

"Thank You"
Day

Research Australia
An alliance for discoveries in health



Wednesday November 21st, 2007

Media Statement

WESFARMERS HONOURED FOR SUPPORTING MEDICAL RESEARCH

WA-based Wesfarmers Limited has been honoured at a national awards ceremony for its long-standing support of medical research in Western Australia.

Wesfarmers last night took out the "Leadership in Corporate Giving" award at Research Australia's annual "Thank You" Day Awards dinner at the National Gallery of Victoria International in Melbourne.

Since 1994, the organisation has ploughed more than \$6 million into the medical research community in WA.

In March 1998, Wesfarmers supported the establishment of the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), becoming its founding sponsor, injecting \$5 million over five years into the Institute's research activities.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said the many successes of WA's premier adult medical research institute would not have been possible without the philanthropic support of Wesfarmers.

"We are truly grateful that Wesfarmers had the vision to recognise the importance of assisting medical research at a time when this area was not being widely supported by the Australian business community," he said.

"The landscape has changed a great deal since then, but we are delighted that Wesfarmers has been honoured for its foresight, culture of corporate philanthropy and commitment to helping improve the health of the people who live in the communities in which it operates."

Professor Klinken said Wesfarmers' generosity in 1998 also prompted numerous other sponsors and donors to come on board and financially contribute to the Institute.

"To our knowledge, this \$5 million contribution remains one of the largest corporate donations made to medical research in Western Australia – and it has no doubt changed lives," he said.

The Managing Director of Wesfarmers, Richard Goyder, said the company was extremely pleased and proud to have been part of bringing WAIMR into being.

"The success of WAIMR is a great credit to all those involved in setting it up and in developing the Institute to the point it has reached today," he said.

"In particular, it is tribute to the vision and determination of our highly respected former Chairman, the late Harry Perkins, who saw the need for collaboration in adult health research in Western Australia and applied himself tirelessly to achieving that goal."

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As well as being a founding sponsor of WAIMR, Wesfarmers has also supported Perth's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (ICHR) and the McCusker Foundation for Alzheimer's Disease Research.

Professor Klinken said the flow-on effect from Wesfarmers' support had been enormous.

"With their generosity, we've been able to help reverse the brain drain from Australia and attract internationally acclaimed scientists to work here so that their discoveries can filter into our community, as well as creating jobs through our growing commercial successes," he said.

Research Australian CEO, Rebecca James, said the financial support provided by Wesfarmers has not only benefited Western Australia, but also carried the potential to have a national, if not global, impact through WAIMR's research into diseases such as breast and prostate cancer, diabetes and muscle disorders.

"Wesfarmers is showing leadership in investing in health and medical research at a time when many corporates are only just awakening to the importance of this research in creating a healthier and more productive Australia," Ms James said.

"Almost 90% of Australians rank health and medical research as the most important industry for Australia's future*, yet health research receives just one-third of the level of philanthropic support enjoyed by other sectors."

Research Australia is a national not-for-profit alliance of organisations and companies that are committed to making health and medical research a higher national priority. Research Australia is funded by membership subscriptions and donations and is independent of Government.

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*Research Australia Public Opinion Polling August 2007

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