

Strategic Framework

2025 - 2030



WEHI
brighter together

www.wehi.edu.au



Acknowledgement of Country

The Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation are the Traditional Owners of the land at the Parkville, Kew, Bundoora and Elizabeth Street campuses on which WEHI operates.

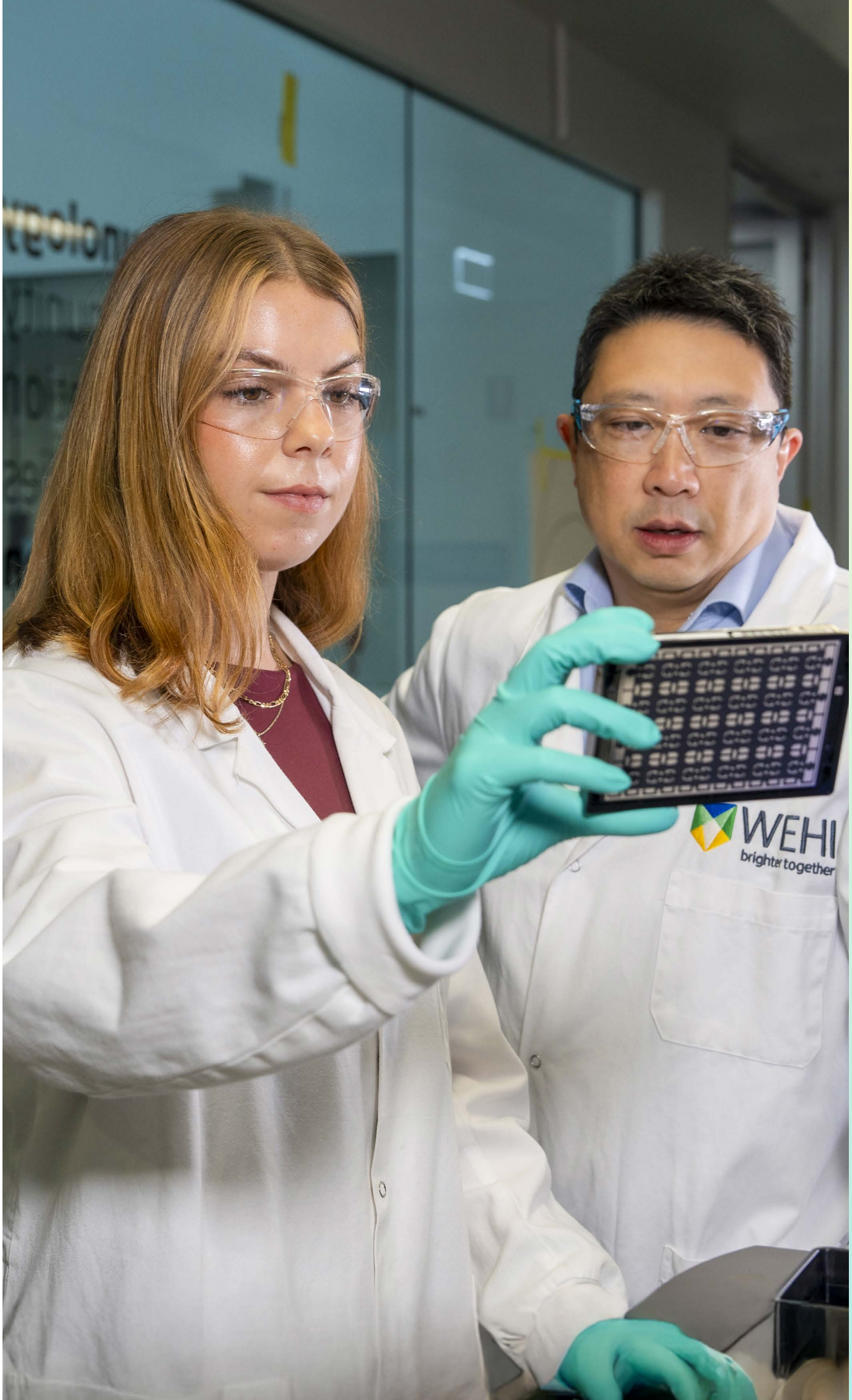
We pay respects to their Elders past and present and embrace their continued connection to the places where WEHI staff and students work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the oldest living generations of knowledge keepers, healers, educators and innovators in health and wellbeing.

We acknowledge the ingenuity, collaboration, resilience and creativity that enabled them to thrive and ensured that knowledge was passed on from generation to generation.

We commit to reconciling the past and working together for a better future for First Nations Peoples through integrated and Community-engaged action aligned with *marra ngarrgoo*, *marra goorri*, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) Accord.

We respect how First Nations Peoples understood and continue to understand the world, and acknowledge how this has benefited, and will always benefit, all of us.



