

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



WESLEY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



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WHO WE ARE



Established in December 1994 by a group of dedicated doctors from the UnitingCare network, Wesley Research Institute is the second-oldest medical research institute in Queensland.

We take a collaborative approach to research, bringing together doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, scientists, patients and the community to work toward a common goal – to improve healthcare outcomes.

Wesley Research Institute is committed to delivering real impact for patients while contributing to knowledge through research worldwide.

As the official research partner for UnitingCare, we conduct high-quality, ethical and rigorous research through our world-class research programs and bespoke services.

We develop research and invest in innovations that lead to faster diagnosis, better treatment options and ultimately cures for debilitating illnesses and diseases.

Investing in the highest calibre research capability across all our programs enables us to drive translational health research outcomes and support our ever-expanding network of clinicians to undertake exceptional research.

Striving to improve the way healthcare is delivered, we provide real-time, real-world impact to further enhance patient outcomes, giving hope and changing the lives of the sick and vulnerable.





GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



As Governor and Patron in Chief of Wesley Research Institute, I congratulate the Institute on another remarkable year of improving patient outcomes.

I commend your dedication to real-world outcomes in medical and health research, and your significant progress over the past year in several areas, including coeliac disease and paediatric acute respiratory interventions. Your research also promises to have a real impact in the way that health services are delivered.

Your partnership with UnitingCare across Queensland, meanwhile, points to an ongoing benefit to people across the State, while investment back into the Institute will ensure the highest calibre of research capability to drive translational health research outcomes.

It's evident that your continued collaborative approach, bringing together diverse expertise, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, scientists, patients, and the community, has been pivotal to your success. This will underpin your ability to have a substantial impact on health care delivery.

Your work is quite simply shaping the future of medical care, and we are all beneficiaries of your dedication and expertise.

I would also like to express deep gratitude to the corporate and individual donors who have been instrumental in supporting Wesley Research Institute. Your contributions are making a real difference in our lives, and your generosity is genuinely appreciated.

Together, we can make significant strides towards a healthier and brighter future for all Queenslanders.



GOVERNOR OF QUEENSLAND

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland



“ Your work is quite simply shaping the future of medical care, and we are all beneficiaries of your dedication and expertise.

Her Excellency the Honourable
Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland

OUR PATRONS



**Associate Professor
John Allan**

Patron

Associate Professor John Allan has been an obstetrician and gynaecologist VMP at The Wesley Hospital since 1984. He is the Chief Academic Medical Officer of UnitingCare Health, former head of the UnitingCare Health Clinical School and current Chair of the Ethics Committee.



**Emeritus Professor
John Pearn AO**

Patron

Professor John Pearn is a senior paediatrician, academic, doctor-soldier, researcher and writer. John was awarded his higher Doctorate of Medicine and is the author of over 500 papers.



Mr Martin Albrecht AC

Patron

Mr Albrecht is a prominent Australian businessman, best known for his service as Chairman, previously CEO, of Thiess Pty Ltd, and former Wesley Medical Research Chairman.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Mr Charlie Sartain

Board Chair

In a year of significant organisational change and strategic planning, the Institute's efforts were focused on growth and greater translational health research outcomes. It has been truly rewarding to see both progress made and exciting opportunities emerge as a result.

We are fortunate to have our organisation being led by our CEO, Andrew Barron, who in his first year in the role has developed a new senior leadership team, and has overseen the expansion of our research staff and organisational capabilities.

The expansion of the Clinical Trials Centre and the further advances in research in coeliac disease are notable examples of this growth. As is the establishment of the Health Services Research team, which has started to extend the reach of the Institute's activities beyond the traditional base within the hospital campuses into other areas of UnitingCare Queensland.

With our growth has come opportunities to deepen our valuable relationships with our strategic partners and individual donors. At the corporate level, Mitsubishi Development continues to make a wonderful contribution to Wesley Research Institute through significantly increased financial support of our Navicare project in Moranbah and the Bowen Basin. Also deserving of our sincere appreciation are the Brazil Family Foundation, Wendy and Allan Grummit, the VidyaJey Family Foundation, the Albrecht Family Foundation, the Catalano Family Foundation, Hugh Sheardown, Maureen Stevenson, Donald and Joan Wilson Foundation, and JJ Richards & Sons, along with all of our financial and in-kind sponsors and donors, whose contributions enable the Institute to improve healthcare outcomes through research.



My sincere thanks go to our Patron-In-Chief, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland, and our Patrons, Associate Professor John Allan, Emeritus Professor John Pearn AO and Mr Martin Albrecht AC, for their continued support throughout the year.

I would also like to express a grateful acknowledgement of the time and contribution that my fellow Board members have made in providing guidance and governance to the Institute at the Board level. Together, we are positive about the direction the Institute is moving in and look forward to supporting the important initiatives that are ahead of us.

I am looking forward in anticipation to the continuing progress and acceleration of the Institute's research, reach and engagement as we head into our 30th Anniversary year in 2024.

CEO'S MESSAGE



Mr Andrew Barron

Chief Executive Officer

Having served as Chief Executive Officer for a full year and relished the growth we have experienced, I am very proud to present this Annual Report to you.

A key focus throughout the first year of my tenure has been the development of our new strategy, which will take us from July 2023 through until 2026. With the support of the Board and our executive team, we designed a strategy that will move the Institute forward with the aim of being a leading research institute known for high-impact health and medical research outcomes and social contributions.

Our strategy is built on the solid pillars of our people, research engagement, sustainability, infrastructure and creating value. We're excited about expanding our internal research capabilities, while continuing our collaborative approach of working with doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to pursue emerging opportunities and innovations in health and medical research.

Our people have been instrumental in the progress we have made in research this year. Our executive team has been a driving force, and we have seen a significant increase in our employed staff this year. Through their combined efforts, we are starting to realise some very positive results in new strategic directions for the Institute.

One of the highlights for me has been the creation of the Health Services Research team, who are working in collaboration with UnitingCare Queensland and other organisations to design, implement and evaluate new models of healthcare delivery. It's a new area of research for the Institute, and I'm excited to see the impact that this team's research has on the way that health services are delivered into the future.

