2025 Annual Report

WEHI
brighter together

wehi.edu.au

Contents

WEHI acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land on which our campuses are located, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and embrace their continued connection to Country and community.

The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI)

Parkville campus
1G Royal Parade
Parkville Victoria 3052 Australia
Telephone: +61 3 9345 2555

Bundoora campus
4 Research Avenue
La Trobe R&D Park
Bundoora Victoria 3086 Australia
Telephone: +61 3 9345 2200

www.wehi.edu.au

WEHIresearch
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Walter and Eliza Hall Institute

ABN 12 004 251 423

Cover images Top: WEHI researchers Professor Shalin Naik, Professor Stephen Nutt, Professor Jeanne Tie, Dr Shengbo Zhang and Dr Cindy Audiger received $17 million from the Australian Government to supercharge immune cell 'spies' to target cancer.
Bottom left: WEHI Consumer Program participants Jane Lucas and Jane Allardice.
Bottom centre: Dr Samantha Chan, clinician scientist – immunodeficiency and allergy, Snow Centre for Immune Health, with Dr Kate Jester from the Royal Melbourne Hospital.
Bottom right: WEHI DeadlyScience Pathways Program 2025 students.

About WEHI

WEHI is where brilliant minds collaborate and innovate to make discoveries that will help us to live healthier for longer.

Our medical researchers have been serving the community for more than 110 years, making transformative discoveries in cancer, infection and immunity.

WEHI brings together diverse and creative people with different experience and expertise to solve some of the world's most complex health problems.

The spirit of collaboration is in our DNA. WEHI was established by a partnership between the University of Melbourne, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Walter and Eliza Hall Trust, bringing together talented researchers and remarkable clinicians, supported by exceptional professional services and underpinned by the power of philanthropy.

Our passion for improving lives drives us forward, even when breakthroughs are decades in the making. We are effective because of our collaborations with hospitals, universities, research institutes and industry, and the support of our community, including philanthropists, donors, bequestors, alumni and consumers.

Our research

Cancer – understanding the basic processes that are disrupted to generate cancer cells and how these can be leveraged to detect, prevent and treat disease.

Infection and immunology – discovering how the body fights infection, how errors in the immune system lead to disease and how we can use the immune system to conquer disease.

Global health – improving the health of people around the world through discovery of the basic mechanisms of disease and by finding and testing solutions to optimise health outcomes.

Advanced technologies and therapeutic development – a powerful hub for cutting-edge technologies underpinning biomedical discoveries and for the translation of these discoveries into new medicines and diagnostics.

Bioinformatics and computational biology – developing and applying new methods to analyse genomes, proteomes, metabolites and more, in health and disease, to reveal how these systems work and how to treat disease.

Clinical translation and consumer engagement – our focus on human biology and experimental medicine allows us to do fundamental research in patients and volunteers, alongside clinical trials, bridging the gap between lab-based discoveries and real-world impact.

Molecular sciences – understanding precisely how fundamental biological processes occur in our bodies, at molecular and even atomic resolution, to enable development of new treatments for disease.

Our mission

Mastery of disease through discovery.

Our vision

We're an innovative medical research institute that engages and enriches society and improves health outcomes through discovery, translation and education.

Our values

- Pursuit of excellence
- Contribution to society
- Integrity and respect
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Accountability
- Creativity

President's report

In 2025 WEHI has delivered outstanding science powered by a community united by purpose. Our achievements reflect an institute that is confident in its mission, committed to long-term discovery and focused on the foundations that enable groundbreaking research.

It's a privilege to serve as president and I want to express my deep gratitude for the welcome and trust I've received from the WEHI community. While I have long been connected to the institute as a board member and donor, stepping into the role has been both humbling and energising. I am truly excited about the opportunities ahead for WEHI and the positive impact we will have on the health of communities everywhere.

The WEHI board and our executive are committed to creating the conditions that continue to allow extraordinary science to flourish, enabling our teams to advance discoveries that make a real difference to human health.

Good governance remains central to WEHI's strength, with the board focused on long-term sustainability and steady stewardship as the institute advances its transformation agenda and implements the new strategic plan which will guide the direction of WEHI for the next five years.

This year we continued our commitment to reconciliation by expanding opportunities for current and future First Nations scientists and establishing a First Nations Staff and Students Network. Cultural learning programs across WEHI further enriched cultural safety and strengthened our collective understanding.

Our transition to 100% renewable electricity in 2025, cutting Scope 2 emissions by over 85%, reflects our determination to operate sustainably and responsibly.

Our philanthropic partners continue to play an essential role in sustaining that excellence. We remain grateful to the Snow Medical Research Foundation, whose vision and long-term investment underpin the Snow Centre for Immune Health, and to the Colonial Foundation, whose partnership supports the Colonial Foundation Diagnostics Centre – among so many other proud supporters. Our colleagues at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the University of Melbourne, our longest-standing partners, continue to bring valued expertise and collaboration to our shared ambitions.

We also congratulate Carrie Bickmore OAM on being named the 2026 Victorian Australian of the Year – her foundation, Carrie's Beanies 4 Brain Cancer, has raised more than $27 million for research and helped establish The Brain Cancer Centre.

I step into my new role appreciative of the tremendous legacy of strategic insight, wise counsel and thoughtful leadership of Jane Hemstritch AO, our former president.

Jane's deep commitment to medical research and personal philanthropic leadership has left an indelible mark on our institute. In leading the institute through the challenges of the pandemic, her steadiness and integrity helped position WEHI to respond with resilience and purpose. Under her leadership we strengthened our innovation ecosystem – advancing major technology and platform investments, and enhancing a culture of entrepreneurship and translational ambition through WEHI Ventures.

The establishment of the Hemstritch Centre of Excellence for Pancreatic Cancer Research – honouring her late husband Philip and father-in-law Reginald – is a testament not only to Jane's generosity but to her belief in research with long-term, transformative potential.

We acknowledge further changes in board composition this year. Kee Wong, who joined the board in 2021, was farewelled after contributing valuable expertise in strategy, innovation and leadership, while supporting our Advocacy and Support Committee and generously connecting WEHI to key stakeholders. We warmly welcomed Angela Skandarajah, whose 25 years of experience across real estate, law and public-sector leadership bring important depth to the board.

> To our donors and supporters who are the driving force behind our research and impact: thank you. Your belief in our mission, and your willingness to invest in long-term discovery, is fundamental to everything WEHI achieves.

My sincere thanks to our director Professor Ken Smith and WEHI's staff and student body, across scientific and professional services and sites, for their commitment to excellence, teamwork and discovery.

Finally my personal thanks to all board members for their support and dedication in 2025.

John Dyson
President, WEHI

Director's report

I am proud to reflect on a year of great impact at WEHI. We have made deep, fundamental advances that sharpen how we understand biology – the essential foundation for future medical breakthroughs – alongside work that has been translated directly to improve and extend patient lives.

Highlights that capture some of our exemplary science include:

- Solving a decades-old Parkinson's mystery by mapping the critical PINK1 protein structure, providing a blueprint for targeted therapies.
- Using high-resolution imaging to visualise the reproductive machinery of the malaria parasite, enabling the development of a novel mRNA vaccine to block transmission.
- Identifying a potential first preventative treatment for the life-threatening HTLV-1 virus by repurposing existing HIV drugs to suppress transmission.
- Helping develop a new blood test for coeliac disease that identifies gluten-specific T-cells even in gluten-free diets, removing the need for gluten challenges.
- Revealing how key immune cells tailor their instructions in response to different infections, offering new ways to boost vaccine effectiveness.

Securing $23 million in NHMRC Investigator Grants, supporting 14 of our leading scientists, was an outstanding outcome that reflects both the calibre of our researchers and the strength of our support teams and structures.

> This year marked a significant evolution in our strategic direction.

We established the Independent Scientific Advisory Board, bringing world-leading experts to guide our long-term scientific and translational ambitions. Our organisation-wide transformation program progressed strongly, ensuring WEHI is financially resilient, agile and fit for the future, and our new strategic plan provides an ambitious vision with clear pathways for the years ahead.

Recognising that discoveries only create an impact when they reach the clinic and community, commercial translation remains a priority. This year WEHI Ventures reached its two-year milestone and is building a strong pipeline of investable opportunities. Forming two new spinouts this year underscores our confidence that WEHI discoveries can deliver global health impact when paired with strong expertise and early support.

The excellence of our research community was recognised widely this year:

- Dr Alisa Glukhova, Snow Fellow
- Professor Clare Scott AM and Professor David Huang, Fellows of the Australian Academy of Science
- Professor Jane Visvader, Ruby Payne-Scott Medallist
- Professor Peter Gibbs, Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences
- Professor Marie-Liesse Asselin-Labat, NHMRC Research Excellence Award recipient
- Professor David Komander and his team won the Eureka Prize for Scientific Research.

Philanthropic and precinct partnerships are vital for building the capabilities and connections that drive innovation. Across our research centres, this momentum is translating into deeper collaborations and integrated programs that are reshaping research and accelerating clinical impact.

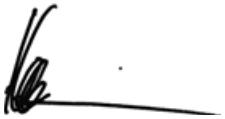
We navigated important transitions in our team. We farewelled Alistair Brown as chief financial officer, and welcomed Sally McCutchan into the role. Ian Wishart was appointed as our new chief operating officer.

This year also marked the retirement of Jane Hemstritch AO from the WEHI board. Jane has been a source of strategic clarity, purposeful leadership and a personal support to me, and has shaped WEHI through her vision and philanthropic generosity. It's been a pleasure to welcome John Dyson who has succeeded Jane as president.

It was an honour to welcome to WEHI the Victorian Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs Danny Pearson, who has responsibility for medical research innovation and technology, to meet our team and tour our labs.

