

Delivering the Future



women & infants
research foundation

Winter 2019



Eliminating
cervical cancer
for all women

Welcome to the latest edition of Delivering the Future.

It has been a fast start to 2019; one that has poised us for another year of highlights across our many fields of research endeavour and community engagement activity.

Our pioneering Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative continues to gather major momentum as it is officially unveiled in each of our states and territories. By tailoring the WIRF program developed right here in WA specific to each healthcare environment, we give ourselves the greatest chance to positively impact the burden of preterm birth on a scale never before achieved. Read the full update and plans for our 2019 WA Outreach program on page 7.

Our page 3 story, which introduces a pioneering cervical cancer research program, represents a much needed strategy to close the gap in Aboriginal cancer outcomes.

WIRF's Artificial Womb program continues to attract national and international interest. The page 8 story describes a world-first milestone for this revolutionary program as it pushes the limits and capabilities of this life-saving technology.

The opportunity to attend the 2019 Telethon Giving Ceremony was a truly special experience and one that reaffirmed the importance of the work we do for all Western Australian children. We are indeed lucky to be a part of this amazing community of beneficiaries and we look forward to Telethon Weekend 2019 to showcase the impact of our work and hopefully contribute to another record year of giving.

A highlight for 2019 has been the success of the Little Angels Gala Ball. Hosted by long-time supporter, Vera Coleski, the event was an opportunity to reflect on Vera's extraordinary story and her unwavering commitment to making preterm birth a thing of the past.

We look forward to meeting many of you during the busy events of the next few months which will be headlined by our highly anticipated WIRF 2019 Spring Gala.

This year's event will build on the success of our 2018 Gala and will once again unite WA's health, business and philanthropic community to showcase WIRF's pioneering research and programs.



Professor John Newnham



Deb Attard Portughes

We hope you enjoy reading about some of WIRF's recent news and activities in this latest edition of Delivering the Future. We thank you for your help and ongoing commitment to our cause. We could not do what we do without your incredible support.

Professor John Newnham AM
Chief Scientific Director

Deb Attard Portughes
Chief Operations Director



Cover image: Aboriginal Ambassadors, Denika and Bianca, promoting the importance of HPV vaccination and participation in cervical screening in Broome

Working towards eliminating cervical cancer for all WA women

A WIRF research program is taking aim at the inequitable and unacceptable cervical cancer health outcomes currently experienced by Aboriginal women.

The program, led by Early Career Researcher, Dr Aime Powell is investigating new strategies to reach Aboriginal women that are under screened or never screened in some of the most rural and remote locations in WA.

Recipient of a post-doctoral Australian Gynaecological Cancer Foundation research fellowship, Dr Powell said the aim of the study was to investigate the impact of the WA Cervical Screening Program and National HPV Vaccination Program on Aboriginal women's health outcomes.

"If we are to improve outcomes for all women and truly work towards the elimination of cervical cancer, we must find new strategies to improve women's participation in cervical screening that break down existing barriers," she said.

Research findings are still to be confirmed, but what we know is:

- Only 50% of women in WA are screened at the recommended 2-yearly interval for 2016-17.
- WA had up to a 65% 3-dose HPV vaccination completion rate for girls turning 15 in 2007 – 2011.
- Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable cancers as long as it is caught and treated early. Unfortunately, there has been no reduction in cervical cancer incidence and mortality for Aboriginal women.

Dr Aime Powell, who is based in the Institute for Health Research at The

University of Notre Dame and clinically supported by WIRF's Associate Professor Paul Cohen and Professor Yee Leung, said one future strategy that is soon to be piloted will be the ability to take HPV self-testing, colposcopy and hopefully treatment to women in their communities.

"Having a portable device that can rapidly detect the presence of high-risk HPV resulting in same day assessment/treatment for high-risk women could prevent future cases of cervical cancer," she said.

Professor, Gynaecologic Oncology, Yee Leung said, "This research project has remarkable significance for the prevention of cervical cancer and research findings will be translated into our state-based program and contribute to national policy."

Professor Leung emphasised that this project could only be made possible through existing partnerships with Australian leading experts in the area, including Associate Professor Paul Cohen, Mrs Nerida Steel, Associate Professor Julia Brotherton, Associate Professor Marion Saville, Professor Jim Codde, Dr David Hawkes and Ms Kay Walley.