Another area of growth has been our Clinical Trials Centre, which has doubled in size over the year. The additional funds generated through these commercial activities are welcomed, as they enable us to reinvest back into other areas of research.

But we still wouldn't be here without our generous donors. The faith that our donors place in us is very humbling for me; they can see and support our vision, and want to be involved as we work to find breakthroughs in care. Thank you!

We would love to hear from you

We welcome the valuable contribution of volunteers to support our work at Wesley Research Institute.

Please reach out and tell us if you are interested in volunteering, or if you would like to share your story. Your experience may help others whether you have participated in a clinical trial or have been treated by one of our doctors. We'd love to hear from you!

Email: enquiries@wesleyresearch.org.au



A Tribute to Dr Russell Stitz

Dr Russell Stitz AM sadly passed away on 25 September 2023 at the age of 80. Dr Stitz graduated in medicine from the University of Queensland in 1966 and completed his residency and surgical training at Royal Brisbane. He was a pioneer in the development of laparoscopic (keyhole) colorectal surgery and performed the first laparoscopic colonic resection in Australia in 1991.

Dr Stitz was well respected worldwide for his leadership, and renowned for his development of innovative healthcare solutions. He held roles such as President of the Australian Medical Association of Queensland and President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

We acknowledge Dr Stitz for his contribution as a former Wesley Research Institute board member, having served from 2009 to 2013, as well as his lifelong interest and support of research. Dr Stitz's legacy will live on through the countless lives he's touched and will be greatly missed by his patients, colleagues, friends and family.



Mrs Anne Stitz and Dr Russell Stitz

OUR BOARD



Mr Charlie Sartain

Chairman

Mr Sartain has served as Board Chair since 2020. He has more than 30 years of international mining experience as a mining engineer and senior corporate executive. Mr Sartain has also served as an independent non-executive director on several Australian and international listed corporate boards.



Mr Andrew Barron

Chief Executive Officer

Mr Barron has worked as a senior executive within the UnitingCare Queensland network since 2008. He has delivered sustained financial and cultural benefits across health, community services, aviation and financial services industries. Mr Barron has successfully shaped and implemented business development strategies in a patient/customer-centred context.



Dr John Lumley

Board Member

Dr Lumley is a colorectal surgeon practising at The Wesley Hospital. Dr Lumley has served on the executives of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia and the Colorectal Society of Australia and New Zealand.



Professor Mary-Louise Fleming

Board Member

Professor Fleming is the Head of School of Public Health and Social Work at the Queensland University of Technology. Professor Fleming has over 25 years of experience in public health and health promotion.



Mr Craig Wildermuth

Board Member

Mr Wildermuth is the Chief Financial Officer for UnitingCare Queensland and is an integral member of the senior leadership team. He joined the Wesley Research Institute in 2021.



Dr Shanthi Kanagarajah

Board Member

Dr Kanagarajah is a practising Geriatrician and General Physician in both private and public hospitals. She is the Clinical Director of the Geriatric Evaluation and Management Unit at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and is a founding Director of Queensland Physician Care.



Mr Michael Krieg

Board Member

Mr Krieg has over 30 years of experience, commencing his career as a nurse before embarking on executive roles in several hospitals across Australia. He was appointed General Manager of The Wesley Hospital in 2017 and in 2019 became the Group Executive Hospitals of UnitingCare Queensland.



Mr David Hairsine

Board Member

Mr Hairsine is a highly experienced business leader with many years of driving growth strategy as General Manager, Finance and Treasury at mining company PanAust Limited and now works in a consultant role to the same.



Mr Neal O'Connor

Board Member

Mr O'Connor was appointed a Non-Executive Director in 2020. He holds a Bachelor of Law degree and has extensive experience in the resource industry with experience in Corporate Governance and Risk Management.



Ms Mairi McNeill

Board Member

Ms McNeill is the General Manager of St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital. Ms McNeill is an experienced healthcare executive who has worked in the private industry for over 25 years.



Dr James Aylward

Board Member

Dr Aylward is an innovative researcher and an active mentor for tech start-ups in health sciences. Dr Aylward was awarded the 2018 Clunies Ross Technology Innovation Award for developing Picato, an anti-skin cancer drug.



Ms Karen Read

Board Member

Ms Read joined the Wesley Research Institute Board in 2021. She holds a Bachelor of Business and is an FCPA, GAICD and MAMI. Ms Read is a senior finance and commercial executive and has extensive experience within the mining and resources sector, with a career spanning 30 years.



Dr John Rivers

Board Member

Dr Rivers is a practising cardiologist and founding member of the Queensland Cardiovascular Group. Dr Rivers has extensive experience in business development and governance in the healthcare industry.



Ms Shannon McDermott

Company Secretary

Ms McDermott is a chartered company secretary and practising lawyer with over 10 years' in-house experience in both private companies and government organisations. She was formerly a medical engineer who worked in neuromuscular research.

Coeliac Research and Immune Health Research Program

RESEARCH PROFILE



Wesley Research Institute receives a high amount of research interest each year from health professionals affiliated with UnitingCare Hospitals, as well as from biotechnology, pharmaceutical and device manufacturing leaders worldwide seeking to leverage our expertise in clinical research to help bring their products to market.

We invest in the highest calibre research capability across all our programs. Our internal experts drive translational health research outcomes and enable our ever-expanding network of clinicians to undertake exceptional research.

The research projects that we fund are reviewed by the Wesley Research Institute Research Advisory Board to ensure the highest standards of research are met.

Thanks to our incredible donors, we were able to fund a number of research projects in 2022-23 and are currently assessing the next set of applications for our 2023 grant program. These donor-funded grant programs enable us to continue research that has real-time, real-world impact across the community.

Featured in this Research Profile are selected research projects undertaken this year. Our breadth of research expands beyond what is highlighted, as we strive towards real-time, real-world impact to further enhance patient outcomes.

Coeliac Disease in First-degree Relatives

A prospective observational study undertaken by Wesley Research Institute's Coeliac Disease and Immune Health Program team found that Australian children have very high rates of undiagnosed coeliac disease if their parents or siblings also have the autoimmune disorder.

The research found that 14% of children who were genetically at risk were diagnosed with coeliac disease, which is 10 times more than the national average.