I want to acknowledge and thank all our donors, bequestors and partners whose investments and contributions are central to shaping WEHI's future, and the many individuals and families who support WEHI and back discovery that will change lives for decades to come.

Thanks finally to the incredible team here at WEHI for your creativity, dedication and ambition in 2025.



Professor Ken Smith
Director, WEHI

Our impact

1200+
staff and students

60+
countries represented by staff and students

90+
laboratories and platforms

130+
consumers contributing to research

Image: *Galaxy* by Marina Leiwe
This image shows tumours growing in a mouse lung, with the colours indicating different gene deletions. Our researchers are aiming to find ways of making tumours more susceptible to attack by the immune system.
Marina's image was a finalist in our 2025 Art of Science competition.
View the full exhibition at wehi.edu.au/artofscience

466
new scientific publications

$137.5m
grants awarded in 2025

75,861
citations of WEHI research in 2025

496
active patents based on WEHI discoveries and inventions

271
new local and international research collaborations

12
new patents granted

23
countries involved in new WEHI research collaborations

8
new provisional patents filed

$10.44
raised from every $1 invested in fundraising

90
new commercial agreements

Exceptional science

Jan

Iron trial could transform pregnancy care worldwide

A landmark Australia–Malawi collaboration, co-led by WEHI, revealed iron infusions in the third trimester of pregnancy can significantly boost iron levels safely and more effectively than iron tablets, the current standard of care.

Globally around 37% of pregnant women are anaemic, with iron deficiency one of the leading causes. Anaemia in pregnancy elevates the risk of complications, including depression, stillbirth and developmental impacts for the baby.

The large trial of 590 pregnant women in Malawi found intravenous iron could be safely delivered in basic health centres in remote areas. It's hoped the data will help inform future WHO antenatal care guidelines.

L–R: Professor Sant-Rayn Pasricha, Professor Kamija Phiri (Training and Research Unit of Excellence, Malawi)

Jan

Ending relapse in chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

WEHI researchers revealed a key reason why many patients with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) relapse, despite receiving targeted treatments.

The study found these anti-cancer treatments can indirectly boost the amount of BAFF – a chemical messenger that helps healthy immune cells survive, but can also increase the survival of remaining cancer cells. The research suggests that blocking BAFF alongside targeted therapies could help stop patients from relapsing.

This approach could result in longer-lasting remission and improve long-term outcomes for people living with CLL. Each year around 2400 Australians are diagnosed with CLL, which is the most common form of leukaemia nationally.

L–R: Dr Tania Tan, Dr Mengxiao Luo, Dr Charis Teh, Professor Daniel Gray

Jan

Blood immune cells linked to Parkinson's progression

A study that analysed data from 500,000 people put researchers closer to identifying a blood biomarker for Parkinson's disease, paving the way for personalised treatments.

In the largest study of its kind, researchers from the Parkinson's Disease Research Centre found that changes in blood immune cell abundance could signal disease progression. The team found this link was primarily driven by the immune response in blood, not mitochondrial dysfunction, which has been long associated with Parkinson's disease.

Software the team developed to estimate cell counts from DNA sequencing has been made freely available, in the hope it will accelerate analysis for future studies beyond Parkinson's.

L–R: Professor Melanie Bahlo AM, Dr Fei Wang

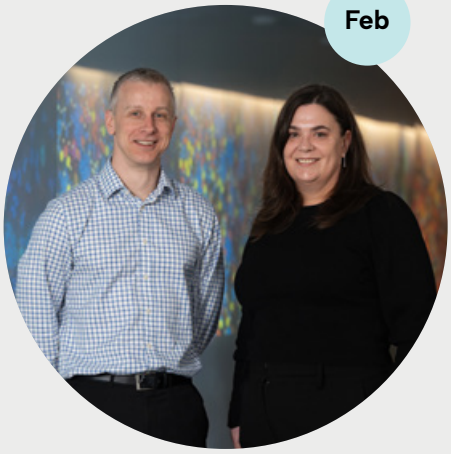
Fast-tracking drug discovery in Australia

Feb

The National Drug Discovery Centre (NDDC) celebrated five years of transforming the Australian biomedical research landscape.

The NDDC gives scientists across the country access to state-of-the-art screening technologies that can rapidly identify promising drug candidates and save years in early-stage development. Since launching in 2020, the centre has analysed over 10 million compounds for more than 30 projects targeting diseases from cancer to malaria.

Supported by the Medical Research Future Fund, the Victorian Government, WEHI and philanthropic partners, the NDDC creates a pipeline for new medicines and strengthens Australia's ability to translate research into life-changing therapies.



L–R: NDDC co-heads, Associate Professor Jeff Mitchell, Associate Professor Kym Lowes

Prestigious Snow Fellowship for cancer researcher

Mar

WEHI laboratory head Dr Alisa Glukhova was awarded the 2025 Snow Fellowship, the only recipient for the year.

The prestigious fellowship from the Snow Medical Research Foundation provides Dr Glukhova $8 million over eight years to tackle one of the biggest challenges in cancer treatment: finding new ways to stop the disease at its source.

By using advanced imaging techniques, Dr Glukhova's work looks at how cells communicate and what happens when those signals go wrong, leading to diseases like cancer. The sustained funding offers real hope to drive this complex research forward, to uncover more precise and effective treatments for different cancers, with fewer side effects.

Dr Alisa Glukhova

Decades-long Parkinson's mystery solved

Mar

Scientists delivered unprecedented insights into Parkinson's disease, revealing for the first time how a key protein works and is activated.

PINK1 is directly linked to Parkinson's disease. In healthy cells, it signals for damaged mitochondria – the cell's powerhouses – to be removed. When PINK1 is mutated, this process fails and damage builds up, leading to Parkinson's.

The WEHI-led study identified new ways to switch on PINK1, opening a long-sought pathway for new Parkinson's drugs. The groundbreaking discovery was recognised at the 2025 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, Australia's top science awards, with the WEHI team winning the UNSW Eureka Prize for Scientific Research.

L–R: Professor David Komander, Dr Nicholas Kirk, Dr Sylvie Callegari, Dr Alisa Glukhova

Apr

Landmark bowel cancer clinical trial launched

A major clinical trial was launched to transform treatment for bowel cancer, Australia's second deadliest cancer.

The WEHI-led trial is testing whether tumour organoids – tiny 3D models grown from a patient's own tissue – can predict which therapies will work best for newly diagnosed patients before treatment begins. This personalised approach aims to replace trial-and-error treatment practices, sparing patients from ineffective drugs, reducing side effects and improving survival rates.

The FORECAST-2 clinical trial builds on world-first research from WEHI and partner hospitals in Victoria, which validated organoid drug testing as an accurate tool in the treatment selection process.

L–R: Professor Peter Gibbs, Associate Professor Oliver Sieber, Dr Tao Tan

Apr

First long COVID treatment on the horizon

Researchers developed a new drug compound that can prevent long COVID symptoms in mice.

The world-first study found mice treated with the antiviral compound, developed by a multidisciplinary research team at WEHI, were protected from long-term brain and lung dysfunction – key symptoms of long COVID. More than 400,000 compounds were screened by the National Drug Discovery Centre, headquartered at WEHI, in the search for the novel drug.

The study also found the compound can treat acute COVID with better efficacy than Paxlovid – the leading treatment currently approved for COVID-19. It's hoped the significant findings could lead to clinical trials and a future oral treatment for long COVID.

L–R: Dr Marcel Doerflinger, Professor David Komander, Dr Shane Devine

May

Cancer research pioneers honoured as Academy Fellows

Professor Clare Scott AM and Professor David Huang were elected as Fellows of the Australian Academy of Science.

A clinician researcher focused on rare gynaecological cancers, Prof Scott has contributed to the development of the PARP inhibitor – a transformative therapy for ovarian cancer – and is collaborating on a vaccine to boost the number of 'super-responders' to this treatment.

Prof Huang has devoted his career to understanding how blood cancers arise and how to better treat them. His discoveries on the BCL-2 family of proteins were part of a body of research that ultimately led to venetoclax – a leukaemia treatment developed by companies Roche, Genentech and AbbVie.

L–R: Professor David Huang, Professor Clare Scott AM

Study uncovers small molecule that blocks cell death

May

A WEHI research team identified a molecule that can selectively block cell death, laying the groundwork for new drugs against neurodegenerative conditions like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

The team screened over 100,000 chemical compounds at the National Drug Discovery Centre. They found one compound that was effective at stopping cells from dying, by interfering with the cell death executioner protein, BAX.

While cell death is a vital biological process, the premature death of neurons causes neurodegenerative conditions. Turning off BAX could be sufficient to stop neurons from dying, with the findings paving the way for next-generation cell death inhibitor drugs.

L–R: Dr Mark van Delft, Associate Professor Kym Lowes, Professor Guillaume Lessene, Kaiming Li, Professor Grant Dewson

Game-changing blood test to diagnose coeliac disease

Jun

A world-first blood test that can detect coeliac disease, even when no gluten has been eaten, was co-developed by a WEHI-led research team.

The breakthrough could change the lives of millions who go undiagnosed worldwide, largely due to challenges in the current diagnostic process – often requiring weeks of eating gluten, despite it making patients sick. The new blood test was found to detect coeliac disease with up to 90% sensitivity and 97% specificity, even in patients following a strict gluten-free diet.

It's hoped the test could boost rates of diagnosis, identify patients at risk of severe reactions to gluten and detect silent coeliac disease in people who are asymptomatic.

L–R: Olivia Moscatelli, Professor Jason Tye-Din

Barcodes uncover our cellular origins

Jun

A new technology developed by WEHI scientists shed light on a biological mystery: how cells divide and grow into the structures that make up our bodies.

Like shuffling a deck of cards, but at the level of DNA, the sophisticated tech creates billions of individual barcodes that allow cells to be tracked – from after conception to when they grow to create tissues, organs and systems in our bodies.

