

Delivering the Future



women & infants
research foundation

Winter 2023

Prof Matt Kemp named in world's top 2% Scientists' List
Leading perinatal psychiatrist joins WIRF Board
Reproductive research awards record



CEO's Message

Why? I am often asked by those who are new to the WIRF family, given all the hugely important causes that exist in our community today, why does WIRF deserve their attention?

Despite WIRF being a relatively small organisation, with your support, we are making a huge positive impact on the health and wellbeing of women and babies here in Western Australia and across the country.

Very few research institutes in Australia fund state-of-the-art technology and equipment crucial to scientific discovery and have a true focus on developing programs and services at the coalface of healthcare delivery.

WIRF brings together expert clinician researchers, scientists, students, corporate and administration staff and volunteers, all working together to solve the most critical health issues facing some women, infants and pregnancy.

On the international research stage, we've never been shy to punch well above our weight and Stanford University's recent ranking of WIRF's Acting Chief Scientist, Professor Matt Kemp, in the list of the top 2% of globally recognised scientists is the latest in a long line of highlights.

Closer to home, our key involvement in the Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative is positioning this world first program to achieve an unprecedented reduction in preterm and early term rates across the country. This National Collaborative is supporting more than 50 participating maternity hospitals to deliver evidence-based changes in clinical care. This work is leaving an enduring culture of better practice by improving health outcomes for mothers and their babies.

The WIRF board and I are very excited and pleased to announce that leading perinatal psychiatrist, Professor Megan Galbally, has been appointed to our Board of Directors. Currently the Director of the Centre for Women's and Children's Mental Health at Monash University's School of Clinical Sciences, Prof Galbally is also a former Director of Psychiatry at King

Edward Memorial Hospital, so it is exciting to reconnect her with WA. We welcome Prof Galbally to the WIRF Board and know that her experience and expertise, along with that of the other Board members, guides our work for a better future for all women, mothers and babies.

I was delighted to attend the Channel 7 Telethon Trust Beneficiaries ceremony. WIRF's 2023 Telethon-funded projects are focused on delivering greater community access to obstetric care, an enhanced role of family in neonatal intensive care, and new treatments for mothers at risk of preterm delivery. We are indeed privileged to once again be a Telethon beneficiary. Thank you to all at Telethon for their hard work and ongoing support of WIRF and our projects.

An occasion that will be hard to beat was the morning tea we held in the WIRF Café to celebrate 20 years of remarkable service by Caroline Crawford. A stalwart of the Café and Hospital, Caroline has enriched the lives of colleagues, women and families that have visited the Hospital and Café. You can see highlights from Caroline's big day on page 11.

So back to why. Why does WIRF deserve your support? Our past and future successes are only made possible with your help, commitment and dedication. To our supporters and key partners, we say thank you! Your support is our lifeblood and it allows us to focus our efforts and energy on what truly matters most – delivering the healthiest possible future for the next generation of Australian families. For this, I cannot thank you enough.

I hope you enjoy reading about WIRF's recent news and activities in this latest edition of Delivering the Future. Thank you for your help, generosity, and ongoing commitment to WIRF. We hope you feel as proud as we do about what you are helping us achieve.

Warm regards,

Deb Attard Portughes
Chief Executive Officer



Stanford's World Top 2% Scientists List

WIRF's Acting Chief Scientist, Prof Matt Kemp has made the highly prestigious Stanford University's recent global list of the top 2% of most widely cited scientists in various disciplines (scientists, doctors, engineers and mathematicians).

Professor Kemp's research interests in perinatology are focused on improving outcomes for preterm infants, and include anti-inflammatory and antibiotic therapies, antenatal steroid treatment optimisation, minimally invasive fetal diagnostics, and the development of an Artificial Womb for extremely preterm infants.

This ranking is based on the information contained in the Scopus database and includes more than 200,000 researchers from the more than 8 million scientists considered to be active worldwide, with 22 scientific fields and 176 subfields taken into account.