An estimated 367,000 Australians (1 in 70) have coeliac disease. People with coeliac disease can experience a wide range of medical problems such as osteoporosis, malignancy, infertility and general malaise. Despite this many also feel they are asymptomatic at diagnosis.

Only around one in three Australians with coeliac disease are diagnosed and most don't find out until later in life, in their fourth or fifth decades.

This research is significant as it highlights the prevalence of coeliac disease and the importance of at-risk children being tested, which can reduce the potential life-long impacts on their overall health. If left untreated, the disease can lead to stunted growth, behavioural issues, iron depletion and malnutrition.

Following the publication of this research in October 2023, researchers called for all children at risk to be checked for coeliac disease after the age of two years. If negative then, though genetically at risk, they should be checked again on a couple of occasions prior to anticipated growth spurts.

The article 'Undiagnosed coeliac disease identified by active case finding in first degree relatives of people with coeliac disease in Australia: a prospective observational study' was published in *The Medical Journal of Australia* on 2 October 2023.

Looking for cases of coeliac disease in high-risk individuals, particularly children, should increase diagnosis rates and give us a much clearer picture of the disease in Australia. If we catch the problem early, we can avoid many years of potential Coeliac-related issues such as tooth decay, osteoporosis, chronic fatigue, lack of focus and malabsorption.

Dr James Daveson, Director of the Coeliac Disease and Immune Health Research Program at Wesley Research Institute

Coeliac Research Network

To support the thousands of Australians with coeliac disease, Wesley Research Institute developed a new research network focusing on coeliac disease and immune health research.

The Network is part of the Coeliac Disease and Immune Health Research Program at Wesley Research Institute, which aims to improve our understanding of coeliac disease to further support the estimated 1 in 70 Australians who live with the autoimmune condition.

Patients, carers, doctors and allied health professionals will be able to directly access the latest coeliac science through the Coeliac Research Network, and support and participate in ongoing research.

The Coeliac Research Network also provides patients with a voice to ensure coeliac research is adequately funded while keeping them informed on research into treatment solutions beyond a gluten-free diet. It adds another dimension to the valuable resources and support available through community groups such as our partner, Coeliac Australia.

Coeliac disease is still very misunderstood, and many patients have the disease for years before they are diagnosed. By then, a lot of damage has been done that could have been avoided.

Dr Anuj Sehgal, Senior Research Officer in Wesley Research Institute's Coeliac Disease and Immune Health Program

Involving people in research networks means that the whole momentum moves forward. People are more engaged, and they have a clearer understanding of what we are trying to do, so we would like them to be involved with us.

Dr James Daveson, Director of the Coeliac Disease and Immune Health Research Program at Wesley Research Institute

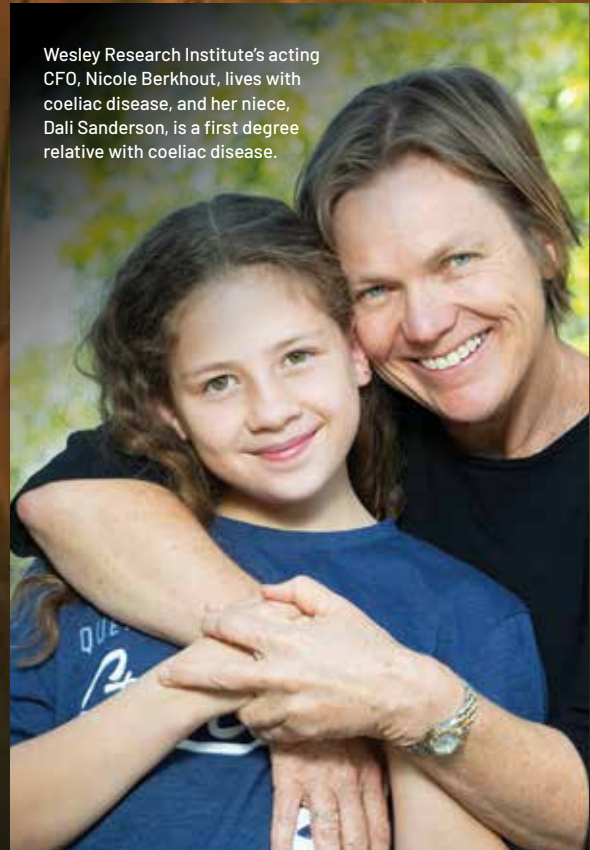
Sponsored Therapeutic Studies in Coeliac Disease

Wesley Research Institute is involved in multiple studies exploring novel therapeutics in coeliac disease, which complements both the advocacy and investigator-initiated clinical trial program in coeliac disease at Wesley Research Institute.

An early Phase 1b double-blind placebo-controlled study by Immunic, Inc conducted at Wesley Research Institute, for which Dr Daveson was the Australian national lead investigator, was presented at the European United Gastroenterology Week in October 2023.

IMU-856 showed positive effects over placebo in four key dimensions of clinical outcome: protection of the gut architecture, improvement of patients' symptoms, biomarker response and enhancement of nutrient absorption. IMU-856 showed the first clinical signals of its potential ability to restore a healthy gut by renewal of the gut wall in patients with coeliac disease.

Wesley Research Institute's acting CFO, Nicole Berkhout, lives with coeliac disease, and her niece, Dali Sanderson, is a first degree relative with coeliac disease.



PARIS 2 and PARIS on Country

Evidence from world-first clinical trials based on the Paediatric Acute Respiratory Intervention Studies (PARIS) has expanded our understanding of when it is best to place an infant or child on nasal high-flow oxygen therapy, and when to use standard oxygen as a first-line oxygen therapy.

PARIS 2 was the world's first large-scale clinical trial in children aged under five presenting to hospital emergency departments with a respiratory illness requiring oxygen. It compared standard oxygen therapy with nasal high-flow therapy, which is a simple method of providing increased oxygen via nasal cannula, but one that is rarely available in smaller hospitals.

The study demonstrated that oxygen therapies work differently for children than for infants and adults, and that the combination of these two oxygen methods can be safely used in general wards of smaller and regional hospitals that do not have children's intensive care services.