LoxCode is already being used in labs worldwide, transforming how we understand brain development, immune cell behaviour and organ growth. It is helping scientists reveal when and why things go wrong, to improve prevention and treatment of diseases such as breast cancer and developmental disorders.

L–R: Professor Shalin Naik, Dr Tom Weber

Jul

Five decades shaping advances in global health

WEHI's parasitology program marked 50 years of discoveries and partnerships that have improved health for vulnerable communities worldwide.

Since the 1970s, researchers have uncovered critical insights into malaria parasites and other pathogens, informing diagnostics, treatments and elimination strategies worldwide. Central to this success has been deep engagement – a 'bench-to-community' model that co-develops solutions and builds local research capacity across the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Today, WEHI scientists are leveraging new technologies and global networks to tackle some of the biggest health challenges affecting billions worldwide, from anaemia to tuberculosis.

Researchers in WEHI's Infection and Global Health division

Jul

Drugs could prevent spread of HIV's 'cousin' virus

A study co-led by WEHI and the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity found existing drugs can suppress transmission of a virus that currently has no preventative treatments or cure.

Around 10 million people worldwide live with HTLV-1, a life-threatening virus that infects the same immune cells as HIV. The virus is endemic among many First Nations communities around the globe, including in central Australia.

The research team found that existing HIV drugs can suppress transmission of HTLV-1 in 'humanised' mice, providing hope for a desperately needed prevention strategy. The study also identified a new drug target that could slow the disease in those with established infections.

Dr Marcel Doerflinger

Jul

Study maps safer path for MCL-1 cancer therapies

Pivotal research on a critical protein that is an attractive target for cancer drug development revealed why some promising cancer treatments are causing serious side-effects, offering a roadmap for safer therapies.

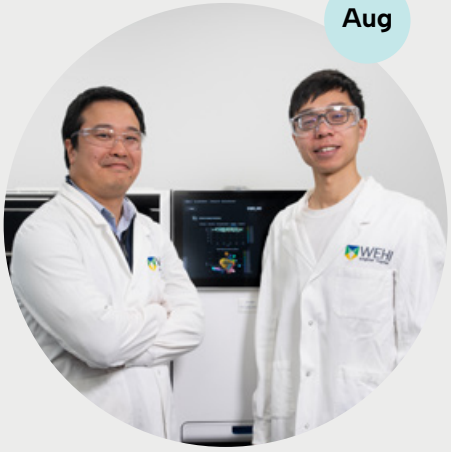
The WEHI-led discovery uncovered a critical new role for MCL-1, revealing that the protein not only prevents cell death, but provides cells with the energy they need to function. The study was the first to show MCL-1's long-speculated critical metabolic function in living organisms.

Drugs targeting MCL-1 have shown great promise as future cancer treatments, but have been shown to harm healthy tissues – issues this study could help resolve.

L–R: Professor Tim Thomas, Dr Kerstin Brinkmann, Professor Marco Herold (Olivia Newton John Cancer Research Institute), Professor Anne Voss, Professor Andreas Strasser

Bone marrow map reveals myeloma complexity

Aug



Researchers created the first detailed molecular map of human bone marrow, imaging more than 5000 genes within individual cells. The high-resolution map has revealed surprising insights that challenge established theories about how an incurable blood cancer grows and spreads.

Using cutting-edge single-cell and spatial technologies at WEHI, the study uncovered hidden complexity in multiple myeloma, showing how cancer and immune cells interact to drive disease progression.

The research paves the way for the development of better treatments tailored to individual patients, providing a blueprint for new therapies that target the bone marrow environment, not just cancer cells.

L–R: Dr Jeremy Er, Dr Raymond Yip

Breakthrough could transform fight against malaria

Aug

WEHI researchers visualised a key protein complex in malaria parasites for the first time, uncovering a new vaccine target that could help stop the disease from spreading. The study used cutting-edge cryo-electron microscopy to capture the first detailed structure of the protein complex, essential for malaria parasite fertilisation.

Inside the mosquito, the malaria parasite is at its weakest. The promising discovery found that a new mRNA vaccine could induce antibodies targeting the protein complex, stopping the parasite from reproducing in mosquitoes, cutting transmission by up to 99.7%.

Malaria remains one of the deadliest infectious diseases, threatening billions of people globally.

L–R: Jill Chmielewski, Frankie Lyons

Pioneering brain cancer clinical trial platform

Aug

A collaborative team achieved a global first, using an innovative clinical trial platform to learn how a new drug suppresses tumour activity in low-grade gliomas (LGG).

The study was the first conducted through the pioneering Brain Perioperative platform, or BrainPOP, led by The Brain Cancer Centre and funded by the Victorian Government.

Researchers from WEHI, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre were able to observe the drug's effect on LGG tumour samples both before and after treatment. The landmark proof-of-principle study showed BrainPOP is a safe and effective platform for accelerating understanding of new treatments and their real-world impact in the brain.

L–R: Professor Kate Drummond (RMH), Dr Jim Whittle, Dr Saskia Freytag, Dr Sarah Best

Sep

Unlocking the immune system's instruction manual

A WEHI-led team uncovered how a key type of immune cell adapts its behaviour to different infections, offering new tools to boost vaccine effectiveness and develop targeted therapies for immune conditions and cancer.

T follicular helper (Tfh) cells are orchestrators of our immune response. The study revealed how Tfh cells tailor their instructions to the immune system depending on the pathogen they encounter, guiding antibody production and long-term immunity. The findings open the door to designing better vaccines that fine-tune Tfh responses.

The study integrated infection models established with Monash University, and insights from human tissue provided by the University of Melbourne.

L–R: Associate Professor Joanna Groom, Dr Lennard Dalit, Dr Chin Wee Tan

Sep

$6m to accelerate Parkinson's and leukaemia research

The establishment of two new Centres of Research Excellence, backed by the NHMRC, will bring together leading Australian researchers to fast-track new treatments for Parkinson's disease and acute myeloid leukaemia (AML).

Professor Grant Dewson is co-leading a team to advance precision medicine and biomarker discovery for Parkinson's disease, aiming to enable earlier diagnosis and development of precision treatments that slow disease progression before irreversible brain cell loss occurs.

Professor Andrew Wei's team seeks to improve outcomes for high-risk AML by developing ultra-sensitive disease monitoring tools.

L–R: Professor Grant Dewson, Professor Andrew Wei

Oct

Testing for ctDNA could change colon cancer care

An international study co-led by WEHI and the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, found a simple blood test could change how doctors decide which patients with colon cancer need chemotherapy and which patients can be safely spared.

The DYNAMIC-III clinical trial of 1000 patients found testing for tiny fragments of cancer DNA in the bloodstream, known as circulating tumour DNA (ctDNA), can reveal if cancer is present after surgery.

Currently, most people with stage 3 colon cancer receive chemotherapy. In the study, stage 3 patients without detectable ctDNA were classified as low risk and treatment was tailored accordingly, highlighting ctDNA's potential to reduce unnecessary treatment.

L–R: Professor Peter Gibbs, Professor Jeanne Tie

New 3D imaging reveals how breast cancers spread

Nov

A study led by WEHI and the Olivia Newton John Cancer Research Institute found a new way to use 3D imaging to track heterogeneous breast cancer cells as they spread to other organs.

Heterogeneous cancers are made up of various types of cells that can behave differently as the disease spreads, making them harder to treat. By tagging cancer cells with different fluorescent colours and using light sheet microscopy, researchers created detailed 3D images showing how breast cancers spread in mouse lung tissue.

These provided new insights into metastatic breast cancer, including that tumours containing multiple cancer cell types grow closer to blood vessels – behaviour that may help them survive and spread.

L–R: Dr Verena Wimmer, Professor Kelly Rogers OAM, Dr Sabrina Lewis, Dr Lachlan Whitehead

Blood test may help tailor ovarian cancer therapy

Nov

A major clinical trial showed that a new blood test may help identify which women with ovarian cancer are most likely to benefit from PARP inhibitor therapy – a treatment that blocks cancer cells from repairing their own damaged DNA.

The four-year SOLACE2 Phase II trial involved 15 Australian hospitals and was co-led by WEHI, the University of Sydney and RMIT University. Researchers evaluated an immune-based blood test during the trial and showed it may outperform current methods for predicting who will best respond to PARP inhibitor therapy.

The findings pave the way for better targeting this leading treatment for the 300,000 women diagnosed with ovarian cancer globally each year.

L–R: Professor Clare Scott AM, Associate Professor Matthew Wakefield, Dr Cassandra Vandenberg

$17m to supercharge immune ‘spy’ cells against cancer

Nov

A plan to supercharge immune cell ‘spies’ to better seek out and kill cancer cells received a $17 million funding boost from the Australian Government.

The WEHI-led project focuses on DC1, a dendritic cell that plays a pivotal role in intelligence-gathering for our immune system and was first discovered at WEHI in 1992.

Funded by the Medical Research Future Fund’s Frontier Health and Medical Research initiative, the project hopes to revolutionise treatment for bowel and other solid cancers. The exciting collaboration draws on the expertise of researchers and clinicians at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Mater Research and the University of Queensland, and Monash University.

L–R: Professor Shalin Naik, Professor Stephen Nutt, Professor Jeanne Tie, Dr Shengbo Zhang, Dr Cindy Audiger

The people powering our research

High-quality research is the result of collective effort and grant funding rarely covers the true costs involved. Our impact depends on our wide and diverse team who deliver the critical operational and technical services that ensure discovery can flourish. Meet some of the people whose essential contributions power our success.

