

# Media Release

## WIRF welcomes new Chief Operations Director

Monday, 13 February 2017

The Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF) have appointed its inaugural Chief Operations Director, Deb Attard Portugues.

Deb's newly created role with WIRF will see her take responsibility for implementing the directions of the WIRF Board, providing leadership to staff and effectively managing the Foundation's day-to-day operations in-line with WIRF's strategic direction.

Deb joins WIRF after a highly success tenure at the Australian Wildlife Conservancy where she has a demonstrated background in business development, marketing and fundraising and brings with her a wealth of experience in stakeholder management and leadership.

Her contributions have been crucial to growing the national scope of AWC and the number of sanctuaries from just five to 25 in the duration of her employment.

Prior to coming to Australia, Deb worked in Malta where she taught Creative Thinking techniques with Professor Edward deBono. For seven years Deb served on the board of POWA institute for creative thinking, here in Australia, this institute is based on Edward deBono's thinking methods.

Deb is currently spearheading the national promotion and philanthropic support for one of WIRF's most successful initiatives, the Western Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative.

The Initiative's identified key health interventions, and subsequent results, have attracted considerable international interest in the field of obstetrics, culminating with the study being published in the leading medical journal, The American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology. The study has also been selected as the Journal's 'Impact Paper' for 2017.

This Initiative seeks to provide a proven roadmap for other regions, both nationally and internationally, to safely and effectively lower the rate of preterm birth, save countless lives, prevent lifelong disability, and deliver significant savings across health systems.

**ENDS**

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**Background:** The Women and Infants Research Foundation is one of Australia's leading independent research institution dedicated to improving the health of women, infants and reproductive health. We have a proud 40-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement centred on the eradication of disease and the reduction of illness in women of all ages and babies.