The findings are already changing how clinicians treat children with acute respiratory problems, and a new project in 18 rural and remote hospitals, PARIS on Country, is aiming to improve health equity and reduce transfers of sick children with respiratory disease to city hospitals.

High-flow oxygen therapy is rarely available in rural and remote areas of Australia and many patients are transferred to city hospitals for a higher level of care than they may need. This can cause emotional stress for children and families, unnecessary load on emergency departments, and huge transfer costs for the State.

Paris on Country will develop and implement a respiratory care training package to help rural and remote clinicians decide when to escalate treatment and when to seek specialist advice via telehealth, with the aim of reducing the number of children being transferred away to city hospitals by up to 50%.

PARIS 2 is funded by Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council with support from the Thrasher Research Fund (US), Emergency Medicine Foundation (Australia), Children's Hospital Foundation (Australia) and Perth Children's Hospital Foundation (Australia).

PARIS on Country is funded by the Medical Research Future Fund.

The article 'Effect of Early High-Flow Nasal Oxygen vs Standard Oxygen Therapy on Length of Hospital Stay in Hospitalized Children With Acute Hypoxemic Respiratory Failure: The PARIS-2 Randomized Clinical Trial' was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* on 17 January 2023.

PARIS 2 has not only changed best practices in this field, but it has changed the way we understand how oxygen needs to be delivered.

Dr Andreas Schibler MBBS,
Chief Investigator on PARIS 2



By providing local clinicians with the tools, education and information they need, we hope to see a positive change for these sick children.

Dr Donna Franklin, Chief Investigator on the PARIS on Country project



Dr Phil Mosley and Chris Wright

Tourette Syndrome and medicinal cannabis

Researchers proved that medicinal cannabis can be a life-changing treatment for people with Tourette Syndrome in a groundbreaking clinical study.

The results showed a statistically and clinically significant reduction in motor and vocal tics in patients with Tourette Syndrome in just six weeks of using medicinal cannabis.

Tourette Syndrome affects about 1% of the population and is four times more common in men than women. The neurological disorder often begins in childhood and is characterised by involuntary movements and vocalisations, known as tics. In some cases, including the participants in this trial, severe symptoms continue into adulthood.

Tourette Syndrome and the uncontrollable movements that go with it can cause widespread and devastating physical, emotional and social problems for patients.

This study showed that medicinal cannabis can reduce tics by a degree that makes a life-changing difference for people with Tourette Syndrome and their families. In a short period, participants found that the number of tics they were having each day decreased substantially, while the tics that remained were less intense, less painful and less disruptive. Other symptoms associated with Tourette Syndrome, particularly symptoms of OCD and anxiety, were also found to have reduced in the study's participants.

Cannabis interacts with specific receptors on nerve cells in the brain that are part of the body's own 'endocannabinoid' system. Stimulation of these receptors tightens a leaky filter that stops the involuntary movements and vocalisations from getting out and being expressed.

This clinical study was conducted by Wesley Research Institute in partnership with scientists from the University of Sydney's Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics and QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, with support from the Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia.

The article 'Tetrahydrocannabinol and Cannabidiol in Tourette Syndrome' was published in *NEJM Evidence* on 9 June 2023.

“ The important aspect about this trial is that it gives people with Tourette Syndrome hope and more treatment options, particularly when other drugs have been unsuccessful, or the side-effects of those drugs have been intolerable.

Dr Philip Mosley, Neuropsychiatrist and a Research Fellow at the Wesley Research Institute and QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute

ENDO-3 clinical trial

A clinical trial into the effectiveness of standard treatments on patients with endometrial cancer progressed this year, with seed funding from Wesley Research Institute supporting the initial establishment of the trial two years ago.

The research, known as ENDO-3, is aiming to accelerate and increase the evidence base for sentinel node biopsy as a surgical technique to explore lymph nodes, as a method for surgical staging of endometrial cancer. The effectiveness of sentinel node biopsy, its value to patients, and potential harms compared with no-node dissection, will be analysed as part of this trial.

The research was initially funded by Wesley Research Institute via a seeding grant, which enabled researchers to establish the clinical trial by putting processes in place and starting to collect data. With the clinical trial established, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) this year provided \$3.1 million in funding to further support the study.

Two years into the trial, 171 patients have been enrolled out of an expected 800, with surgeons currently participating in the study from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Further sites across Australia and internationally are expected to join the clinical trial in the coming years.

Blood and tumour tissue samples are also being collected through the clinical trial, to enable a deeper understanding of the molecular mechanisms that define aggressive tumours.

It is anticipated that the findings of the research will be available in eight to 10 years and will have an impact on treatment practices for hospitals and health professionals worldwide.

“ This research will help certainly about 3,000 women diagnosed every year with uterine cancer straight away. In addition, this trial will not only help Australian women, but because there is no other trial like this in the world, it will therefore help a lot of women globally because our results will be presented internationally

Dr Andreas Obermair, Researcher at Wesley Research Institute





Collaborating with The University of Queensland on developing this unique Centre will be mutually beneficial, with the goal of fast-tracking and advancing our research, translating to improving health outcomes for our patients.

Andrew Barron, CEO Wesley Research Institute

Queensland Spatial Biology Centre

Matching patients with the correct therapy is of the utmost importance in developing personalised medicine and improving patients' quality of life. With a long-term vision to improve treatment for patients, we're aiming to answer the question: 'Why do people with a similar disease have completely different outcomes?'

Wesley Research Institute has this year laid the foundations for the development of an Australian-first hospital-based Spatial Biology Centre, positioning discovery and clinician scientists in the heart of personalised therapy.

Spatial biology is the next frontier in medicine and biomedical sciences, providing new insights into the causes of diseases, from cancer and cardiovascular to neurodegenerative and beyond. This new technology will hopefully provide the answers for why some people respond to specific treatments and others don't.

This cutting-edge technology enables us to interrogate many proteins and genes from tissue samples in their original locations, while maintaining the tissue architecture and organisation intact.

This enables us to assess every cell within a diagnostic specimen, including their unique signals and locations within the organ. These new dimensions of data will give us insights into why some patients respond to treatment and why some may not, and how understanding these cellular communications may aid in personalising therapies.