In addition to being WIRF's Acting Chief Scientist, Professor Kemp is an Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore, and holds a number of international appointments, including Adjunct

Professorships at the University of Western Australia and Murdoch University, and an Honorary Associate Professorship at Tohoku University Hospital in Sendai, Japan.

Prof Kemp's work has received significant international attention and has attracted more than \$10 million in funding from a range of national and international agencies. His 2018, NHMRC Artificial Placenta funding application was the highest scoring Project Grant awarded in Western Australia in over a decade and ranked among the top three scoring Project Grants in the country that year.

He has published more than 130 peer-reviewed papers and scientific reports. His work has significantly advanced our understanding of fetal responses to infection, inflammation and exogenous glucocorticoids.

Working with collaborators in Japan, Professor Kemp's studies with the Artificial Womb, for extremely preterm infants, have generated national and international interest. The project is presently in an advanced phase of preclinical development.

The database of top-cited scientists provides standardised information on citations, h-index, co-authorship adjusted hm-index, citations to papers in different authorship positions and a composite indicator (c-score). Congratulations to Professor Kemp!

Reproductive research awards record

WIRF researchers earned a record number of awards at the international Society for Reproductive Investigation's (SRI) 70th Annual Scientific Meeting.

WIRF's Erin Fee, Haruo Usuda, Tsukasa Takahashi, Hideyuki Ikeda and Sean Carter each submitted SRI abstracts that were awarded oral presentations. These oral presentations represent the top 10-15% of all abstracts submitted.

Continuing the remarkable result for the team, Erin, Haruo and Tsukasa were also awarded the highly coveted SRI President's Presenter's Award for their work. These awards represent the top 25 most meritorious abstracts submitted by individuals still in training (either PhD students, postdocs or clinical fellows).

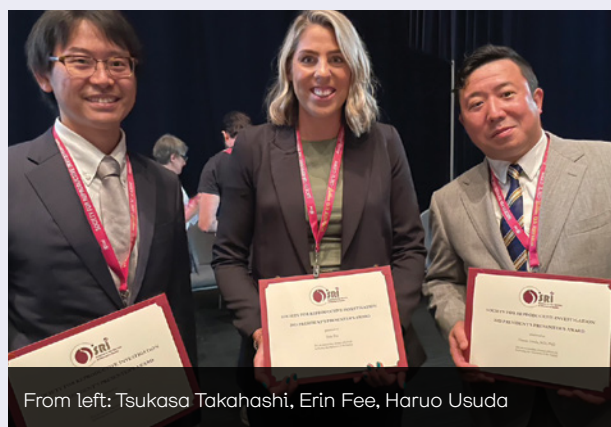
Previously WIRF has never had five oral abstracts presented - let alone been awarded three of the 25 most exemplary oral abstracts submitted.

WIRF Acting Chief Scientist, Professor Matt Kemp pointed to the record result as a clear

example of the calibre of WIRF's scientists on the international research stage.

WIRF-funded scientists and clinicians continue to rise to the challenge of improving women's health and ensuring a healthy start to life for every baby. They are delivering world-leading research into new therapies for preterm babies and better diagnostic tests for maternal and fetal health.

The Society for Reproductive Investigation advances reproductive and women's health care through translational and clinical science, training and mentoring future investigators, targeting funding agencies and policy makers, and promoting women's health.



From left: Tsukasa Takahashi, Erin Fee, Haruo Usuda

WIRF welcomes Minister for Medical Research



From left: Minister Stephen Dawson MLC, Deb Portughes, Dr Gareth Baynam, Dr Matt Skinner, Prof Matt Kemp

WIRF was absolutely thrilled to welcome the Honourable Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Medical Research, Emergency Services; Innovation and the Digital Economy; Volunteering, to WIRF.