Contents:

Acknowledgement of Country	II
From the Director	IV
From the President	V
Our framework at a glance	VI
About this strategic framework	1
Our track record of impact	2
Our vision and values	3
Our breadth and depth	4
Realising our vision	5
Our strategic pillars:	6
Pillar A: We prioritise research excellence	7
Pillar B: We empower our outstanding people	8
Pillar C: We partner, collaborate and lead	9
Pillar D: We are resilient and future-ready	10
Pillar E: We translate discoveries into impact	11



Cover image

The cover image is a representation of a strategic focus for WEHI: accelerating and strengthening our research and its translation through artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. Our technology teams routinely generate vast, high-quality datasets, suitable for AI analysis and pattern-finding alongside computational biology approaches. We see a future where every WEHI laboratory's work is enhanced through AI. Data in the 'hologram' are drawn from recent publications from across WEHI.

From the Director



Professor Ken Smith

PhD FRACP FRCPA FRCP FRCPATH ScD FMedSci
Director, WEHI
The Lorenzo and Pamela Galli Chair in Medical Biology
Head, Department of Medical Biology,
The University of Melbourne

We live in a complex and changing world. The aftermath of COVID, pervasive geopolitical uncertainty and the acceleration of climate change are all impacting the health and wellbeing of communities everywhere. Big steps forward in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure for many diseases highlight the profound impact of medical research – while new health challenges continue to emerge that urgently require attention.

Fundamental biomedical research has never been more important. The great majority of advances in modern medicine over the last 100 years stemmed from fundamental research that uncovers primary biological principles – including at WEHI. The Strategic Framework 2025–30 affirms WEHI’s longstanding commitment to outstanding fundamental research as a crucial wellspring of discovery.

Discoveries alone, however, are never enough. WEHI remains committed to translating our discoveries into real-world impacts for people and communities in Australia and worldwide. In this strategic framework, we set out our intent to build on our track record in translation to tackle the health challenges of the present and the future.

Science and technology evolve, and so must we. The framework emphasises the need to balance WEHI’s core scientific strengths with an openness to pursuing new research directions. It establishes

flexible and responsive governance and strategy around our science, to ensure we continue to respond to new opportunities and to address important scientific and health challenges.

I believe that excellent people, well supported, drive excellent research. We will engage and develop researchers and professional staff of the highest calibre at all levels. And we will shape an environment of cutting-edge technologies, data sciences (including AI), professional support and infrastructure where research can truly flourish – underpinned by an inclusive culture where we all feel we truly belong. All of this is dependent on financial resilience, and we are prioritising major efforts to enhance efficiency and resources to allow WEHI to support ground-breaking research, not just now but into the future.

“ **Fundamental biomedical research has never been more important.** ”

Crucially, true impact comes from working together. We are immensely proud of our longest-standing partnerships, with the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the University of Melbourne, and of our work alongside partners across the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct (Parkville), across Australia and internationally. WEHI will help craft the future of the health and medical research sector, alongside our partners and collaborators, for the benefit of people and communities everywhere.

I am excited about this new chapter in WEHI’s history, and hope that you are too.

Professor Ken Smith

From the President



John W. Dyson

BSc GradDipFinInv MBA
Board President, WEHI

WEHI has a long and proud history of conducting outstanding discovery research – and, crucially, translating that research into impacts that improve the health of millions.

The institute’s new strategic framework remains true to that history. It emphasises the enduring value of WEHI’s vision of **mastery of disease through discovery** – and it sets out an overarching roadmap to deliver on that vision.

The framework also builds on WEHI’s enduring values and culture. WEHI is justly proud of its strong and positive culture. The institute is committed to creating conditions for safety, inclusion, belonging and respect, and recognises that these experiences are shaped everyday by our leaders and organisation. We aim to be a place where all can thrive and where the contributions and leadership of First Nations Peoples are honoured.

WEHI’s six core values – Pursuit of excellence, Creativity, Contribution to society, Accountability, Integrity and mutual respect, and Collaboration and teamwork – remain a powerful touchstone and are therefore enduring and unchanged.

Importantly, however, this is also a framework for changing times.

In a time of global uncertainty and changing funding models, efficient and sustainable operational and financial foundations are more important than ever. A core focus of the framework is to bring WEHI to a position of financial resilience and stability, including through an organisation-

wide transformation process, now underway. We will grow financial reserves so that we can support the most ambitious research programs and seize new research and clinical directions as they arise.

The framework is designed to ensure that WEHI’s research is cutting-edge, evolving and responsive to emergent health challenges. In support of this goal, the institute has established an Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB), a group of internationally renowned leaders in medical research and allied sectors who provide forward-looking guidance on WEHI’s scientific strategy and research focus.

“ **...this is a framework for changing times.** ”

