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Media Statement

NEW CENTRE ENSURES KEY MEDICAL RESEARCH “GOLD” IS MINED

Western Australia is to become home to a new centre dedicated to boosting the number of cutting-edge medical research discoveries that go from the laboratory bench to a patient’s bedside.

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) today announced that its founding sponsor, Wesfarmers, would commit \$4.5 million to the initiative over five years.

The Wesfarmers Research Centre will initially be based at WAIMR’s Royal Perth Hospital campus but will ultimately form part of the Institute’s new state-of-the-art buildings to be constructed at QEII Medical Centre in Nedlands and the Fiona Stanley Hospital at Murdoch.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said the Wesfarmers Research Centre – which would focus on cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity – aimed to change many more lives for the better.

“Making research discoveries in the lab is the critical first step in any health breakthrough – it’s the equivalent of striking gold – but right now many of those discoveries don’t make it the next step of being “mined” or take a very long time to get there,” he said.

“Usually, this is because taking that knowledge through the different exploration phases that might lead to a new medical treatment is costly and risky; this new Centre aims to turn that around and we are very grateful to Wesfarmers for their commitment.”

Health Minister Jim McGinty commended Wesfarmers for their commitment to the new Centre that would ultimately lead to better health outcomes for Western Australians.

“This Centre is going to help us build a bridge between cutting edge medical research discoveries made right here in our own backyard to the patients who need it, offering real solutions to some of the serious health problems in our community,” Mr McGinty said.

“Wesfarmers contribution to this major link in the medical research chain is commendable and a great example of their commitment to the State and WA corporate sector generosity – I’d like to see this great effort lead the way to bigger and better collaboration between the health and corporate sectors.”

Professor Peter Leedman will lead the Wesfarmers Research Centre, having been appointed to the newly-created role of WAIMR Director of Translational Research.

“It’s very exciting that WAIMR now has the funding to focus on this important area known as translational research as this is where we’ll be able to make the biggest in-roads that can improve people’s health,” he said.

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“Without translational research, Professor Ian Frazer’s idea that it might be possible to create a cervical cancer vaccine may have stayed just that – an idea – so this Centre is clearly very significant and will allow WA scientists to ask the “big questions” that can change lives.”

Announcing the \$4.5 million funding today, Wesfarmers Managing Director, Richard Goyder said he was extremely pleased that Wesfarmers was continuing its long association with WAIMR in such a positive and potentially ground-breaking way.

“Research that leads to a better understanding of how to diagnose, treat and prevent these three diseases, and in the process rapidly translating this research into patient treatment, has the potential to make a profound and positive impact for many people, not only in Australia, but around the world,” Mr Goyder said.

In the five years from 1998, Wesfarmers injected a total of \$5 million into WAIMR’s groundbreaking research.

In 2007, Wesfarmers was nationally recognized for their enormous contribution, believed to be one of the largest corporate donations, receiving the "Leadership in Corporate Giving" award at Research Australia's annual awards dinner at the National Gallery of Victoria International in Melbourne.

WAIMR celebrates 10 years of groundbreaking discoveries in 2008.

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