Marika Bjorasen Clinical Discovery and Translation Manager

My team supports researchers working in human-based and clinical research, helping to bridge the gap between lab discoveries and patient care. We help researchers access blood and tissue samples for research, connect them with consumers (a person impacted by a disease or their loved ones) and support them with clinical database building and biostatistics. We build and manage clinical partnerships, supporting projects from early modelling using healthy human control samples and consumer engagement, through to database creation and clinical translation.

Clinical research is highly regulated and complex – but essential if we want to enable scientific discoveries to benefit the community and clinical care. Our central support structure is a connecting hub for resources, training and hands-on support, ensuring researchers can focus on delivering high-quality and impactful research.

Onker Singh Minor Works Coordinator

I coordinate and manage building, maintenance and upgrade works across WEHI to ensure facilities and critical infrastructure continue to support safe, compliant and efficient medical research operations. This work minimises downtime and ensures research activities can continue without interruption, which is vital to the institute's future research outcomes.

One of the most interesting aspects of my role is delivering building works within active research environments. This requires careful planning and close coordination to manage risks, essential services and compliance requirements, while maintaining day-to-day operations. I find great satisfaction in knowing that the work I do directly supports important medical research and contributes to an organisation that makes a real difference to people's lives.

Meg Taylor Scientific Education Program Leader

The Scientific Education office is responsible for supporting about 250 students, from high school to doctoral level, through various programs designed to aid their scientific journey and wellbeing.

My role is incredibly diverse and collaborative. It encompasses designing and teaching honours and masters courses, providing academic support to PhD candidates, staying current with scientific discoveries and contributing to a variety of committees.

I love the passion of our students and the investment WEHI makes into supporting them. My position is incredibly rewarding as every single day, together with my colleagues, I can see how we make a real difference in students' lives and contribute to the future of scientific research.

Emily Sommerfield Animal Technician

In my role I provide compassionate, high-quality care for our 'little heroes'. I ensure the welfare and ethical treatment of laboratory mice, while supporting researchers in meeting their scientific goals.

My position is integral, as we work closely with the Animal Ethics Committee to ensure all wellbeing standards for the animals are met. We also collaborate with researchers to uphold every regulatory framework and ethical guideline governing animal care and research.

I enjoy supporting different studies, and contributing to medical research that leads to life-changing discoveries is incredibly rewarding. Seeing the advances in medical knowledge at WEHI is the most satisfying part of my work.

Seth Jones Entrepreneurship Lead

I help turn WEHI's research into real-world impact by coordinating the building blocks, partnerships and teamwork needed to grow new ventures and support entrepreneurship.

Impact starts with our scientific and professional staff, and translating discoveries is only possible when many people work together. I strengthen that effort by building the policies, systems and relationships that enable researchers and external partners to move ideas from discovery into clinical, commercial and community benefit.

The greatest satisfaction comes from seeing shared efforts turn into tangible outcomes. Structuring the IonOpticks deal or helping establish ventures such as Proxima Bio, Research Code, Nelcanen and Togglelux shows just how powerful WEHI's combined strengths can be.

Myha Huynh Research Assistant, Antibody Facility

I generate, culture and maintain various cell lines to produce high-quality antibodies that support a range of biomedical research applications. Antibodies are fundamental tools allowing scientists to probe cellular pathways, block specific molecular interactions or support biological reactions. I ensure researchers have the precise reagents they need to generate reliable data and drive discoveries. This contribution underpins experiments across WEHI, making my work essential to advancing scientific knowledge.

Creating antibodies that are entirely novel and do not exist anywhere else in the world is satisfying, especially as these custom tools often begin as a unique request from a WEHI researcher and ultimately advance global health research. Knowing that something developed in our lab can contribute to discoveries internationally is incredibly rewarding.

Partnerships driving discovery

Our collaborative research centres deliver on WEHI's ongoing commitment to bringing together leading minds to drive life-changing discoveries. They unite scientific and clinical experts, diverse skills and advanced technologies in long-term, multidisciplinary programs that address major health challenges.

Parkinson's Disease Research Centre

The centre made great strides in 2025, with researchers awarded the prestigious Eureka Prize for Scientific Research for a discovery revealing how the key Parkinson's-linked protein PINK1 works.

Other research achievements included: an international collaboration to find a blood-based Parkinson's biomarker, funded by a $1.8 million grant from The Michael J. Fox Foundation; a discovery about the 'killer protein' BAX that paves the way for the development of next-generation neuroprotective drugs; and publishing the first consumer-led research paper on how people experience a Parkinson's diagnosis.

The centre received generous philanthropic support, including from the Bodhi Education Foundation, who expanded their partnership with Parkinson's research at WEHI, and the Parkinson's Research Foundation.

As projects moved from fundamental science to the drug discovery pipeline, the team's progress and multidisciplinary approach were recognised through a $3 million NHMRC grant, establishing the Centre of Research Excellence for Parkinson's Disease: Advancing Precision Medicine.

As a founding member of the National Parkinson's Alliance, the centre has been pivotal to the development of the first National Parkinson's Action Plan, funded by the Australian Government and launching in 2026.

Image: The Centre of Research Excellence team

Snow Centre for Immune Health

A new director, clinician-scientist Associate Professor Jason Tye-Din, joined the Snow Centre, bringing extensive expertise in translational research to advance the centre's program. The inaugural Annual Conference highlighted progress and reinforced the centre's commitment to integrating patient voices, clinical insights and industry pathways into project design and delivery.

Key milestones included the launch of the Snow Centre Clinical Research Unit, which enrolled its first patients in a landmark study aimed at accelerating the translation of immune disease discoveries into clinical practice.

The team built critical infrastructure, in partnership with BioGrid Australia and the Aridhia Digital Research Environment, to enable secure integration of research and clinical data. A new collaboration with Northeastern University (US) complements local partnerships with WEHI and the Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH). The centre is preparing to launch its Consumer Program to embed patient perspectives in research and has welcomed its first PhD students, reflecting an investment in future leaders and innovation in immune health.

Co-led by WEHI and the RMH, this pioneering work is possible thanks to a generous 10-year philanthropic partnership with the Snow Medical Research Foundation.

Image: The inaugural Snow Centre for Immune Health Annual Conference

The Brain Cancer Centre

Founded by Carrie's Beanies 4 Brain Cancer and in partnership with WEHI, The Brain Cancer Centre brings together experts from 17 collaborative partners across Australia.

This year saw exciting breakthroughs like BrainPOP, a world-first clinical trial platform that allows researchers to test new therapies directly in the brain – something never done before due to the complexity of neurosurgery.

The BCC secured Medical Research Future Fund support for a new clinical trial that will investigate an accelerated, less burdensome treatment to improve quality of life for people with brain cancer. The team also received a $2.5 million grant from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation to launch the BRAIINSTORM Program – a national initiative that will fast-track personalised treatments for high-grade gliomas, the most aggressive brain cancers in children and adults.

Image: The Brain Cancer Centre CEO Sam McGuane (centre) with co-heads of Research Strategy Dr Jim Whittle and Professor Misty Jenkins AO

Hemstritch Centre of Excellence for Pancreatic Cancer Research

Established through a generous gift from former WEHI president Jane Hemstritch AO, the Hemstritch Centre of Excellence for Pancreatic Cancer Research completed its first year with strong impact.

The centre delivered foundational initiatives, launching the PURPLE Translational Platform that connects patients with appropriate clinical trials. Researchers also secured funding to advance early detection research and to commence a biomarker-guided clinical trial aimed at improving patient treatment selection.

Uniting clinicians and scientists around a shared commitment to improving pancreatic cancer outcomes, the centre's 10-year partnership is a collaborative model. The centre supports more than 57 global partnerships, including over 45 clinical collaborations across Australia. This patient-centred approach strengthens understanding of disease biology, enabling earlier diagnosis and accelerating the development of more effective, personalised therapies.

L–R: Research leaders Dr Belinda Lee and Associate Professor Tracy Putoczki

Colonial Foundation Diagnostics Centre

Backed by a $21 million commitment from the Colonial Foundation, the centre is breaking new ground to shorten the often long journey to diagnosis for patients with immune and inflammatory diseases.

Combining WEHI's spatial biology platforms and bioinformatics expertise with the Royal Melbourne Hospital's clinical capabilities and diagnostic services, the centre aims to discover new disease biomarkers and translate them into state-of-the-art diagnostic tests, to deliver tailored treatments sooner.

In 2025 the centre formed a Research Translation Advisory Committee of national and international experts to provide independent oversight.

The centre also initiated pilot projects in areas of clinical need that will benefit from novel spatial omics-based methods, including inflammatory bowel disease, systemic lupus erythematosus, acute myeloid leukaemia and kidney transplantation.

L–R: Centre leaders Dr Michael Christie and Associate Professor Edwin Hawkins

Outstanding supporters

Our supporters play an essential role in powering medical breakthroughs that lead to better health outcomes for the entire community.

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters, including those profiled here. A list of all donors, supporters, funders and bequestors of $10,000 or more is on pages 30–31.

Philanthropy backs autoimmune discoveries

Award-winning funds management firm Munro Partners has a partnership with Hearts and Minds Investments (HM1), providing pro bono investment recommendations that enable HM1 to donate to medical research.

Motivated to advance world-leading science, they have chosen to support WEHI's Dr Hamish King, whose team uses advanced technologies to uncover the genetic causes of autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis.

Thanks to the philanthropic contributions of Munro Partners and HM1, the King Lab is driving vital research to advance treatment options and create better diagnostic tools for a wide range of autoimmune conditions.

The King Lab L–R: Dr Viacheslav Kriachkov, Annelise Quig, Dr Hamish King, Cindy Shen, Davide Vespasiani, Gabrielle White, Jeralyn Wen Hui Ching

Legacy gift invests in future science

This year, WEHI was deeply honoured to be the beneficiary of the estates of Helen and Ron Diamond.