The WIRF Vision

For all Australian women to enjoy the best health for themselves, their pregnancies and their babies.

About WIRF

WIRF is one of Australia's leading independent research institutes dedicated to improving the health of women and infants.

We focus our research and programs across three principal areas: the prevention of preterm birth, gynaecological cancers, and women's mental health. This research and programs have directly contributed to a number of improved clinical practices and health outcomes.

- 🌸 **Leading the world in preterm birth prevention**
- 🌸 **Discovering causes and cures of women's cancers and improving outcomes**
- 🌸 **Improving access to mental health resources and enabling better mental health outcomes**
- 🌸 **Translating our research findings into guidelines and resources.**



Midwives swap scrubs for swimsuits for Rottnest Swim

A group of King Eddies midwives are the toast of the town after they traded their scrubs for swimsuits to conquer the 2019 Rottnest Channel Swim.

As equally as impressive as completing the gruelling 20km open water swim, was the incredible fundraising result achieved by the group – in total raising more than \$10,400 for WIRF's critical work into preterm birth prevention.

A total of two teams of four were fielded for the 2019 event. The Celestone Currents: Liz Hull, Jenny Goetze, Kirsten Blacker, Jen Wood, and the Water Breakers: Vanita Coulthard, Sharon Cattermole, Emma Cross, Jennifer Owen, were expertly supported by paddler, Viv Wigg.

In addition to the group's online funding efforts which would net more than \$6250, the midwives would also source a variety of prizes and hampers for a raffle run through WIRF's Café, which itself, would raise more than \$4150.



WIRF congratulates this amazing group of midwives and their outstanding continued efforts to ensure optimum health outcomes for WA women and their babies.

On the road again: 2019/2020 Outreach Program

Planning is well underway for the second wave of the WA Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative Outreach Education Program.

Principally supported by the Stan Perron Charitable Trust, the 2019/2020 Outreach Program will once again traverse across the state to provide education to maternity care providers in their own work environments.

The inaugural 2015 Outreach Program travelled more than 13,000 km across metropolitan, regional and remote WA, engaging hundreds of doctors, midwives and other health professionals about new breakthroughs in the field of preterm birth prevention. The result of which was an 8 per cent decline in the rate of early birth across the state in the program's first full year of implementation.

Although still in the planning stage, it is anticipated that the following centres will be visited by the team of obstetricians and midwives who will

educate attendees about new health interventions to prevent preterm birth and other 'hot topics' in obstetrics:

- The Kimberley – Kununurra, Derby, Broome, Fitzroy Crossing
- The Pilbara – Port Hedland, Karratha
- The Midwest – Carnarvon, Geraldton
- The Goldfields – Kalgoorlie, Esperance
- The Wheatbelt – Narrogin, Northam
- The South West – Bunbury, Busselton, Collier
- The Great Southern – Albany
- North Metro – KEMH, Joondalup Health Campus, Osborne Park Hospital
- South Metro – Rockingham General Hospital, Peel Health Campus, Fiona Stanley Hospital
- East Metro – Armadale Kelmscott Memorial Hospital, SJOG Midland Public Hospital



Travelling regional, remote and metropolitan WA, the 2019/2020 Outreach Program is being planned

For a full listing of outreach sites and dates visit: www.wirf.com.au



STAN PERRON
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

THE WHOLE NINE MONTHS



Discover how we have successfully lowered the rate of preterm birth and are continuing to make pregnancies safer for women and their babies.

The West Australian



ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT
Published May 1, 2019

The Whole Nine Months is out now

The Women & Infants Research Foundation has just published the 2019 edition of The Whole Nine Months magazine.

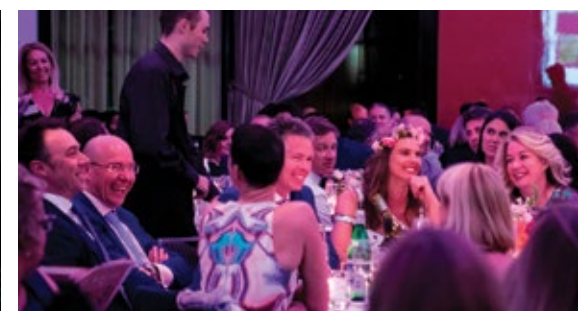
This 12-page magazine contains expert editorial relating to pre conception, pregnancy, and post pregnancy care, as well as our world-first preterm birth prevention initiative which is now being rolled out across the country as part of a national approach to reducing the burden of preterm birth.