Taken together, this information can identify new drug targets and distinguish patients likely to achieve the greatest benefit from therapy.

Being the official research partner of UnitingCare Queensland, Wesley Research Institute has a unique position with the ability to leverage the clinical expertise and patient throughput of the four UnitingCare Hospitals – The Wesley, St Andrew's War Memorial, Buderim Private and St Stephen's – as well as aged care and community services. Our broad patient population allows us to possess a deep, rich and evidence-based understanding of the health challenges faced by our patients every day.

Health Services Research



L-R – Belinda Moshi, Dr Elizabeth Martin, Dr Olivia Fisher, Dr Caroline Grogan, A/Prof Wendell Cockshaw

Health services research is a fast-growing, multidisciplinary field that aims to improve the design, implementation and delivery of health services to get the best possible outcomes for both patients and healthcare providers.

Our newly formed Health Services Research Team uses evidence-based methods to understand health service challenges, and to co-design, implement and evaluate innovative solutions. Our experienced researchers take a system-wide view, considering a range of different perspectives, from external influences such as social and environmental factors, policy and legislation, to individual and group norms and behavioural factors, all of which influence how healthcare is delivered and experienced by patients and practitioners.

The team's expertise spans implementation science, health economics, and quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research design. The broad range of experience within our team also includes clinical practice, health promotion, lecturing and project management.

The team was initially established in July 2022 to work in partnership with UnitingCare Queensland, and quickly expanded due to the demand for this research.

Unlike traditional medical research, which can take 15 to 20 years to be translated into healthcare practice, health services research has real-time and real-world impact. A key example has been the development of the UnitingCare Queensland Virtual Hospital, where the research team and the hospital project team within UnitingCare, have met regularly to discuss emerging research findings and how these might impact the roll-out of the new hospital.

Our researchers

Dr Olivia Fisher is an implementation scientist and mixed methods researcher specialising in consumer-led research and co-design. Olivia has expert knowledge of mental health promotion and mental illness prevention.

Associate Professor Wendell Cockshaw is a research design specialist and statistician with a PhD in psychology. Wendell has extensive experience spanning multidisciplinary health and psychology research contexts.

Dr Elizabeth Martin is a health economist and implementation scientist specialising in maternity services research. Elizabeth is recognised as an expert in patient-reported outcome and experience measures.

Dr Caroline Grogan is a qualitative dementia and aged care research expert with a PhD in social work. Caroline's knowledge of strategies for including people with cognitive impairment in research impacting their health and aged care outcomes is highly regarded.

Belinda Moshi has a background in policy implementation and has a strong interest in research to deliver better health outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Our projects

Research projects this year were undertaken across UnitingCare Queensland's Hospitals, BlueCare, and Family and Disability Services, as well as Isaac Navicare.

Isaac Navicare Pilot Evaluation

Lead Researcher: Dr Olivia Fisher
Funded by Mitsubishi Development

This evaluation examined the uptake, suitability and acceptability of the Isaac Navicare service during the first 12 months of operation. An embargoed report has been provided to the funders of Isaac Navicare (Mitsubishi and BHP), and a paper is currently under review for a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Virtual Hospital Research Program

Lead Researcher: Dr Olivia Fisher
Funded by UnitingCare Queensland

The Virtual Hospital Research Program is expected to be a long-term collaboration with UnitingCare Queensland to co-design, implement and evaluate models of care delivered under the new Virtual Hospital. We are using a world-first, cutting-edge context assessment and co-design process informed by implementation science to support UnitingCare Queensland in developing the vision, principles and future models of care. Our comprehensive evaluation plan includes patient and carer, health service and implementation outcomes.

Projects:

- Context Assessment Study
- Co-Design Study
- Hospital Evaluation Study (future project, in development)

“It is exciting to see how rapidly this area of research is growing, and the impact we've been able to have in such a short period of time. We are laying the groundwork for long-term programs of research which will result in better health and aged care services, leading to better outcomes for patients, clients and their carers.”

Dr Olivia Fisher,
Health Services Research Team Lead

Tissue Injury Research Program

Lead Researcher:
Associate Professor Wendell Cockshaw
Funded by UnitingCare Queensland

This research program will focus on the prevention, identification and management of chronic wounds across UnitingCare Queensland. The initial phase will identify current practices and areas for improvement.

Future phases will involve co-design of interventions targeting the identified areas for improvement to achieve better outcomes for UnitingCare Queensland clients.

Aged Care and Dementia Research Program

Lead Researcher: Dr Caroline Grogan
Funded by Irene Hunt Estate

A partnership has been formed with BlueCare to research key aged care programs and initiatives. Initial projects will focus on understanding the health and aged care needs of people living with dementia and their carers.

Projects:

1. BlueCare Dementia In-Home Respite Study - This project focuses on understanding the needs, preferences and perspectives of people living with dementia and their carers in relation to in-home respite care. The project will inform the roll-out of this service in Beaudesert, Gold Coast and Toowoomba.
2. BlueCare Neighbourhood Model Evaluation (future project, in development) - BlueCare is implementing a new local model for their community services known as a Neighbourhood Model, where small teams of local staff support clients in a distinct geographical area. This project will investigate whether the new model improves outcomes for clients, their carers, and Bluecare staff.

The expansion of our internal research capabilities through the development of the Health Services Research Team will help to move Wesley Research Institute forward as we continue to make a real-time, real-world impact across the community.

Australians living in rural and remote areas have higher rates of health risk factors, lower access to health services such as GPs and mental health support, and higher rates of death due to chronic conditions such as coronary heart disease, compared with their metropolitan counterparts.

Sadly, suicide rates are almost double in rural and remote areas compared to the rest of Australia. Access to primary, acute and specialist care is limited in rural areas, and distance, cost, stigma and lack of healthcare professionals all act as barriers to receiving good quality mental health care.

To try and address this mental health crisis, the Isaac Navicare service, located in the Isaac Shire, was officially launched in November 2021 as part of the Mitsubishi Development Rural and Remote Health Centre, and continued into 2022, reaching capacity towards the end of the year. Demand was such that a second Mental Health Care Navigator was employed in December 2022, and a third, part-time Care Navigator will join the team in January 2024.

Who is Navicare helping?