Helen and Ron were active members of their local Rockhampton community and admired the late Walter Hall – a major benefactor to their region and the philanthropist whose estate, through his wife Eliza, later founded the trust that established WEHI.

That respect for his legacy led them to contact the institute, becoming generous and passionate supporters.

Ron and Helen's legacy will help support the next generation of research at WEHI.

Image: Ron and Helen Diamond

Accelerating breast cancer research

Rising Supercars driver Zach Bates helped raise funds for WEHI's breast cancer research in memory of his mother, respected media personality Alison Drower, who sadly passed away just days before his Bathurst 1000 debut.

Coming from a renowned motorsport family, Zach has long credited his mother's influence and support throughout his career, often reflecting on the profound impact she had on him.

Donations made in her honour are fuelling critical research at WEHI, helping advance discoveries that could improve health outcomes.

Image: Zach Bates and his mother, Alison Drower

WEHI scientist Professor Marie-Liesse Asselin-Labat (third from right) with the WEHI Ventures team L–R: Dr Leigh Coultas, Dr Nicholas Liau, Dr Anne-Laure Puaux, Dr Lee Booty, Dr Amanda Woon, Dr Heshan Peiris

Entrepreneurship and commercialisation

Commercialisation is a crucial step to ensure that medical breakthroughs made in our labs reach patients. WEHI's entrepreneurial culture fast-tracks discoveries into successful ventures, turning brilliant science into therapies, drugs and devices that improve lives.

We reinvest income from successful projects back into the research engine to create sustainable long-term impact, and in 2025 continued to accelerate innovation with the greatest potential to benefit our communities.

Innovation to impact

Our WEHI Ventures team marked its two-year milestone in 2025 with strong results, supported by a fully established team that brings together world-class science and commercialisation expertise. Its $66 million investment fund, 66ten – the largest internal seed fund in an Australian medical research institute – exceeded projections and is on track to reach its goal to deploy the full amount by 2033, turning promising discoveries into globally significant health impact.

WEHI Ventures CEO Anne-Laure Puaux was recognised with the 2025 BioMelbourne Network Emerging Leadership Award and contributed to key discussions at biotech conferences in Singapore and Belgium.

Further cultivating innovation, WEHI's InnoVision program nurtured five teams of budding entrepreneurs to develop the skills needed to translate research ideas into commercial solutions.

66ten spins success

With a growing pipeline of pre-seed investments and five companies in its portfolio, 66ten made three key investments in 2025.

Two new spinouts were established: Nelcanen – developing autoimmune and fibrotic disease therapeutics; and Togglelux – creating therapeutics to activate a patient's own genes to treat a rare disorder, Prader-Willi syndrome. Togglelux leverages the partnerships and advanced technologies of the National Drug Discovery Centre (headquartered at WEHI), MedChem Australia and the Ian Holmes Imaging Centre at Bio21.

The fund also backed its first diagnostic project, TrueIron – a concept developing a point-of-care test for iron deficiency, a major unmet need.

Incubating the future

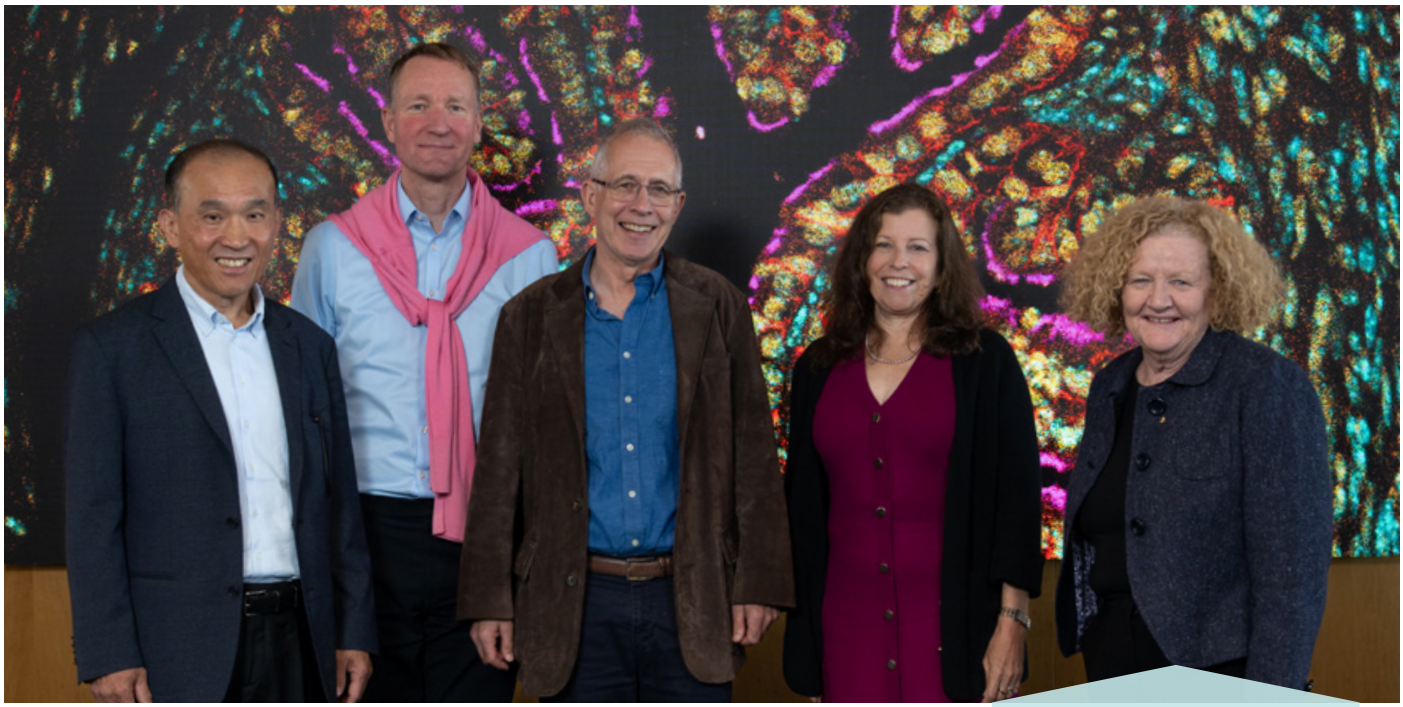
In 2025, Jumar Bioincubator achieved financial breakeven and 80% utilisation. Jumar now hosts 40 startups, up from 29 in 2024 – demonstrating the growing national demand for dedicated biotech incubation space and the momentum building across our life science sector. Over 180 talented individuals now reside at Jumar.

Engagement between Jumar residents and WEHI's research platforms continues to grow, enhancing access to advanced technologies and strengthening industry collaboration.

Jumar Bioincubator is Australia's first and only biotech incubator co-located with a leading biopharmaceutical company in a world-class biomedical precinct. Its achievements reflect the strength of Jumar's collaborative model, established by founding partners WEHI, the University of Melbourne and CSL, and highlight the value of coordinated support to accelerate discoveries towards real world therapies.

Purpose, progress and people

Delivering world-class research requires strong foundations. This year we progressed the strategies, infrastructure and technologies that allow discovery to thrive, and strengthened our culture, sustainability and governance so our science benefits the community.



Renowned leaders and inaugural members of WEHI's new Independent Scientific Advisory Board L–R: Mr Lim Chuan Poh, Professor Jan Löwe, Professor Sir Jim Smith, Professor Donna Farber, Professor Margaret Sheil

Enabling exceptional science

Bringing together internationally renowned leaders, we established the Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). This pivotal new body comprised of Australian and international experts will provide forward-looking guidance on strategy, translation and partnerships and help shape our future direction.

In parallel, the WEHI Science Strategy Group, which draws on leaders from across the institute, commenced and began prioritising high-impact initiatives. Together these two bodies position WEHI to respond faster and more effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges, backed by expert guidance.

A new strategic plan was developed following consultation with staff across the institute and incorporating insights from the ISAB.

We continued to deliver on key enabling strategies. Our Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AI/ML) Strategy is guiding the scaled adoption of capability and infrastructure to support sustainable, AI-driven discovery. The 2021–31 Technology Strategy is shaping platform governance and a financial model that sustains technology platforms and enables innovation, investment and a dynamic, collaborative culture.

This year we appointed a Head of Technology Strategy and Governance, Professor Aaron Jex, and invested over $3m in major new equipment purchases for technology platforms and divisions, including an Australian-first climate chamber to enable research into the health impacts of global warming. The valued support of Technology Circle donors has helped provide these cutting-edge technologies to researchers.

Major competitive funding was received across the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), including:

- $23 million in NHMRC Investigator Grants, supporting 14 of our leading scientists with salary and project support. Our success rate of 33% was well above the national 13% rate.
- $6 million for two NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence that will unite leading Australian researchers to address two major health challenges: Parkinson's disease and acute myeloid leukaemia.
- $17 million from the MRFF Frontier Health and Medical Research initiative to supercharge dendritic cells against solid tumours and advance these to clinical trials.

In 2025 we made further progress on our organisation-wide transformation program, which will ensure a sustainable, resilient, fit-for-future institute that remains responsive to emerging health challenges.

Farewell to Jane Hemstritch AO

Jane Hemstritch AO retired from the WEHI Board in October, concluding 12 years of exceptional leadership, effective governance and visionary philanthropy.

Under Jane's guidance, which included six years as president, the institute achieved major successes, including the establishment of The Brain Cancer Centre (2021), Parkinson's Disease Research Centre (2022) and Snow Centre for Immune Health (2023).

She championed translation and entrepreneurship through WEHI Ventures and the 66ten investment fund (2023), supported the launch of the Jumar Bioincubator (2023), and advanced the 2021–31 Technology Strategy with investment in platforms and technologies such as spatial omics, AI and machine learning.

