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Media Statement

MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE CELEBRATES 10-YEAR MILESTONE

Now a central part of the State's scientific community and the leader of a new project changing the landscape of medical research in WA, the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) has much to celebrate in its 10th anniversary year.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said while the Institute would be reflecting on its important history throughout 2008, it was also keeping more than a keen eye on the future.

"We have certainly experienced some exciting times in the 10 years since we began in 1998, but I think it's fair to say that the decade ahead holds the promise of even more important breakthroughs and, indeed, a new era in medical research in WA," he said.

"As the main driver of the construction of two new cutting-edge research facilities, we are very aware that our future will see even more collaboration between WA scientists and that is something the entire community will benefit from.

"The more knowledge our top minds can share, the more successful we will be at delivering world-class research breakthroughs that boost the health of the entire community."

One new research facility will be built at QEII Medical Centre in Nedlands and one at the forthcoming Fiona Stanley Hospital in Murdoch.

Professor Klinken said WAIMR would hold a ball on March 15, 2008 at Winthrop Hall at The University of Western Australia, as well as other activities during the 12-month celebration.

"We've been blessed over the past 10 years to have helped pinpoint genes linked to leukaemia, breast, ovarian and prostate cancer, as well as those contributing to a number of nerve and muscle disorders," he said.

"We have also been able to attract some of the world's finest scientists into WA and are confident we'll continue to deliver life-changing findings in the years ahead.

"None of this would have been possible without the late Harry Perkins, who played a key role in WAIMR's formation.

"Harry believed that without a high quality research environment, it would prove difficult to recruit and retain the best doctors to WA which would, in turn, impact health care to the community.

"He was a man of vision, and, as our inaugural Chairman, he also managed to secure us what is still one of the largest corporate donations ever made to medical research in Australia – a \$5 million grant from Wesfarmers, so we take this opportunity to again say, 'thank you' and in particular express our gratitude to then CEO Michael Chaney."

Professor Klinken also paid tribute to WAIMR's other generous supporters.

"The University of WA, Bankwest, and private donations from many other business professionals across the State have contributed considerably to our ongoing success," he said.

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“The West Australian government and the Federal Government have also been tremendous supporters and we are indebted to them for both our historic and future achievements.”

UWA and the State and Federal Governments have contributed almost \$200 million dollars to the creation of the two new research facilities in WA.

WAIMR Deputy Director Peter Leedman said much of WAIMR’s work would also not have been possible without the support of the wider community.

“Everyone from volunteers for our research studies to those who give up their time to help our fundraising activities and those community members who give financially to our work, are integral to our success and we honour them for their contribution,” he said.

BACKGROUND

WAIMR is a leader in research into the genetic causes of adult diseases including leukaemia, breast, prostate cancer, diabetes and nerve and muscle disorders.

Its founding partners were The University of Western Australia, Royal Perth Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. In July 2003, Fremantle Hospital also became a partner.

WAIMR has also contributed much to the State’s growing biotechnology sector, establishing the spin-off companies Ozgene and Dimerix, as well filing a number of patents.

It also has commercial agreements with Perth companies including Proteomics International, Molecular Discovery Systems, and BioPharmica which all serve to maximise the potential results of WAIMR research.

The Institute is currently located on two campuses, with state-of-the-art research laboratories situated at both Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Nedlands and Royal Perth Hospital in Perth.

Through its research and commercial initiatives, WAIMR has grown in size considerably, creating more than 200 highly skilled jobs since its inception in 1998.

WAIMR is also driving the establishment of a \$10 million Phase I Clinical Trials facility to be built at the QEII Medical Centre with the support of the State Government.

As well, a number of specialised research centres are now based within WAIMR including:

- The Centre for Food & Genomic Medicine
- The WA Centre for Health & Ageing
- The Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre
- The Neurotrauma Research Program
- Cancer Council Clinical Trials Centre
- National Research Centre for Asbestos-Related Disease

All of this serves to enable WAIMR in its goal to deliver better health and wealth to all West Australians.

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