WIRF's CEO, Deborah Portughes, Acting Chief Scientist, Professor Matt Kemp, and Dr Gareth Baynam updated Minister Dawson

on the immense impact of WIRF's scientific achievements locally, nationally and on the global research platform. They also delved into the future directions of WIRF, promising even more ground-breaking discoveries on the horizon.

The support of the WA Government is playing a pivotal role in empowering WIRF to conduct, translate, and implement our critical work, research, and programs for all Western Australians. This unwavering backing remains absolutely crucial to our ongoing success and the advancement of our mission.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Minister Dawson for not only his invaluable support but also for taking the time to personally engage with WIRF. His continued interest in our work serves as a tremendous source of motivation for our dedicated team. Together, we are blazing a trail towards a brighter and healthier future for all.

Acting Chief Scientist's Message



Professor Matt Kemp

WIRF's research mission, a healthy start to life for every baby, and a healthy life for every woman, sits at the heart of everything we do as an organisation. In support of this important cause, last year saw completion of the first phase of a governance renewal and strategic development process at WIRF. This is an initiative that is already paying dividends for the women and babies of Western Australia in 2023.

The direct funding of high-impact research, building local research capacity, and community engagement were three key areas targeted for prioritisation in 2022. I am pleased to report that the Foundation's Scientific Team has wasted no time in rising to these challenges this year.

In late May, WIRF began calling for applications under its new funding scheme, the Research Acceleration Awards.

Made possible with the generous support of every-day West Australians, and the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, the Awards will provide much-needed grant funding to mature and exploratory research projects addressing areas of need in women's and newborn health.

A unique feature of these awards will be the targeting of specific funding to graduate students working in women's and reproductive health disciplines, thus both accelerating early-stage research efforts and helping to secure a pipeline of research talent for long-term community benefit. The recipients of funding will be announced at the Foundation's annual Stars and Rising Stars Scientific Symposium, to be held in September 2023.

The Foundation has always sought to take a long-term view of research support, and this approach continues to bear fruit. Earlier this year, WIRF's Dr Usuda received \$393,000.00 in Fellowship funding from the WA Government's Future Health Research Fund for his work on the artificial placenta, a new and urgently needed life support platform for extremely preterm infants. You can read more about the research success of Dr Usuda and his team at a high-level international research meeting on page 4 of Delivering the Future.

This year, WIRF researchers will be hitting the road like never before, taking the latest in scientific discoveries around the Perth metropolitan area and, importantly, out to the regions, in a series of high school lectures and round table sessions.

Central to this initiative is the promotion of research in women's and newborn health as a career pathway, and of course sharing the amazing work that our WIRF researchers do with the generous support of the WA community. If you have a school or community group that would like to hear more about our work please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

As always, thank you for your support.

Professor Matt Kemp
Acting Chief Scientist, WIRF

Funding to accelerate life-changing medical research

The Women and Infants Research Foundation is backing Western Australian scientists to address key areas of women's, maternal, and newborn health, with grants to enable research breakthroughs.



The Foundation's Research Acceleration Awards have been designed to translate innovative research to real-world impact, and will keep WA among the best in the world for advancing medical breakthroughs.

A unique feature of these awards is bringing together the universities and tertiary medical institutions to create a single hub of perinatal research excellence, spearheaded from WA, to support the world's best medical researchers. Through the awards WIRF provides targeted, early-stage funding to promote translational perinatal research and develop a pipeline of research talent for long-term community benefit.

The 2023 Awards represent the largest level of direct grant support made by the Foundation to date. They will support both mature and exploratory research projects focussed on improving the health of WA women, mothers, and babies.

WIRF has a proud history of supporting Western Australia's top emerging medical researchers. The Foundation looks forward

to receiving applications for assessment by its Scientific Grants Sub-Committee and making Award recommendations to the WIRF Board for endorsement.

Applications close 12pm (AWST), Friday 23rd June 2023. Award recipients will be announced at the Foundation's annual Stars and Rising Stars Scientific Symposium, to be held on 1 September 2023.