For many years Jane has been a passionate and dedicated supporter of WEHI's pancreatic cancer research program, culminating in 2024 with her exceptional $8 million, 10-year investment that established the Hemstritch Centre of Excellence for Pancreatic Cancer Research. The centre honours the memory of her late husband Philip Hemstritch and father-in-law Reginald Hemstritch, who both died from the disease.

We marked Jane's retirement with a celebration in the Davis Auditorium, reflecting on her enduring contribution to WEHI that will continue to shape the institute for years to come.

"Being part of the WEHI Consumer Program and working closely with researchers allows me to provide insights that help guide science from bench to bedside and support their success in securing grants. It makes me feel valued and in a partnership with WEHI."

– **George Kiossoglou, WEHI consumer**

Consumers supporting research

Consumer advocates provide meaningful insights into research relevance, community need and lived experience of disease. Our Consumer Program is the largest of its kind in Australian fundamental medical research and continues to drive research excellence and community engagement across the institute.

Integrating strong consumer contributions into grant applications strengthened research quality during 2025. Consumer engagement broadened across divisions and centres, with new partnership models developed for The Brain Cancer Centre, Parkinson's Disease Research Centre and the Snow Centre for Immune Health.

Building trust in science

We welcomed Professor Brett Sutton AO, Director of CSIRO's Health and Biosecurity Research Unit and former Victorian Chief Health Officer, for a special seminar on the importance of maintaining and building trust in research.

Prof Sutton (pictured with WEHI director Professor Ken Smith) outlined the new Australian Coalition for Trust in Science and Health – a collaborative effort to raise science literacy, foster public trust and guard against misinformation – and reinforced the critical role of scientists as advocates and communicators.

More than 300 precinct staff and students joined the presentation, followed by an engaging panel discussion featuring Prof Sutton, Dr Amanda Caples (Victoria's Lead Scientist), Professor Jodie McVernon AO (Director of Doherty Epidemiology) and Emeritus Professor David Vaux AO, which explored practical approaches to tackling misinformation and sustaining trust in research.

WEHI DeadlyScience Pathways Program 2025 students on a lab tour

Impact with integrity

We strengthened our partnership with leading not-for-profit DeadlyScience and welcomed First Nations students from regional and remote schools to explore the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct through the WEHI DeadlyScience Pathways Program. Students gained hands-on experience in our labs and learned about future STEM career opportunities.

Our ongoing support for CareerTrackers, which helps pre-professional First Nations university students to participate in paid internships, enabled six students to take part in 2025. WEHI's Dr Rhea Longley and intern Macie Lamont were also recognised with the CareerTrackers 2025 Project Excellence Award.

To provide peer connection and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students we established the First Nations Staff and Students Network. Its Advisory Group, drawn from the network, represents interests and views on First Nations matters and channels these into advice and advocacy.

Leaders and staff completed a three-phase Cultural Learning Program facilitated by local First Nations consulting group, Weenthunga, that deepened cultural awareness and strengthened cultural safety across the institute. Staff also took part in a seminar and panel discussion for National Reconciliation Week on equitable access to healthcare and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research co-design.

In December 2025, WEHI transitioned to 100% renewable electricity through the voluntary purchase and surrender of Large-Scale Generation Certificates. This milestone will reduce WEHI's Scope 2 emissions by more than 85% and is supported by coordinated sustainability initiatives underway across our campuses.

We advanced the groundwork to electrify operations and improve energy efficiency, supported by careful risk management, planning and long-term investment to ensure research integrity and safety are maintained. Emissions are now monitored via a centralised data collection system, improving accuracy and consistency and strengthening decision-making as initiatives progress.

WEHI also marked World Environment Day for the fifth year with a Director's Seminar delivered by Professor Ollie Jay, Director of the Heat and Health Research Centre at the University of Sydney, highlighting the intersection of climate, health and medical research.

100%

of student survey respondents were inspired to pursue STEM

Building STEM pathways for First Nations students

The 2025 WEHI DeadlyScience Pathways Program brought 29 students from seven schools to WEHI for an immersive three-day experience. The program expanded its reach, with students from the Northern Territory participating for the first time, alongside those from New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

The experience proved transformative: every student survey respondent said they were inspired to pursue STEM and 81% indicated a greater awareness of study supports.

Culturally significant activities and interactive lab tours across the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct were highlights of the program, which was supported by WEHI and a $100,000 Toyota Community Trust grant.

A great place to work and study

Backing our emerging leaders, the Postdoctoral Association distributed WEHI funding to 42 postdocs to support conference and workshop attendance. The inaugural Catherine McLean Travel Grant, created in memory of a beloved WEHI division co-ordinator of over 20 years, was awarded to postdoctoral researchers Dr Rachel Joyce and Dr Georgia Atkin-Smith. The grant, established through a generous gift from Catherine's family, will support postdoctoral researchers to present their work at international conferences.

WE-Pride – our network of LGBTIQA+ staff, students and allies – continued to offer support, share information and advise on inclusive policies, while celebrating diversity across the institute and collaborating with peers in the Parkville precinct.

The launch of Bystander Training for all staff strengthened our team's capability to address uncomfortable behaviour at work. The program equips staff and students with practical tools to act in the moment on bias, harassment and microaggressions, helping safeguard trust and morale.

International Women's Day featured an address from Dr Lorien Parker (Dr Loz), a neurodivergent scientist, educator and STEM communicator, who shared her experiences as a woman in STEM and her transition from lab-based research to founding her own business providing accessible science learning experiences.

Alumni engagement deepened throughout 2025 with international events in Hong Kong, Nanjing and San Francisco, strengthening long-standing relationships through targeted, personalised connection. At Parkville, the Beyond the Bench – WEHI Alumni Reflect on 110 Years of Discovery event brought alumni together to reflect on WEHI's legacy and impact. The event introduced an alumni giving appeal for Bright Futures, which supports PhD, masters and honours students.

Opening our doors for Student Open Day, 198 prospective honours, masters and PhD students were welcomed by around 100 staff and students. Attendees met researchers, toured our labs and gained a first-hand experience of student life at WEHI.

We invited the community to share in our work through:

- 23 group tours for supporters and community
- Guiding over 800 visitors through our working labs
- Major annual celebratory events, including our Art of Science donor preview, Celebrating Supporters and the WEHI Society festive lunch

The alumni program supported the Infection and Global Health division to mark 50 years of parasitology at WEHI with a symposium recognising the people and discoveries that shaped the discipline

The Jenny Tatchell Awards for Blue Sky Research provide two $40,000 prizes to back bold, curiosity-driven ideas from our postdoctoral community. Aided by a generous gift from Jenny Tatchell, matched by WEHI, the awards encourage original thinking that could lead to exciting outcomes.

Two award-winning teams will lead distinct projects: uncovering drug resistance through advanced gene-editing screens, and engineering hybrid proteins to decode the signals that guide cell behaviour. We're deeply grateful to Jenny for her generosity and ongoing commitment to innovative science.

WEHI Voice culture survey

Our team engaged strongly with our annual survey, with over 780 participants taking part; a 60% response rate. Staff feedback continues to guide how we work, collaborate and grow together at WEHI. Notable highlights:

Peer relationships
Staff continue to feel supported by colleagues, with WEHI placing in the top 25% of our industry benchmark for this measure. Trust, inclusion and collaboration remain strong across teams.

Autonomy
Most staff feel empowered to manage their workload and value the flexibility available to them, particularly those managing carer/family responsibilities and health.

Goal setting
Our staff feel confident in their sense of purpose and understand the value of their work, as well as the expectations associated with their roles.

Pride was on full display at WEHI's eighth Midsumma Pride March in St Kilda

Celebrating our graduating students

Students are highly valued members of research groups at WEHI and receive world-class training in medical research and broader skills equipping them for a range of careers. We are proud that many go on to become leaders of our sector. Congratulations to the following students who successfully completed their studies at WEHI during 2025.

Doctor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne

Dr Balasubramanian Adithya
Targeting immune resistance mechanisms to enhance anti-tumour immunity in non-small cell lung cancer
Professor Marie-Liesse Asselin-Labat, Professor Marnie Blewitt, Professor Thomas John

Dr Jack Alexandrovics
The catalytic mechanism of USP16 is driven by its Znf-UBP domain
Professor David Komander, Dr Stephin Vervoort

Dr Grace Bidgood
Understanding SOCS1 regulation of cytokine signalling
Professor Sandra Nicholson, Dr Karen Doggett, Dr Colin Hockings

Dr Dale Calleja
Inhibiting SARS-CoV-2 PLpro
Professor David Komander, Professor Guillaume Lessene

Dr Samantha Chan
Untangling genetic and extrinsic influences on T cell dysregulation: insights from inborn errors of NFKB1 and CMV infection
Dr Vanessa Bryant, Dr Lauren Howson, Professor Jo Douglass

Dr Tianwei Chen
Understanding the role of mutant p53 in lung cancer using novel genetically engineered mouse models
Professor Gemma Kelly, Professor Andreas Strasser, Professor Kate Sutherland

Dr Jinming Cheng
Exploring mammary gland developmental stages and breast cancer heterogeneity using single-cell technologies
Professor Gordon Smyth, Dr Yunshun Chen

Dr Shene Chiou
Necroptosis signalling in mouse models of diseases
Professor James Murphy, Dr Andre Samson, Associate Professor Edwin Hawkins

Dr Amali Cooray
Applying advanced technologies to identify genetic drivers of DNMT3A mutant haematological malignancies
Professor Marco Herold, Professor Matthew Ritchie, Dr Andrew Kueh

Dr Jaison D Sa
Characterisation of nanobodies and stabilised variants to progress antibody-based interventions and sero-diagnostic development for *Plasmodium* adhesins
Professor Wai-Hong Tham, Dr Phillip Pymm

Dr Lennard Dalit
Divergent cytokine and transcriptional signatures control functional T follicular helper cell heterogeneity
Associate Professor Joanna Groom, Professor Stephen Nutt

Dr Kaloni Deeksha
Understanding the regulation of the BH3-only proteins PUMA and BIM by TRP53 dependent and TRP53 independent processes to enhance the efficacy of BH3-mimetic drugs and other anti-cancer agents in cancer therapy
Professor Gemma Kelly, Professor Andreas Strasser, Dr Sarah Diepstraten

Dr Rezazadehshojaee Farzanehsadat
Cell death signaling and BET protein function in a cytokine storm syndrome model
Professor James Vince, Dr Maryam Rashidi

Bachelor of Science graduate Dylan Silke received the 2025 Colman Speed Award, recognising his achievements as WEHI's top honours student.