Queenslanders in the Bowen Basin, with local community members, service providers, government and local businesses committed to improving the mental health of the community.

Navicare is making a real difference in the community, having supported almost 500 individuals to access timely, appropriate mental health support since it opened. In the 2022–23 financial year, Navicare supported 292 new clients ranging from 2 to 73 years of age.

- 1 in 3 clients are aged under 18 years.
- 2 out of 3 clients are female.
- 1 in 6 clients report self-harm or suicidal ideation.
- 1 in 3 clients are unemployed. Of those adult clients who are employed, approximately half work in mining or construction.
- 1 in 3 clients are named on a government concession card, such as low income, health care, carer's pension or disability pension, and require low-cost or bulk billed mental health services.
- 5.7% of clients report having a disability.
- 9.5% of clients identify as First Nations peoples.
- 6.2% of clients have complex psychiatric conditions, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.
- 8.9% of clients have autism spectrum disorder.
- 12.0% of clients are experiencing, or have recently experienced, domestic and family violence.
- 12.4% of inquiries come from outside of the Isaac region.
- Over half of all referrals come directly from general practitioners.

“ I send all our mental health referrals to Navicare. It's a relief to finally have a clearer pathway to getting our patients the counselling they need.

GP Practice Nurse, Isaac region

What's the next phase for this project?

An evaluation of the first year of service was conducted, the findings of which will be presented at the Rural Mental Health Conference in Albury, NSW, in November 2023. The research findings have also been submitted by publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Further to this, additional research on the Navicare program will be conducted through 'The Bridging Study', a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnership Project (ID2018981) announced in December 2022. This study, led by the Queensland University of Technology with Wesley Research Institute as an official partner, will look to expand Navicare services into three additional Bowen Basin communities. The project is also partnering with Beyond Blue, Isaac Regional Council, Greater Whitsundays Communities, mental health care providers and Bowen Basin communities.

In July 2023, Wesley Research Institute and Mitsubishi Development signed a new partnership – the largest for Mitsubishi Development in Australia – which will provide significant funding for Navicare over the next two years.

FOUNDING PARTNER
ISAAC NAVICARE



BHP

I have struggled with my mental health for over a decade. I was in such a dark place when my doctor referred me to Navicare that I honestly believe I would not be here without the help they provided. Navicare ... connected me with an amazing telehealth psychologist who has helped me out of the darkness and back into the light. This service has literally saved my life.

Navicare client, Isaac local

Mitsubishi Development has a vested interest in the health of the Bowen Basin rural community, and we are grateful to have their support, not just for the Navicare program, but since our inception in 1994. It's through corporate partnerships like this that we can develop robust research that has positive social impact.

Andrew Barron, CEO Wesley Research Institute

L-R: Yasutaka Okamoto, Sonia Lewis, Kenichiro Tauchi, Andrew Barron, Charlie Sartain



FINANCIAL SUMMARY



Wesley Research Institute is in the final year of its three-year strategic plan.

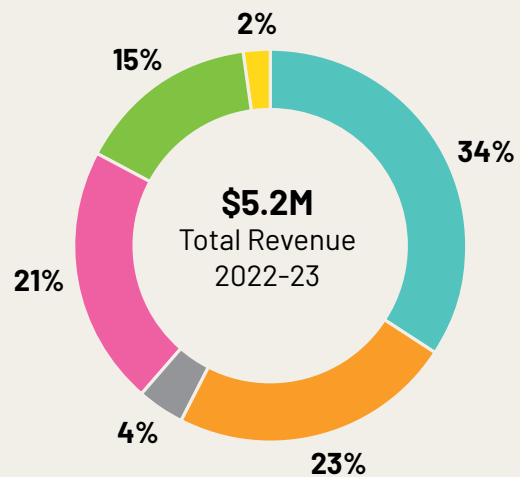
As the organisation continues to pursue collaborative opportunities to deliver its research mission, we are taking an entrepreneurial and innovative approach to building sustainable growth.

The Institute continues to enhance the extensive risk management framework, embedding significant mitigation and governance strategies. Wesley Research Institute is committed to building highly efficient operations, ensuring the generous funds received help achieve its ultimate mission.

Income

Total Revenue in 2022-23 was \$5.2M, compared to \$4.6M in 2021-22.

- 34% Gifts, Donations & Sponsorships
- 23% Grants
- 4% Bequests
- 21% Fee for Service Income
- 15% Investment Income
- 2% Facilities & Other Income

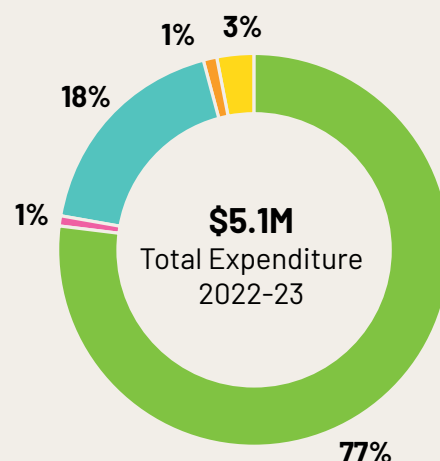


Expenditure

Total expenditure for the 2022-23 year was \$5.1M, relative to \$4.5M in 2021-22.

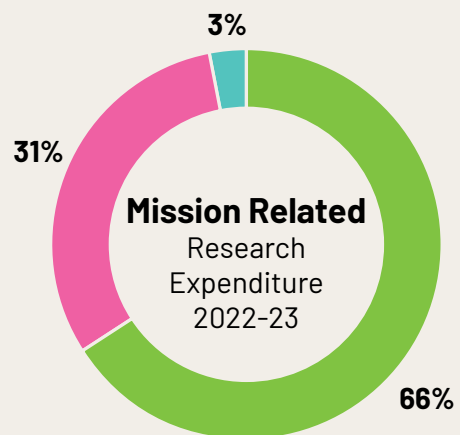
The total reported surplus was \$171,000 compared to \$92,000 in 2021-22.