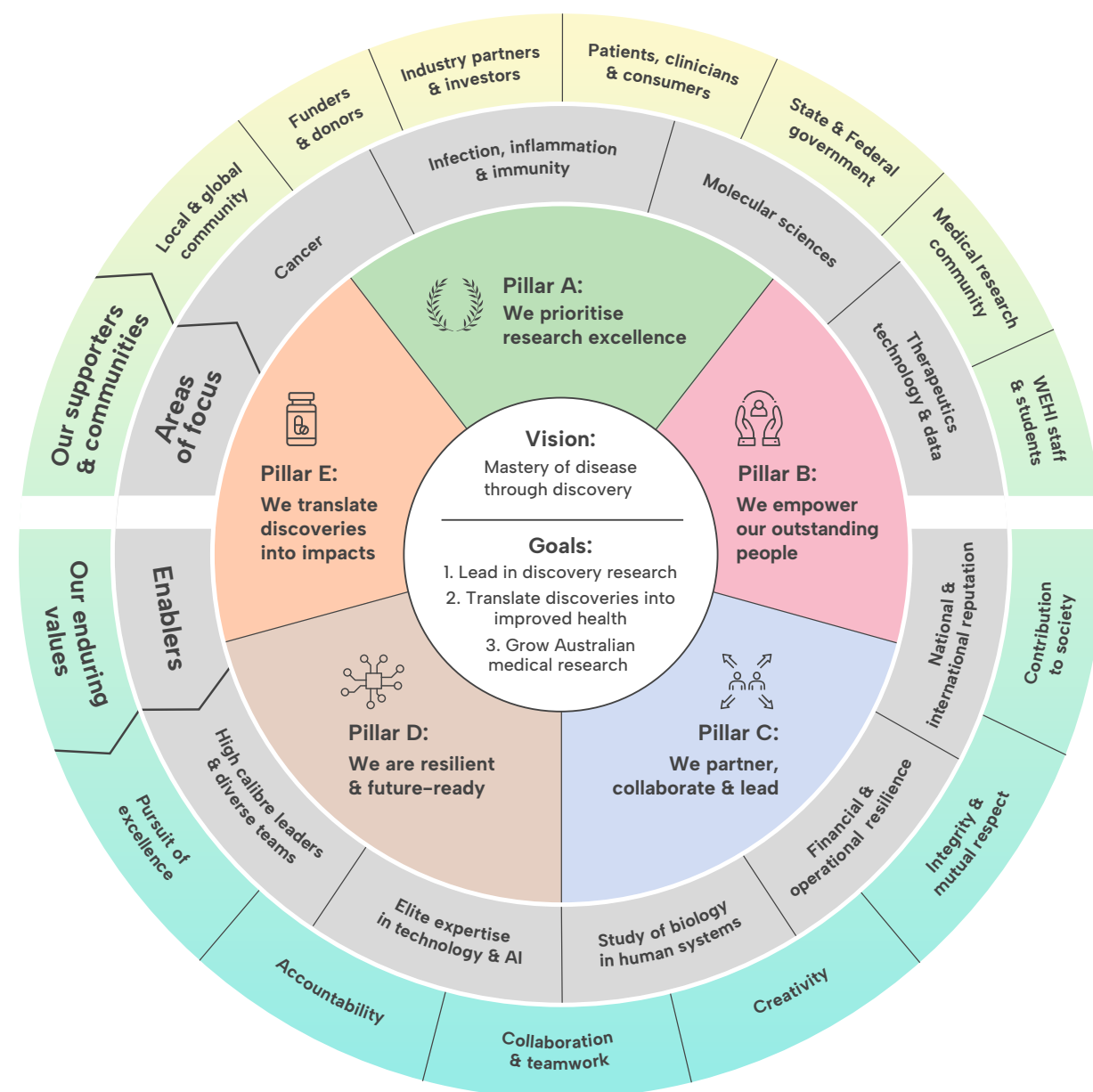
WEHI’s work is enabled by transformative investment from federal and Victorian governments, philanthropic donors and givers, and other funding bodies. I’d like to take this opportunity to particularly thank WEHI’s donors; they often fund vital research at its earliest, proof-of-principle stages and their generosity and foresight cannot be overstated. Without supporters of all kinds, WEHI could not deliver on its ambitious goals of research and impact.

I look forward to working with Ken and WEHI’s leadership, with the ISAB, with my fellow board members, with staff, and with our valued partners, supporters and community to deliver WEHI’s Strategic Framework 2025–30. Together, we can realise the vision of transformative impact through exemplary science.

John W. Dyson

Our framework at a glance

Our strategic framework sets out our all-of-institute approach to delivering on our enduring vision of **mastery of disease through discovery**.



About this strategic framework

This framework defines a direction for WEHI up until 2030. It sets out the architecture within which WEHI will operate: its vision and values, its overarching strategic goals and its core focus areas (pillars and priorities).

Why a strategic framework and not a strategy?

A clear strategic direction is essential for all organisations, but medical research organisations must also anticipate and respond to rapid change on many fronts. Our sector is purpose-driven, fast-moving, and responsive, and genuine openness to new directions is crucial – whether these emerge from new fundamental discoveries, from new technologies or from unmet clinical need.