WIRF would like to thank the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation for their generous contributions to this program.

For more information on the Research Acceleration Awards visit: <https://wirf.com.au/Research-Acceleration-Awards>



APPLY HERE

Prof Megan Galbally joins WIRF Board



The Women and Infants Research Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of leading perinatal psychiatrist, Professor Megan Galbally, to its Board of Directors.

For the last 19 years, Professor Galbally, Director of the Centre for Women's and Children's Mental Health at Monash University's School of Clinical Sciences, has undertaken high-impact research and led the development of perinatal service delivery in Australia.

The former Director of Psychiatry at King Edward Memorial Hospital, Prof Galbally has been a regular keynote speaker at the annual WA Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Symposium, and presented on the hidden issue of eating disorders in pregnancy at WIRF's 2022 Stars Symposium.

Prof Galbally is also Program Director of the Mental Health Program for Monash Health that covers the south-east of Melbourne and regional parts of Victoria. Spanning around a third of Victoria's population, it is the largest mental health program in Victoria.

She continues to lead the Mercy Pregnancy Emotional Wellbeing Study; a longitudinal pregnancy study across Victoria and Western Australia (including rural WA). For this study, Prof Galbally was successful as Chief Investigator A for NHMRC grants in both an Ideas and a Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies in 2022.

This breakthrough study hopes to establish the biological, psychological and social factors that contribute to women's emotional health in pregnancy and the postpartum. It will also link child wellbeing and developmental outcomes.

Professor Galbally continues to have roles with The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP). She is also the current Chair of the National Section of Perinatal and Infant Mental Health, RANZCP, and Chair of the Gender Equity Working Group, RANZCP, leading the development of the first gender equity action plan for the College.

We look forward to working with Professor Galbally on promoting and amplifying her critical research into the effects of maternal mental health, including perinatal depression, on child development.

WIRF's Directors look forward to Prof Galbally joining the Board to support and expand the Foundation's work going forward.

National Collaborative update

National efforts currently underway to safely prevent preterm and early term birth celebrated another landmark event in Melbourne recently.

Victorian Minister for Health, the Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas, joined 240 attendees from more than 60 Australian maternity hospitals at the iconic MCG to officially open the second critical Learning Session of the Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative.

The session featured interactive activities and presentations across the two days. Highlights included team presentations of their storyboards to share their learning, a deep dive into the collaborative strategies and the improvement methodology that will help them to achieve their aims. Breakout sessions on topics such as cervical length measurement, continuity of care, optimal timing of birth, and empowering women were also very well received.

A very special 'Yarn' involving a number of leading First Nations health professionals, scholars and researchers generated powerful reflections and thought provoking ideas on



National Preterm Birth Prevention COLLABORATIVE



maternity hospitals working together to prevent preterm birth

how to deliver culturally safe maternal and newborn care for First Nations communities.

The panellists also provided participating hospitals with robust strategies and resources to assist them to improve care and outcomes for First Nations women.

Through a Commonwealth grant awarded to WIRF, the Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative is supporting more than 60 Australian maternity hospitals to work together over the next 12 months to safely lower their rate of preterm and early term birth by at least 20%.

Commission for a Cause 2023

EUROZ HARTLEYS

FOUNDATION

The Women and Infants Research Foundation is extremely honoured to be named a beneficiary of the 2023 Euroz Hartleys Foundation's Commission for a Cause.

Euroz Hartleys' fifth annual 'Commission for a Cause' on 9 June 2023 will see 100 per cent of all brokerage generated on that day donated equally to WIRF and three other Western Australian charities: the Perth Children's Hospital Foundation, Lifeline WA and the Western Australian Cricket Foundation.

Euroz Hartleys' Executive Chairman, Andrew McKenzie said: "Euroz Hartleys has been grateful to be a beneficiary of our growing Western Australian economy over the past 22 years and as WA's largest and most successful stockbroking and wealth management firm we believe that we have an obligation to give back to our local community."