- 77% Research
- 1% Investment Activity
- 18% Fundraising & Marketing
- 1% Corporate Services
- 3% Other Expenses



Research Expenditure

- \$2,679,337 Investigator Initiated Research
- \$1,235,720 Sponsored Clinical Trials
- \$127,441 Biobank

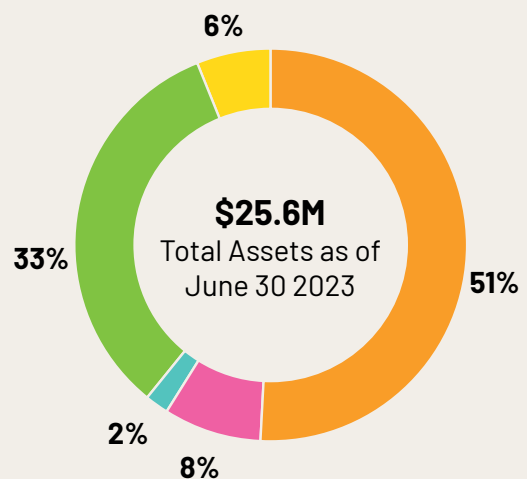


Assets

Total assets as of 30 June 2023 were \$25.6M, relative to \$24.9M in 2021-22.

Total liabilities were \$1M, with net assets totalling \$24.5M as of 30 June 2023.

- 51% Investments
- 8% Cash
- 2% Trade Receivables & Other Assets
- 33% Property, Plant & Equipment
- 6% Term Deposits



DONOR PROFILES



Maureen Stevenson

Maureen Stevenson's passion for improving the lives of those in our community is evident in the way that she has given selflessly to so many causes. Maureen says humbly that she just wants to help as many as she can with her giving, because she can.

Maureen Stevenson received the 2023 Community Philanthropist of the Year Award at the Queensland Philanthropy Awards (QCF) held at Brisbane Town Hall. In addition to supporting many Queensland charities for over 30 years, Maureen has also been supporting Wesley Research Institute as a generous and long-term loyal donor for 16 years.

Her donations have not only contributed to enabling research into a range of diseases and medical conditions but have also helped to fund a range of initiatives that have the potential to help change lives. We sincerely thank Maureen for her generous support again this year.



Maureen Stevenson and Libby Smith,
EA at Wesley Research Institute

Brazil Family Foundation

Through hard work, good planning and decision-making, Southern Queensland mixed farmer, investor and philanthropist Franklin 'Lyn' Brazil progressed from a small poultry farm to four cropping properties and two cattle operations.

Alongside Mr Brazil during his grains industry work was his wife Bobbie. In addition to serving as the University of Southern Queensland Chancellor from 2006 to 2014, Mrs Brazil was the chair of the Australian Landcare Council, and a director of the Condamine Catchment Management Association.

The Brazil Family Foundation contributes to many medical and scientific research organisations, including Wesley Research Institute. This year we were fortunate to receive a very generous donation to help further the research being conducted for the Coeliac Disease and Immune Health Research Program. We thank the Brazil Family Foundation for their continued support.

I give regularly through Wesley Research Institute to drive positive research based changes in patient care. As a cancer survivor, I want to help support research for this terrible disease. Investing in patient oriented medical research has proved to be great value for money and the best way to witness the impact of my donations during my lifetime.

Maureen Stevenson

DONOR HONOUR ROLL



Hugh Sheardown AM

Diagnosed with coeliac disease himself nearly 20 years ago, Hugh Sheardown has always strived to help others with the condition. Mr Sheardown has spent much of his retirement in various roles with Coeliac Queensland and Coeliac Australia, including stints as president of both organisations.

"I understand research takes so long that it's probably never ever going to benefit me, but certainly if my grandchildren or great-grandchildren now develops coeliac disease, it could help them. But more importantly, there's a huge audience of children and the young adults out there that can do with all the help that they can get," he said.

We would like to thank Hugh and Bev Sheardown for their generous ongoing support of Wesley Research Institute, particularly for coeliac research.

VidyaJey Family Foundation

The VidyaJey Foundation's steadfast support of the Wesley Research Institute over the last seven years continued this year with their generous donations allowing important research projects to progress. Their donations enable our researchers to provide positive impact for patients through medical research.

Wesley Research Institute is very grateful to the VidyaJey Foundation for the ongoing and generous support they have provided since 2016. We would like to thank the family, JeyJey, Vidya and Sandra, for their commitment to the work we do and the research that they enable.

Martin and Fran Albrecht

Martin and Fran Albrecht have been long term supporters of Wesley Research Institute. Not only was Martin former Chairman of the Board but he was also awarded Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AC) in 2002, and the Centenary Medal in 2003. Martin is also a recipient of Honorary Doctorates from University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, University of South Australia and Griffith University.

We are so honoured to have the Albrechts as donors and Martin as Patron, not only for their generous philanthropic support but for their tireless advocacy for Wesley Research Institute across government, industries and with corporate partners.

Bequest

Estate of Late Frank Herbert Casley

Over \$50,000

Bev & Hugh Sheardown, AM
BHP

Brazil Family Foundation
JJ Richards & Sons Pty Ltd
Mitsubishi Development Pty Ltd
VidyaJey Family Foundation

Over \$10,000

Albrecht Family Foundation
Catalano Family Foundation
The Donald & Joan Wilson Foundation
Edward Bullock Endowment
The Sartain Family Foundation
Mr Tony Hogg

Over \$1000

A/Prof John Allan
Mr Peter and Mrs Anne Allen
APS Foundation
Mrs Andree Axelsen
Dr James Aylward, AM
Mrs Kay and Mr Jon Douglas AM
Mrs Daphne Dunn
Ms Louise Etlin
Mr John and Mrs Patrice Foote
Dr Troy and Karelia Gianduzzo
Mr Richard Hughes
Dr Cathryn Mittelheuser, AM
Mr Neal O'Connor
Mr Sid Owen and A/Prof Glenda Strachan
Mrs Viti Packer
Queensland Community Foundation
Mrs Maureen Stevenson
JB Were
Mr Stephen Yelland

Grants

Fisher & Paykel – Research nurse

A LEGACY OF HOPE

A gift in your Will can save lives.

Help ensure that groundbreaking medical research is translated into real and valuable treatments.



Your gift is precious. We will make it count.