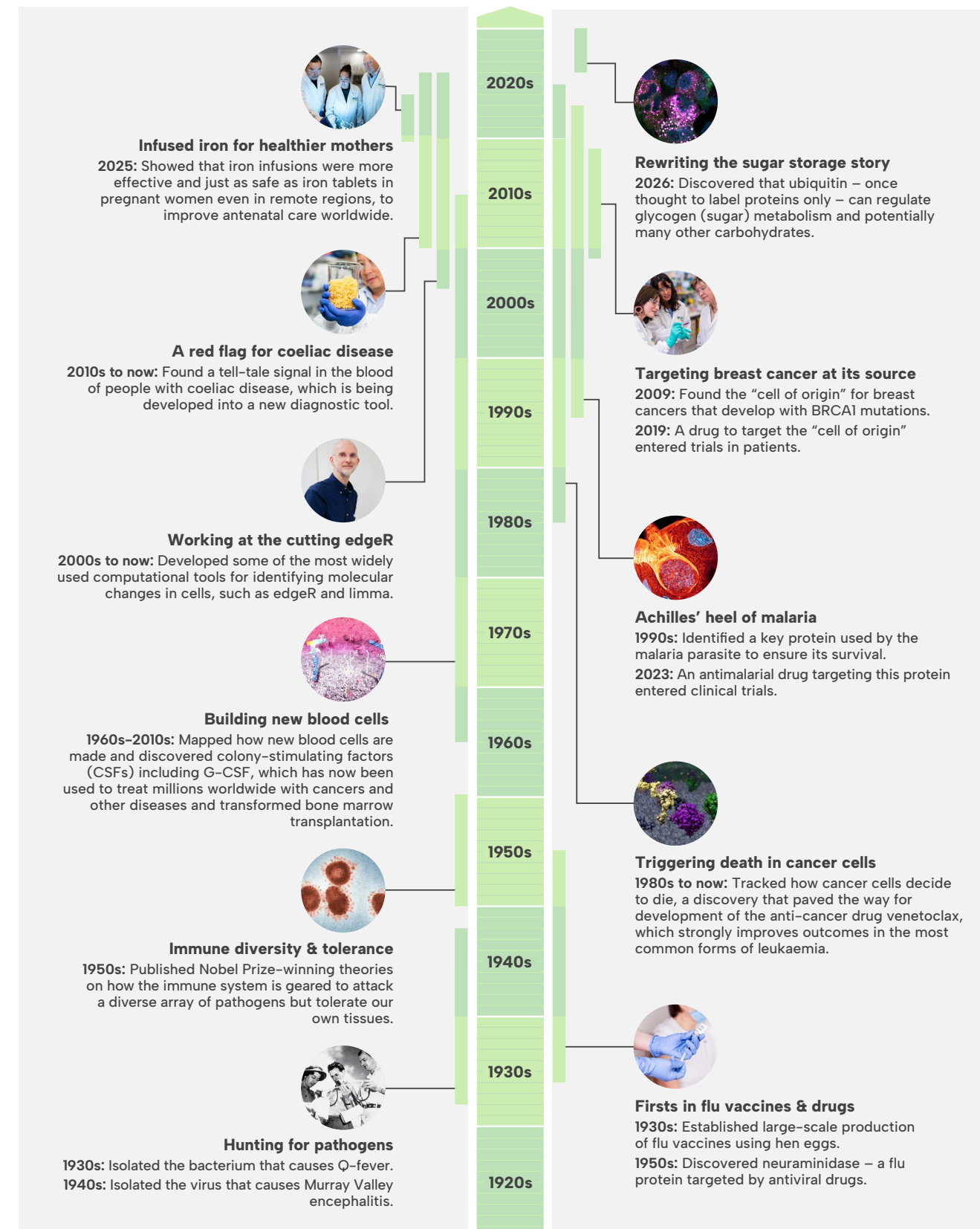
For this reason, we have chosen to share a strategic framework. We intentionally do not list all the initiatives through which we will deliver WEHI's strategy. Instead, the framework creates space for responsive governance to guide the development of those initiatives over the next five years.

Building the future

Our framework will help shape our most ambitious initiatives. It will provide a clear and enduring direction, while allowing WEHI to respond with agility to new opportunities and needs. We look forward to sharing initiatives that we are delivering under this framework as they mature.

Our track record of impact

Our 111-year history anchors WEHI's ongoing efforts in medical research and enables us to innovate like few others.