Dr Megan Iminitoff
Investigating the epigenetic regulator SMCHD1 as a potential therapeutic target for the treatment of Prader-Willi syndrome and Schaaf-Yang syndrome
Professor Marnie Blewitt, Professor James Murphy

Dr Eunjung In
Understanding biology and improving treatments for colorectal cancer patients
Associate Professor Oliver Sieber, Dr Anuratha Sakthianandeswaren

Dr Serena Kane
Exploring regulation of lineage-specific genes in mammary epithelial cells
Professor Jane Visvader, Professor Geoffrey Lindeman, Dr Michael Milevskiy

Dr Alex Lam
Drug target deconvolution in the parasitic protist *Giardia duodenalis*
Professor Aaron Jex, Dr Samatha Emery-Corbin

Dr Dulcie Lautu
Surveillance of molecular markers of antimalarial drug resistance in *Plasmodium falciparum* in Papua New Guinea from 2005 to 2020
Professor Alyssa Barry, Professor Leanne Robinson

Dr Belinda Lee
A multi-omics approach to blood-based biomarker discovery in pancreatic cancer with a focus on biomarkers for early disease detection
Professor Peter Gibbs, Associate Professor Tracy Putoczki

Dr Samuel Lee
Computational approaches for modelling heterogeneity across complex biological phenotypes
Professor Tony Papenfuss, Dr Matthew Faria, Professor Delphine Merino, Professor Melissa Davis

Dr Melody Pui Yee Leong
Effects of loss of PHF6 in a mouse model of the intellectual disability disorder Börjeson-Forssman-Lehmann syndrome (BFLS)
Professor Anne Voss, Professor Anthony Hannan

Dr Leesa Lertsumitkul
Developing novel-targeted CAR T cell therapies for high-grade gliomas
Professor Misty Jenkins, Dr Ryan Cross

Dr Kaiming Li
Small-molecule modulation of BAK- and BAX-driven apoptosis
Professor Grant Dewson, Dr Mark van Delft, Professor Guillaume Lessene

Dr Paula Loveland
Novel blood biomarkers of dementia with Lewy bodies; Evaluation of neurodegeneration biomarkers and inflammatory profiles in a longitudinal cohort of dementia with Lewy bodies
Professor Rosemary Watson, Associate Professor Nawaf Yassi

Dr Mengxiao Luo
The impact of targeting BCL-2 family proteins on cell competition in leukemia
Professor Daniel Gray, Dr Charis Teh

Dr Jiyi Pang
Programmed cell death licensed by iNOS: dissecting its role in inflammatory bowel disease and SARS-CoV-2 pathogenesis
Professor James Vince, Professor Sandra Nicholson

Dr Hongke Peng
Applying single-cell multi-omics to discover potential approaches to enhance the efficacy of venetoclax therapy
Professor David Huang, Professor Matthew Ritchie, Dr Rachel Thijssen

Dr Jan Schaefer
Developing precision RNA therapeutics for tuberculosis
Professor Marc Pellegrini, Dr George Ashdown

Dr Marlene Schmidt
Understanding the role of the E3 ubiquitin ligase Parkin in Parkinson's disease
Professor Grant Dewson, Professor David Komander

Dr Xiaoyu Song
Investigating the immune microenvironment changes during breast cancer development and understanding features of invasive lobular breast cancer
Professor Jane Visvader, Professor Geoffrey Lindeman

Dr Qiao Su
Systems-based approaches to understanding infection, stress responses and drug resistance in parasitic protists
Professor Aaron Jex, Professor Ivo Mueller, Dr Samatha Emery-Corbin

Dr Wenyin Su
Chemical genetics of *P. falciparum* Plasmepsin V, Plasmepsin X, and Cytochrome b
Associate Professor Brad Sleebs, Dr Madeline Dans, Professor Alan Cowman, Dr William Nguyen

Dr Andres Tapia Del Fierro
SMCHD1, linking gene expression, epigenetic marks and chromatin architecture
Professor Marnie Blewitt, Dr Andrew Keniry, Professor Matthew Ritchie

Dr Annabella Thomas
Investigating p53-activated cellular responses to understand tumour suppression
Professor Andreas Strasser, Professor Gemma Kelly, Dr Georgia Atkin-Smith

Dr Indran Tishya
Platelet biogenesis in human health and disease
Professor Sant-Rayn Pasricha, Dr Samir Taoudi

Dr Yat Hang To
Personalised adjuvant chemotherapy in stage II colon cancer – a health economic analysis
Professor Peter Gibbs, Associate Professor Jeanne Tie, Dr Koen Degeling

Dr Sarah Trevelyan
Understanding K6/K48 branched ubiquitin chain assembly by the RBR E3 ligase RNF14 in ribosomal quality control
Associate Professor Bernhard Lechtenberg, Dr Rebecca Feltham, Associate Professor Tracy Putoczki

Dr Xinyu Wu
Deep Mutational Scanning of SARS-CoV-2 Papain-Like protease
Associate Professor Melissa Call, Professor Matthew Call, Professor David Komander

Dr Shiyi Xi
Mechanisms orchestrating the activity of tumour-suppressive A4GNT
Professor Ethan Goddard-Borger, Associate Professor Brad Sleebs

Dr Kathleen Zeglinski
Developing sequencing and bioinformatic workflows to accelerate the discovery of new biopharmaceuticals
Dr Quentin Gouil, Professor Rory Bowden, Dr Arthur Hsu, Professor Matthew Ritchie

Master of Biomedical Science, University of Melbourne

Naomi Jones
How does iron status influence albumin regulation? An experimental investigation in mice
Dr Cavan Bennett, Professor Sant-Rayn Pasricha

Benishar Kombut
Sero-surveillance as a tool to measure burden of disease exposure in pregnant women in Papua New Guinea
Professor Leanne Robinson, Dr Fiona Angrisano

Quoc Hoang Nguyen
hexDensity: improved kernel density analysis of spatial transcriptomics with hexagons
Dr Yunshun Chen, Dr Xueyi Dong

PhD graduate Dr Stefanie Bader, with former WEHI president Jane Hemstritch AO and director Professor Ken Smith.

Dr Bader received the 2025 Corcoran Award recognising the top WEHI PhD thesis.

Master of Philosophy, University of Melbourne

Logan Wu
Bayesian calibration of dynamic *Plasmodium vivax* malaria transmission models
Professor Ivo Mueller, Professor James McCaw, Professor Jodie McVernon, Dr Eamon Conway

Master of Research, University of Melbourne

Yichen Xie
Measuring susceptibility of cancer cells to BH3 mimetics
Associate Professor Ruth Kluck, Associate Professor Mary Ann Anderson, Dr Karla Fischer, Dr Michelle Miller

Bachelor of Science (Degree with Honours), University of Melbourne

Sirui (Annie) Fang
Characterising the role of VPS13D in mitochondrial homeostasis
Dr Sylvie Callegari, Professor David Komander

Claerwen Opat
Multicolour fluorescence imaging to decipher cellular interactions in brain cancer
Professor Misty Jenkins, Dr Verena Wimmer

James Roseman-Gannon
Targeting cell death pathways in innate lymphoid cells to influence allergic inflammation
Professor Daniel Gray, Dr Lucille Rankin

Dylan Silke
Accelerating synthetic protein binder design with high-performance computing
Professor Tony Papenfuss, Dr Joshua Hardy, Professor Isabelle Lucet

Bachelor of Biomedicine (Degree with Honours), University of Melbourne

Maaria Ahmed
Defying cell death: investigating key protein interactions that regulate BAK at the mitochondria
Professor David Huang, Dr Mark Van Delft

Felix Brown
Identifying resistance factors to STING agonists in blood cancer
Professor Gemma Kelly, Dr Eddie La Marca, Dr Sarah Diepstraten

Jemima Chin
Investigating the role of IL-11 in the pancreas microenvironment during inflammation
Associate Professor Tracy Putoczki, Dr Ka Yee Fung

Lara Green
Harnessing the power of lipid nanoparticles for the treatment of autoimmune and inflammatory disease
Professor Sandra Nicholson, Dr Lizeth Meza Guzman

Ng Christina Le
Exploring the impact of somatic mutations on human haematopoiesis and immune function
Professor Shalin Naik, Dr Sara Tomei, Dr Miles Horton, Dr Ashley Ng

Qingqing Lin
Understanding the role of the RNA binding protein FD4 in malaria transmission
Dr Matthew Dixon, Professor James McCarthy, Dr Mohini Shibu

Jeremy Oliver
Going nuclear for T cells: The impact of nuclear export inhibition on immune homeostasis in myeloma patients
Professor Daniel Gray, Dr Charis Teh

Matt San Buenaventura
Progress towards a passive immunotherapy for *Acinetobacter baumannii*
Professor Ethan Goddard, Dr Niccolay Madiedo Soler

Jonathan Wood
The impact of malaria exposure on chemovaccination efficacy
Associate Professor Justin Boddey, Dr Elena Lantero-Escolar

Thank you to our supporters

Your support allows our researchers to advance critical research and translate their discoveries into disease diagnosis, prevention and treatment for the benefit of the whole community.

