

November 5, 2008

Media Statement

**MADELEY SCIENTIST STRONG CONTENDER IN PREMIER'S AWARDS**

Madeley researcher Dr Oliver Rackham is vying for top honours after being named one of three finalists in the Premier's Science Awards 2008.

Dr Rackham, from the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), is in the running for Young Scientist of the Year – a prize awarded to a scientist under the age of 35 who has demonstrated excellence in their field in Western Australia.

Dr Rackham has been recognised for his contributions which include the invention of a new technique which has allowed scientists to see RNA-protein interactions in living cells for the first time.

Dr Rackham's main research focus is in "hijacking" bacteria to make microscopic drug factories which offers huge potential for scientists worldwide to produce large quantities of medications inexpensively, and could lead to big advances in drug availability and affordability in developing countries.

"It's a real privilege to be set beside some great young scientists in the state and I'm honoured to be listed among them because the standard of work being undertaken is world-class," Dr Rackham said.

"This recognition means a lot to me and has given me a boost both professionally and personally, to look toward bigger and better contributions."

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said he was delighted Dr Rackham had been acknowledged for his achievements.

"It is wonderful to see an incredible young scientist like Oliver recognized for his amazing contributions to the field at such a young age," he said.

"We're immensely proud to have him on the WAIMR team and we're lucky to have someone of his calibre working in our state – his success is testament to the ever-rising standard of medical research being conducted here in WA."

Dr Rackham's WAIMR colleague, Dr Kevin Pflieger has also been named as a finalist in the same category. The winners of the Premier's Science Awards 2008 will be announced in a ceremony to be held at the Perth Convention Centre on December 4.

**BACKGROUND**

WAIMR's Dr Kevin Pflieger has been recognised in the Premier's Science Awards 2008 for his contribution to medical research in developing improved technologies to identify new drugs and drug targets for a range of conditions.

Dr Pflieger helped to invent a new form of a technology which places special light-emitting labels on proteins of interest, allowing interactions between proteins to be studied. Advances demonstrated by the team have now enabled novel interactions to be monitored in real-time in living cells for extended time periods and with sufficient sensitivity to enable screening for new drugs.

Last year, WAIMR celebrated Dr Kristen Nowak's honour in the competition, taking out the Premier's Prize for Early Career Achievement in Science 2007.

**MEDIA CONTACT: Sarah Hayward, WAIMR Media Consultant, m 0411 404 415, o 9388 9280**