Our vision and values

Our vision

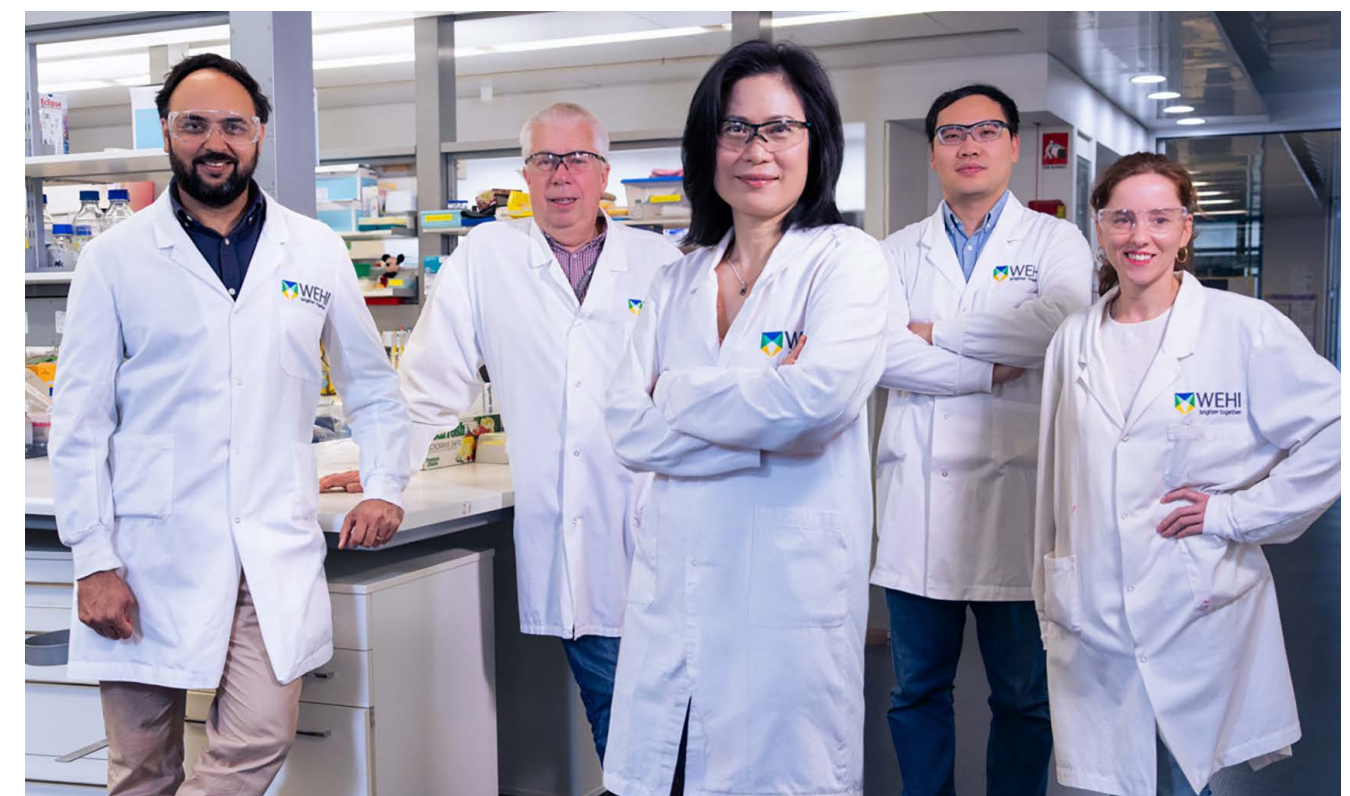
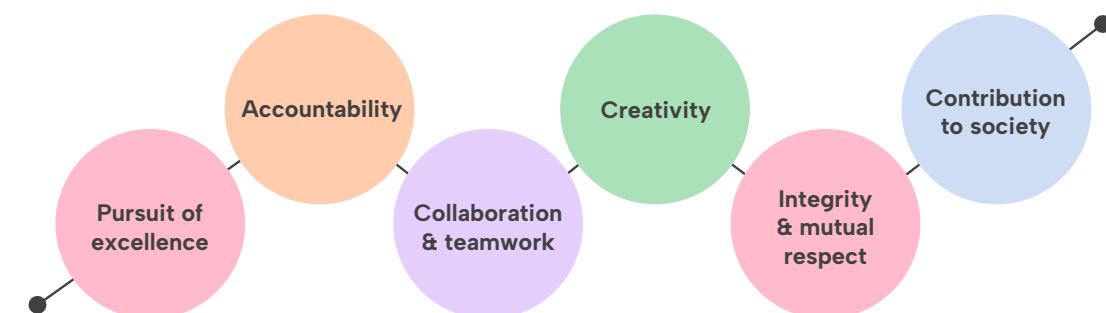
WEHI's enduring vision is **mastery of disease through discovery**.

We reaffirm our commitment to that vision, which evokes our dual ambition in discovery research and in translating discoveries into impact.

Our values

Our organisational values shape our culture.