Below is a list of our generous donations and grants of $10,000 or more between 1 January and 31 December 2025. A full list of donations, grants and bequests of $1000 or more can be found on our website.

Donations

6A Foundation
Dr Peter Adams and Dr Sheryl Lawson
AWM Electrical
Stuart Bales and Jillian Bales
Andrew and Allison Barnes
Bodhi Foundation
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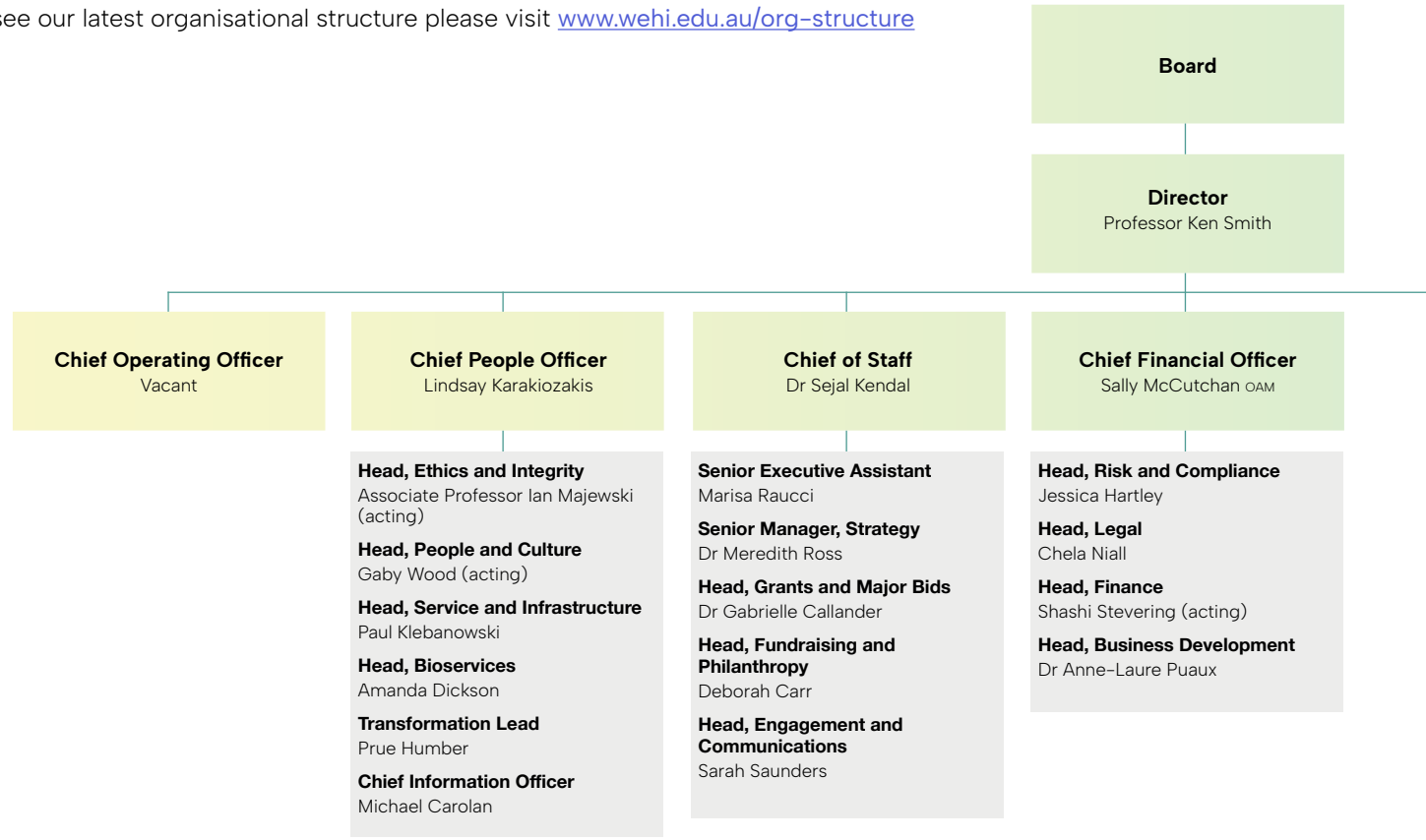
Professor Sir John Savill
Professor Ken Smith
Dr Angeli Weller

Organisational structure

As at 31 December 2025

To see our latest organisational structure please visit www.wehi.edu.au/org-structure



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To 31 December 2025

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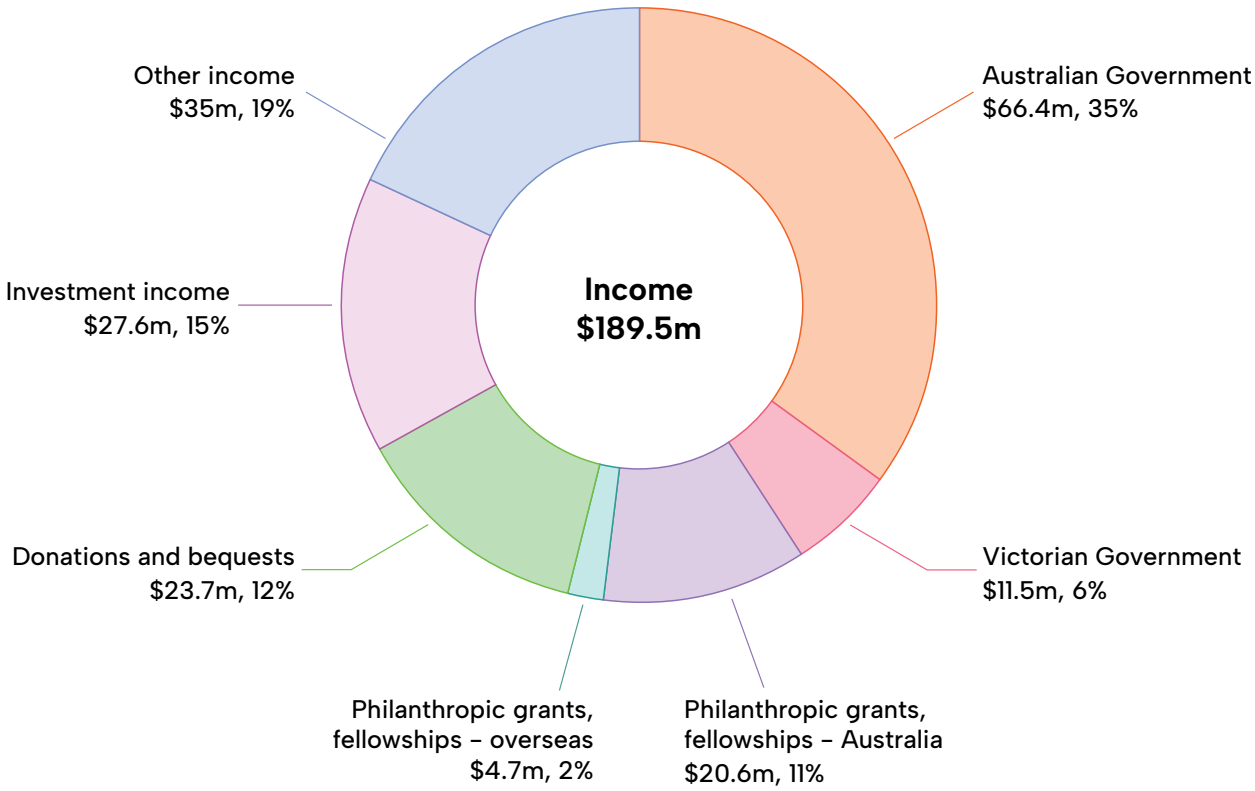
WEHI remembers those members who passed away in 2025

Mick Dexter

Year at a glance



Condensed consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2025

	2025 $'000	2024 $'000
Grant and fundraising income	146,807	130,064
Other income	15,057	14,843
Investment income	27,632	32,677
Employee related expenses	(145,107)	(142,813)
Scientific consumables and other research expenses	(30,757)	(28,575)
Other expenses	(54,880)	(49,615)
Finance income	674	877
Operating deficit	**(40,574)**	**(42,542)**
Non-operating items		
Bequests and donations allocated to permanent funds	3,487	3,705
Gain on financial assets taken to profit or loss	7,365	10,704
Other non-operating (losses) income	(3,563)	57
Net deficit for the year	**(33,285)**	**(28,076)**
Other comprehensive income	17,584	54,951
Total comprehensive (loss) gain for the year	**(15,701)**	**26,875**

Condensed consolidated statement of financial position

As at 31 December 2025

	2025 $'000	2024 $'000
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	108,606	77,816
Trade and other receivables	29,417	22,588
Financial assets	2,600	-
Prepayments	1,994	3,131
Total current assets	**142,617**	**103,535**
Non-current assets		
Financial assets	635,780	681,471
Other receivables	1,605	1,605
Investments in associates and joint ventures	7,586	7,877
Property, plant and equipment	188,182	189,899
Right of use assets	3,028	3,685
Total non-current assets	**836,181**	**884,537**
Total assets	**978,798**	**988,072**
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	12,428	12,407
Provisions	27,075	27,520
Unearned grants and fellowships	81,064	73,720
Other liabilities	1,109	980
Total current liabilities	**121,676**	**114,627**
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	22,349	22,254
Other liabilities	-	717
Total non-current liabilities	**22,349**	**22,971**
Total liabilities	**144,025**	**137,598**
Net assets	**834,773**	**850,474**
Funds		
Permanent funds	304,125	283,078
Investment revaluation reserve	162,836	171,703
Accumulated surplus	367,722	395,684
Non-controlling interest	90	9
Total funds	**834,773**	**850,474**

To view the full set of the audited accounts, visit the ACNC website at www.acnc.gov.au

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