WIRF would like to thank the Euroz Hartleys Foundation for its ongoing support.

Erin celebrates her first Mother's Day with baby Ruby

When Erin Thomas gave birth to her daughter Ruby Landman earlier this year, the birth wasn't just preterm, it was almost 13 weeks too soon!



Erin and baby Ruby during their 10 week NICU stay

Born at 27 weeks and 2 days and weighing just 950 grams, Ruby is classed as a 'micropremie'. Erin remembers in vivid detail her preterm birth experience.

"Despite it impacting more than 3000 Western Australian babies each year, I didn't know very much about preterm birth at all. But we knew that if she came early we were confident that she would do well. Luckily she was at a gestational age where she had a good chance of surviving."

"One evening I went into early labour at home. There were some early signs, such as bleeding and pain weeks earlier which meant we had to be prepared for any outcome," she remembers.

Erin arrived at King Edward Memorial Hospital 10cm dilated with contractions one minute apart. Throughout, she remained steadfast in her wishes to keep things physiological – without unnecessary medication or intervention.

To mature Ruby's preterm lungs, Erin was given an antenatal steroid injection and just 10 minutes later Ruby was born.

Apart from her low birth weight and very early birth, Ruby hasn't had any initial or ongoing health concerns.

"This experience has been a very traumatic chapter in our lives, but ultimately, one that has shaped us and made us stronger," Erin reflects.

"Ruby's team has been exceptional. Nursing staff have been fantastic and I've had so many positive experiences interacting with the hospital's social work team and network of charities including WIRF. Ruby is just perfect and we can't wait to take her home."



THE MOST IMPACTFUL TIME TO GIVE

WIRF's mission is to ensure every baby has the best start to life. This end of financial year, we ask you to help us continue our fight to reduce preterm birth and ensure every baby, just like Ruby, has the brightest future possible.

Our research achievements would not be possible without your valued support. We hope you feel as proud as we do about our work to build healthy Australian families and save and improve countless lives. You can continue your support of WIRF so we can expand the reach and impact of our most transformative research and programs at www.wirf.com.au/donate

Alison's road to WIRF

There are many pathways to volunteering and our Vollies reflect the diversity of professional and working life as well as interesting personal experiences. WIRF Volunteer Alison Reid is a perfect example of this.

Having previously worked in very senior roles in the private sector, listed property funds and large organisations, Alison felt a compelling desire to give back to the community and help others.

Working mainly in Sydney in shopping centre management and development, redevelopment and refurbishment of large retail properties, she relocated to work in Perth 11 years ago.

“I can’t recall what first sparked my interest in volunteering with WIRF, but I know I just wanted to give back and the WIRF Café was a great fit. I love spending time in the kitchen and preparing quality and appetising food for hospital patients, staff and visitors. It also feels good that I can, in a very real way, help others.”

Alison's professional and volunteering journey hasn't been without its fair share of major challenges.

Diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer in August 2009, Alison had an immediate lumpectomy followed by aggressive chemotherapy and radiation treatments.



Alison Reid in the Café Gift Shop

Just two weeks into her radiation treatment, Alison fractured her spine and suffered a compressed vertebrae in a car accident. She couldn't drive and had to wear a Jewett spinal brace, so for six weeks Alison walked to her daily radiation treatments.

Steeled by her experience and armed with a clean bill of health, Alison continued to walk with a purpose and in 2016, was the face of Harry Perkins' Weekend to End Women's Cancer's 64km walk.

"I met a lot of women doing the walk and I know I approached the breast cancer different to a lot of people. I went out with a very positive attitude thinking 'this is not going to get me', 'I am a survivor.'"

Completing the Walk again in 2019, Alison decided to cast her altruistic net further and volunteering with WIRF eventuated. When asked if she could summarise what her volunteering experience meant to her, Alison responded simply and powerfully with “rewarding”.