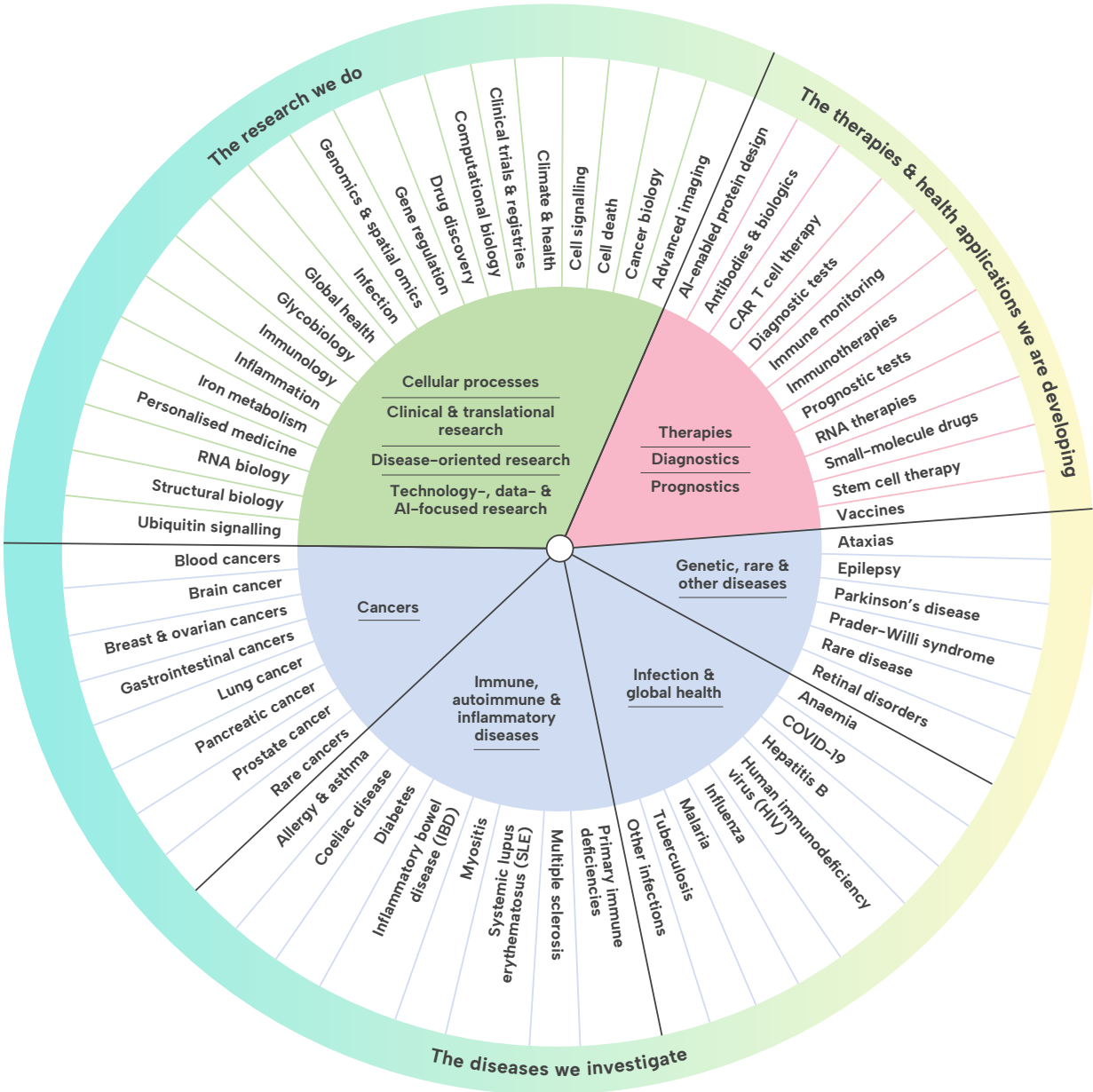
They influence how we work, how we behave towards each other and how we engage with others beyond WEHI.



Our breadth and depth

WEHI’s earliest strengths lay in infectious disease. Over time, we have also built world-class strengths in cancer and the immune system, underpinned by outstanding expertise in molecular sciences, cutting-edge technologies and computational biology.

Today, WEHI studies a wide range of diseases and health interventions. We seek out opportunities to advance new and emergent areas of research in response to new fundamental discoveries, new technologies and new health challenges.



Realising our vision

WEHI is pursuing three strategic goals that together advance our vision of **mastery of disease through discovery**. We will iteratively track our progress towards our goals, anchored in a clear view of the future state we seek.

GOAL 1

Discovery

Strengthen our ability to conduct ground-breaking fundamental research, building a pipeline of discoveries with potential for patient impact.

At WEHI, we believe that fundamental research is critically needed to generate discoveries for translation. Through Goal 1, WEHI commits to maintain and strengthen its emphasis on fundamental research as a wellspring of discoveries.

GOAL 2

Impact

Improve the health of patients and populations by delivering new therapies, diagnostics and prognostics.

All medical research has the improvement of human health as its ultimate goal and, at WEHI, we are proud of our track record in delivering tools that improve health outcomes. Goal 2 emphasises our intent to accelerate our work in this space.

GOAL 3

Ecosystem

Grow the Australian health and medical research sector through our science, advocacy and partnership.

The most impactful medical research does not occur in silos; it needs a thriving research and translation community that is adequately funded, highly collaborative and enabled by critical mass. Goal 3 sets out our intent to help craft the future of Australia’s health and medical research sector, building on our track record of leadership.

We seek a future in which:

WEHI is increasingly recognised globally for the excellence of its fundamental discovery research, including through the quality and reach of its research papers.

WEHI is increasingly recognised globally for its outstanding track record in translating its research outputs and discoveries into clinical impact, including therapies, diagnostics and prognostics.

