine Chalwell Grant**

The early detection of melanoma metastasis to the brain is crucial, because once symptoms appear, treatment success rates drop.

This research aims to develop a simple blood test to detect brain metastases early and monitor treatment response, offering a less invasive alternative to current methods.



A great night was had by all at the WA Awards night



**Prof John Olynyk**  
**Liver disease**  
South Metropolitan  
Health Service



Sponsored by: **Len & Fran Mihaljevich** |  
**David Clegg**

One in five Australians have risk factors for chronic liver disease, which can lead to deadly liver cirrhosis, a leading cause of death in WA males.

This project will focus on a liver-produced protein called Gamma Prime Fibrinogen (GPF) and will assess whether GPF is an effective biomarker and target for new personalised therapies, with the potential to revolutionise cirrhosis management.





*Dr Michael Kyron*

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## Harnessing AI to improve mental health outcomes

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**Wearable technology that monitors sleep, physical activity and mental wellbeing is being trialled as a lifesaving new tool to help detect and prevent declines in mental health.**

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**With a fresh grant from The Hospital Research Foundation Group, sponsored by the City of Cockburn, University of WA researcher Dr Michael Kyron will trial the artificial intelligence (AI) technology to improve the detection and prevention of suicidal thoughts among people with mental health concerns.**

“My motivation in this research – and beyond – is to ensure that those at risk of suicide are identified early and receive the support they need,” Dr Kyron said.

“We chose to investigate this space because these innovations offer both incredible potential and critical challenges – especially in accuracy, ethical use and long-term impact.”

The project will combine the analysis of wearable technology-based data with regular check-ins to help identify those at risk and provide them with timely support.

**With nearly 17% of people experiencing suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives, Dr Kyron was grateful for the funding to help improve mental health in the community.**

**“Early career researchers often have lots of bold ideas but lack the resources that are critical to turning those ideas into impactful research. Without this backing, many promising discoveries... may never reach their full potential.”**

**Your donations are critical to seeing this work succeed.  
To learn more, visit [www.HospitalResearch.org.au](http://www.HospitalResearch.org.au)**



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## Exciting new base in the heart of Fremantle

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**After moving to our new base within High Street Mall recently, it was with a sense of nostalgia that we said goodbye to our old offices at Fremantle Hospital.**

Our roots have been intertwined with those of the hospital's since 1996 with the founding of The Fremantle Hospital Medical Research Foundation by prominent Perth businessman Warren Jones, which went on to become Spinnaker and now The Hospital Research Foundation Group.

**Our new base is more accessible within the heart of the Fremantle community, and we look forward to continuing to connect with our stakeholders while supporting the important research being done across the South Metropolitan Health Service.**



**DONATE TODAY** 

**WE NEED YOU TO HELP CREATE  
EVERYDAY MOMENTS!**

[www.HospitalResearch.org.au](http://www.HospitalResearch.org.au) | (08) 6215 8940



Nicholas Way

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## Remembering journalist Nicholas Way

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**The Nicholas Way Fund was set up in 2021 to provide recipients of Early Career Research grants with additional top up funds to ensure the success of their research projects.**

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**It was established via a generous gift from Professor Sue Fletcher, a passionate supporter of those at the beginning of their research careers.**

Nick was an award-winning Western Australian journalist who spent years reporting for some of the country's leading news networks across Asia, Australia and South Africa before establishing his own media business in 2012.

**As a newsman, Nick was well known for his humanity and for seeing past the news of the day and into the human condition.**

"He didn't see people he interviewed as subjects in a story, he saw them as people who needed help and needed a voice," said those who worked closely with him.

He was well known for his enduring humanity and insight into those who found themselves in the news, providing them with a voice and treating them with empathy and respect.

Nick died in 2022 just shy of a two-year battle with bulbar onset Motor Neuron Disease (MND), but

never lost the drive and tenacity that were hallmarks of his career even as his health declined.

The Nicholas Way Fund was established by Professor Sue Fletcher to honour that tenacity and drive in the face of difficulties and to encourage young researchers to overcome any hurdles or adversity in achieving their own goals.

Prof Fletcher met Nick through his patronage of the Racing for MNDi Foundation that supports MND research and came to know him well during the time he was seen by clinician-researcher colleague Professor Merilee Needham, following his diagnosis.

**"Nick was such a delightful person with a glorious voice. It was so unfair that this voice was stolen by MND," she said.**

"He believed in the power of research and shared my passion for empowering and supporting the next generation of medical researchers."

**Dr Matthew McDonald from Curtin University is the latest recipient of the Nicholas Way Fund, helping men improve their heart health.**

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# Transforming the lives of autistic children

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Kitty, Bunny and mum Carolyn

**An important exercise program co-designed by children, parents/carers and exercise physiologists is helping autistic children become more active.**

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**For program participants Kitty (10) and Bunny (8) and their mum Carolyn, the experience has been an overwhelmingly positive one they hope lays a foundation for future participation and enjoyment.**

Mum Carolyn explained that she tried a variety of different sports and programs over the years with the girls, but had almost given up.

“What I hope is that the ethos and understanding that the team has shown in here can shift the paradigm in the outside world for kids like mine,” Carolyn said.

**“I’m super proud of the kids for the resilience they’ve shown and their willingness to give it a go. It’s been great to see them build their physical confidence and also to get back in touch with sport and I’ve found they’re more willing to go out and try new things.”**

The program is led by Associate Professor Timothy Fairchild and a multidisciplinary team at Murdoch University, funded by The Hospital Research Foundation Group via a Telethon grant.

Less than a quarter of Australian children and adolescents meet recommended levels of physical activity, and despite the known benefits of exercise, participation rates for autistic children are even lower.

A/Prof Fairchild said the traditional spaces for physical activity like playgrounds or sports environments are loud, unpredictable and potentially overwhelming for autistic children. This program is designed to create safe, personalised activities that are designed to build a foundation for better physical and social skills that they hope will last into adolescence and adulthood.

**The collaborative and inclusive approach adopted by this initiative catered to each child’s strengths – with a focus on promoting motor skills, fitness, social interactions and more – and has so far delivered some amazing results for participants.**

**Your generous support goes directly to life-changing research like this. Thank you!**

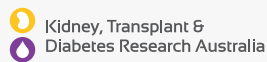
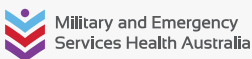
# The Hospital Research Foundation Group exists for every Australian



## Did you know?

We are a Group of charities and together we support more than 60 areas of disease and illness.

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



### WA Office

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The Hospital Research Foundation Group

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