"Volunteering gives me something to do with all the spare time I have now that I am no longer working. I meet new people, have a few laughs and thoroughly enjoy it."

Volunteer with WIRF: Create your work of heart

Charity comes in many forms, be it the generosity of a donation of funds, equipment or hours of one's time. Each equally as important to the other in our support of the King Edward Memorial Hospital community.

The time has come for us to recruit more volunteers to the WIRF Café, Gift Shop and Op Shop so that we may extend our opening hours.

If you are empathetic, compassionate and helpful, and would like to volunteer your time we would love to hear from you. You will be rewarded with a hands on experience working with a team helping us to help them - women and babies.

Please contact us at info@wirf.com.au or call 6458 1437.



Caroline clocks up 20 years of outstanding service

When it comes to larger than life personalities, they don't get much bigger than Caroline Crawford – who earlier this year celebrated a remarkable milestone with the Women and Infants Research Foundation and King Edward Memorial Hospital.

Earning the moniker 'Mini Boss' from her colleagues, Caroline recently marked 20 years of service to the Foundation and Hospital working across numerous roles.

WIRF Café Manager, Sam Cobley, pointed to Caroline's razor sharp wit, 'never say no' attitude, and willingness to give any new task a go, as attributes which made her so special.

"Caroline is a great person to have around the Café. She has taught me so much and I feel blessed to have the opportunity to work with someone so incredibly special."

Joined by her parents, Maria and Alan, for a morning tea at the Café, Caroline was delighted to see so many familiar faces, and as a die-hard West Coast Eagles fan, a room bathed in blue and gold.

"I love my co-workers and seeing everyone's happy faces. The Café is a fun place to work and Sam helps me a lot. I love seeing



Caroline (seated front left) celebrates her milestone with her WIRF Café family

the healthy preterm babies leave after their long stay. I am proud to have worked for 20 years in such an incredible place."

Everyone at WIRF and KEMH are extremely grateful to Caroline, not only for her dedication, but also for the role she has played in the lives of women and families that have visited the Hospital and Café.

A decade of delight for Noeleen

In another long-service highlight for the WIRF Café, Noeleen Hegotule recently marked 10 years of service to WIRF, KEMH and the WA community.

We can't count the times new mothers and patients have reached out to us after their stay to communicate just how exceptional Noeleen is, and how she goes 'above-and-beyond' to provide a friendly ear and support when it's most needed.

Originally from Niue Island in the South Pacific, Noeleen wears her heart on her sleeve and epitomises what it means to be a true team player.



Noeleen (left) with WIRF Café Manager, Sam Cobley, on her 10 year anniversary

"I love my job because of the interaction I have with women and families from all nationalities, cultures and walks of life. Most of all, I am passionate about saving preterm birth babies and allowing them to live their best lives."

Women give us the precious gift of life.

We are dedicated to giving them and their families the healthiest possible future.

WIRF is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes pioneering a new era of preventative medicine, solving problems at the earliest stages before they start. Our world-class research and public healthcare programs are focused on the most critical issues impacting women, infants and pregnancy:

- the prevention of preterm birth
- gynaecological cancers
- women's mental health
- development of an Artificial Womb

Together with our partners and supporters, we have the opportunity to fundamentally improve

maternal-fetal medicine, and significantly advance women's healthcare. We hope you feel as proud as we do about what you are helping us to achieve on behalf of all women, mothers and their babies.

We ask you to please continue your support of WIRF so we can deliver the healthiest possible future for all Australian families.

Regular giving

By setting up a regular gift to WIRF you can help make an ongoing difference to the lives of women, infants and families across Australia. To set up your monthly donation go to: wirf.com.au/donate



Please scan QR code to donate

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

☐

Yes, I would like to make a donation to the Women and Infants Research Foundation

All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible. You can also donate online: wirf.com.au/donate

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