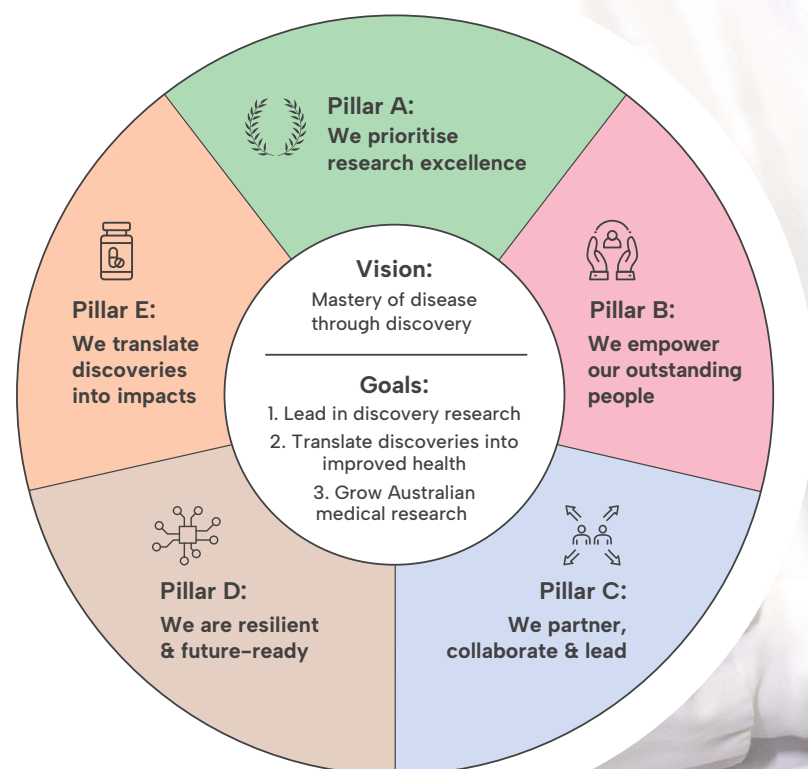
Australian medical research is better funded, more closely coordinated and more effectively translated.

We will realise that future by:

- Building research leadership of the highest calibre
- Enabling research through state-of-the-art technologies and leading expertise in data and AI
- Building close clinical partnerships that enable the study of biology in human systems
- Strengthening WEHI’s drug discovery, translation and commercialisation capabilities
- Establishing long-term financial and operational resilience
- Shaping impactful national and international partnerships
- Advocating effectively for the health and medical research sector

Our strategic pillars

To deliver on our goals, we will work across five strategic pillars.



Strategic Pillar A: We prioritise research excellence

We will enhance the excellence of WEHI's discovery research, recognising that it is a crucial first step in delivering new knowledge and better health outcomes.

Key priorities:

1	Fundamental research	Embed our longstanding commitment to discovery research as a wellspring of biological insight and translatable discoveries.
2	Evolving & future-focused	Set a coherent and evolving scientific direction, building strength in emergent areas such as climate and health.
3	Building on our strengths	Invest in our longstanding strengths in the intersecting areas of cancer biology, immunology, inflammation and infection, and molecular sciences.
4	Technology, data & AI	Maintain and extend WEHI's cutting-edge and research-embedded enabling capabilities, including technology platforms, computational biology, AI and machine learning.
5	Clinical integration	Advance fundamental research in people and engage closely with patients and consumers across the research lifecycle.

Selected initiatives

At the forefront of new diagnostics technologies

The Colonial Foundation Diagnostics Centre (CFDC) is a pioneering philanthropy-enabled initiative that is advancing precision diagnosis for immune- and inflammation-mediated diseases that affect millions of Australians. The centre's approach takes advantage of 'spatial omics' technologies, which can map tissue samples in exquisite detail. A joint initiative between WEHI and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the CFDC draws on scientific, technological and clinical pathology expertise across the partners. The CFDC is made possible through a generous gift of \$21M from the Colonial Foundation.

Using a ubiquitous process to design drugs of the future

One of WEHI's research focuses is the biological process of ubiquitination – the major 'waste disposal system' in a cell. Building on fundamental research discoveries, Professor David Komander FAA FRS and other researchers have identified new ways to create drugs that take advantage of this process, with potential applications in cancer, inflammation and Parkinson's disease.

Strategic Pillar B:

We empower our outstanding people

Our people are the heart of WEHI and are central to its success. We will shape a future-focused team of scientific and professional leaders and foster a culture of excellence where all are safe, respected and valued.

Key priorities:		
1	Strengthening leadership	Build a balanced, diverse group of excellent scientific and professional leaders, ensuring leadership depth and continuity.
2	Developing our people	Create visible, supported and future-facing career pathways across scientific, professional and clinician-scientist roles.
3	Leaders of the future	Provide an outstanding educational and professional experience for graduate students, equipping them for future success.
4	First Nations leadership & partnership	Advance health, leadership and safety of First Nations Peoples.
5	WEHI culture	Shape and evolve our inclusive, values-led culture of excellence, safety and respect.

Selected initiatives

Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

WEHI partners with DeadlyScience, Australia's leading Indigenous STEM charity, to offer the Pathways Program to First Nations secondary students from across Australia. This three-day immersion program held at WEHI and across the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct includes scientist-led lab tours, hands-on activities, and presentations – designed to build awareness of STEM education and career opportunities and inspire passion for science. WEHI also partners with CareerTrackers and the Aurora Education Foundation to offer lab internships to First Nations university students, moving medical research from an abstract to a visible and achievable career path.

Bridging bench and bedside

Clinician-scientists – research leaders who are also clinical specialists – play a crucial connecting role in medical research through their dual perspective of research expertise and clinical insight. They are key to WEHI's strategic priority of conducting more fundamental research in people (see Pillar A), in order to accelerate discovery while providing patients with enhanced information and early access to new interventions. WEHI's clinician-scientists are active across the breadth of our research programs – and particularly in translational research centres. WEHI has a focus on supporting clinician-scientists' unique career pathways.