Wesley Research Institute was established 28 years ago and continues to be the official research organisation of UnitingCare. We only invest in research that has been rigorously assessed for scientific merit by an Independent Research Committee. Studies have shown that every dollar invested in research returns \$3.90 in benefits to the population.

We support research initiated by people on the frontline who really know the value of clinical research – the doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in our hospitals. They are driven by a desire to give patients better treatment options and improved quality of life for a range of diseases and health issues.

For more information or to discuss leaving a gift in your Will, please email bequests@wesleyresearch.org.au or call (07) 3721 1500.

If you're already thinking about your personal legacy and the possibility of including Wesley Research Institute in your Will, we can't thank you enough for considering us. Naturally, looking after your family and friends comes first. All we ask is that after remembering them you would consider leaving a gift in your Will to Wesley Research Institute.

Most gifts in Wills (or bequests) are made by ordinary, hard working people who want to make a positive difference to their community. A gift in your Will to Wesley Research Institute will help ensure that groundbreaking medical research is translated into real and valuable treatments.

How to leave a gift in your Will

A gift in your Will to Wesley Research Institute will fund critical research that achieves a lasting impact for generations to come. There are different ways you can leave a gift in your Will:



Percentage share gift

This is the most flexible option, and you do not need to know how much your estate will be worth just the share you'd like to leave to each beneficiary.



Residual gift

Another way to contribute is to leave a percentage of what is left after you have provided for your loved ones.



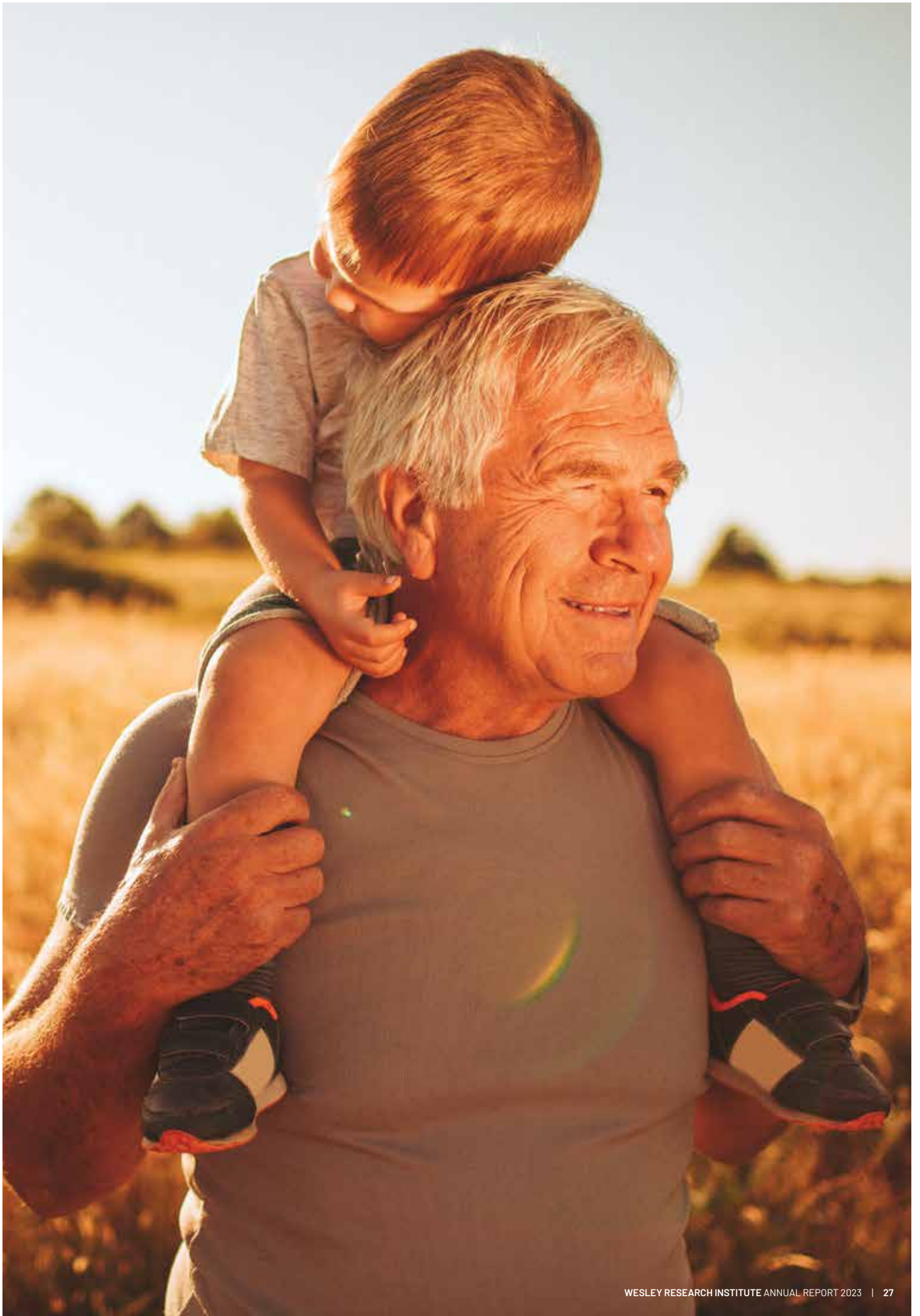
Pecuniary gift

You may wish to leave a fixed sum of money (known as a pecuniary bequest).



Specific purpose gift

You may wish to leave a gift for a specific type of research or program.



SUPPORT RESEARCH



YES, I'll support vital medical research

Please accept a donation of:

\$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible

Please find enclosed

Cheque Money Order (payable to Wesley Research Institute)

Please debit my:

Visa Mastercard Amex

Card Number _____ Expiry Date _____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____

Alternatively you can donate **online via bank transfer:**

Bank: ANZ Bank BSB: 014 272 Account: 8365 649 65 Ref: Surname

Your Details

Name _____

Address _____

Suburb _____ Postcode _____ State _____

Email _____ Mobile _____

Please return this form to:

Wesley Research Institute
PO BOX 499 Toowong
QLD 4066

Please call **(07) 3721 1500** with any queries or
visit **www.wesleyresearch.org.au**

**Donate with your
smart phone!**



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