Strategic Pillar C:

We partner, collaborate and lead

Transforming health through medical research cannot be achieved by individual organisations in isolation. We will play a leading role in growing Australia's medical research ecosystem, through leadership, collaborative partnerships and building critical mass.

Key priorities:		
1	Sector leadership	Grow the health and medical research sector through advocacy and collaboration.
2	Melbourne Biomedical Precinct	Advance precinct planning to enhance the impact of Australia's pre-eminent biomedical precinct.
3	Our valued partners	Renew and expand strategic collaborations with the Royal Melbourne Hospital, University of Melbourne and other valued academic, clinical, education and industry (see Pillar E for more detail) partners.
4	International reach	Build and strengthen international scientific and educational partnerships, particularly in the Asia-Pacific.
5	Lead by example	Uphold principles of scientific integrity, ethical research and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Selected initiatives

A transformative research: clinical partnership

WEHI is proud to partner with the Royal Melbourne Hospital and Snow Medical to deliver the Snow Centre for Immune Health. Enabled by a major investment of up to \$100 million from Snow Medical, the centre is designed to accelerate the translation of discoveries in immune disease into new therapies and diagnostics. The centre's Clinical Research Unit brings clinicians, researchers and patients together, linking clinical and immunological data to fast-track better treatments and diagnostic tools. The centre recruited its first patients in 2025.

Learning from those with lived experience

Consumers are people with lived experience of a specific health condition, whether as a patient or carer or through other circumstances. Consumers bring unique insights and perspectives that can meaningfully impact research direction; they are valued partners in WEHI's research.

To enable close and sustained engagement, WEHI's extensive consumer program involves more than 140 consumers, who partner with researcher teams to inform project ideas and communication approaches through sharing their lived experience.

Strategic Pillar D:

We are resilient and future-ready

Operational strength underpins scientific success. We will continuously shape a future-ready organisation that enables and accelerates research and translation.

Key priorities:	
1 Operating strategy	Build an adaptive operating model and strategy that enables WEHI's research ambitions.
2 Our enabling context	Shape and evolve future-ready infrastructure, systems, spaces and governance structures.
3 Our financial resilience	Grow our financial reserves to better enable sustained, high-risk, high-reward research.
4 Funding our research	Grow and diversify our income through philanthropy, grants, commercial partnerships and other approaches.
5 Environmental stewardship	Optimise our environmental sustainability through continuous improvement and partnership.

Selected initiatives

A renewable future

In 2025, WEHI marked a significant step in reducing its environmental footprint, matching 100% of its electricity consumption with renewable energy. WEHI also lowered its Scope 2 emissions by more than 85% – equivalent to over 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year.

A stronger organisation

Impactful medical research cannot take place without firm, stable operational foundations. WEHI is undergoing a major transformation process to introduce a more efficient structure and operating model. As an outcome of the transformation, WEHI will become financially sustainable, grow its financial reserves and be better positioned to enable ambitious, long-term programs of research.

Powering brain cancer trials in partnership

The Brain Cancer Centre—a collaborative research centre focused on improving survival and quality of life for people with brain cancer—was established by WEHI and partner organisations through transformative philanthropic commitments from Carrie's Beanies 4 Brain Cancer (CB4BC). Its innovative clinical trial program, BrainPOP, integrates clinical and translational research within a coordinated, multi-institutional platform. The far-sighted CB4BC investment de-risked early development and attracted co-investment, delivering high-impact research and clinical trials.

Strategic Pillar E:

We translate discoveries into impact

To ensure our research delivers transformational health impacts, we will continue to prioritise the translation of discoveries into clinical, commercial and societal applications.

Key priorities:	
1 Drug discovery	Strengthen Australian drug discovery capability through WEHI's translational platforms.
2 Diagnosis & early intervention	Develop next-generation diagnostic tests.
3 A robust pipeline	Grow WEHI's commercial portfolio and investment pipeline.
4 Industry partners	Strengthen industry and investment partnerships, becoming a partner of choice for the private sector.
5 Entrepreneurship	Cultivate and support an entrepreneurial culture across WEHI.

Selected initiatives

Advancing drug discovery in Australia

WEHI is proud to operate the National Drug Discovery Centre (NDDC), Australia's only small-molecule drug discovery platform with industry-scale capacity. Since 2020, the NDDC has delivered more than 50 major new medicine projects for research and commercial organisations from across Australia. The NDDC has been made possible through investments by state and federal governments, donors and philanthropic organisations. The NDDC is now entering a new era of AI-enabled drug discovery capabilities, supporting faster and more efficient identification of promising drug candidates.

Driving discoveries towards impact

Most research discoveries require external investment to support their development into therapies or medical products – but progressing to investment-readiness is challenging. To address this, WEHI has established WEHI Ventures to manage our strategic venture fund, 66ten. The fund aims to invest \$66 million in WEHI discoveries with a high potential for impact over the course of 10 years.

WEHI is also proud to be a founding partner of Jumar Bioincubator, alongside CSL and the University of Melbourne. A world-class hub for biotech innovation and translation, Jumar is helping Australian startups to progress and drives the maturation of the Australian research translation ecosystem.