This magazine is a valuable resource for all new and returning mothers and families and healthcare professionals. If you are pregnant, or considering a pregnancy, then this magazine is for you.

To view an online version of The Whole Nine Months magazine visit: www.wirf.com.au

Build your partnership with WIRF

Generous support from businesses and individuals continues to play a vitally important role in enabling us to deliver critical resources like The Whole Nine Months magazine and our flagship community engagement event, the WIRF Spring Gala.



WIRF is currently seeking interested Event Partners, Major Supporters, and Prize Donors for our 2019 WIRF Spring Gala to be held on Saturday, 31 August 2019 at Fraser's State Reception Centre.

The event will unite iconic Western Australian identities, government representatives, private industry, key philanthropic and medical representatives, and those touched directly by our work.

If you are able to assist in shaping and ensuring the success of this very important event, or another area of the Foundation's activity, please contact WIRF on (08) 6458 1437 or Gillian.Booth-Yudelman@wirf.com.au

We look forward to partnering with you to improve the health of our mothers and babies.



Dr Jodi Graham



Symposium highlights importance of a good start to life



Prof Megan Galbally

More than 200 attendees joined some of the state's leading mental health professionals for a special symposium detailing the importance of supporting the early parenting environment.

The WIRF-KEMH Symposium for Perinatal Mental Health 'Celebrating a Good Start to Life', hosted a further 143 delegates video-conferencing in from 42 regional and remote sites.

Western Australian Minister for Health, The Hon Roger Cook opened the Symposium which included talks from consumers, researchers and clinicians from across the state.

Perinatal Psychiatrist, Professor Megan Galbally, said the Symposium covered a broad range of topics from managing eating disorders in pregnancy through to the future of medicine and mental health.

"All our Symposium speakers delivered thought-provoking presentations to inspire robust discussion amongst participants," she said.

"Exploring evidenced-based strategies that scaffold mothers and families during the perinatal period give us the best opportunity to work with families to promote a good start to life."

Ensuring inclusion of all of WA in education and research on perinatal

and women's mental health is important and this is also reflected in the expansion of the Pregnancy Emotional Wellbeing Study.

This study is now expanding recruitment of participants from Melbourne and Perth to also include pregnant women in South West, Mid-West and Goldfields region.

"This ensures we will build a better understanding of the important factors for pregnancy and mental health wellbeing for women in rural and regional Western Australia," Prof Galbally said.

Prof John Newnham up for Top Award

We could not be more proud to announce that our Chief Scientific Director, Professor John Newnham AM, has been nominated for the Professions Award in the 2019 Western Australian of the Year Awards.

Recognised as one of the world's leading authorities in the prevention

of pre-term birth, Prof Newnham's 35+ year contribution to the field of obstetrics has changed the practice of medicine and the lives of countless women and infants.

His lifelong work has made WA one of the world's best-known and most highly regarded centres for research and

clinical excellence in pregnancy and fetal medicine.

All finalists and winners will be honoured at the Western Australian of the Year Award Gala Dinner on Friday 31 May, 2019.

We wish all the finalists the very best for these Awards.

WIRF Café turns 20

In April 2019, the WIRF Café celebrated its 20th birthday.

Providing a friendly and warm atmosphere for mums-to-be, new parents, visitors and staff to relax, the Café has been WIRF's most visible presence within King Eddies for over two decades.

Since opening, proceeds from the WIRF Café/Gift Shop have generated a staggering \$5 million in profits, which has supported our research grants program.

The Foundation is extremely grateful to Café Manager, Annemarie Weekes, café staff and volunteers for this significant contribution and congratulates everyone at the WIRF Café on this amazing milestone.



Volunteers from the café and gift shop on its 1st birthday in 2000



Volunteers hard at work in the WIRF Café



Café staff Sue, Anne, Dewi, Noeleen and Mari



Then Acting Prime Minister, Julie Bishop and Prof John Newnham enjoy a cuppa in 2017

Support our 2019 EOFY Appeal

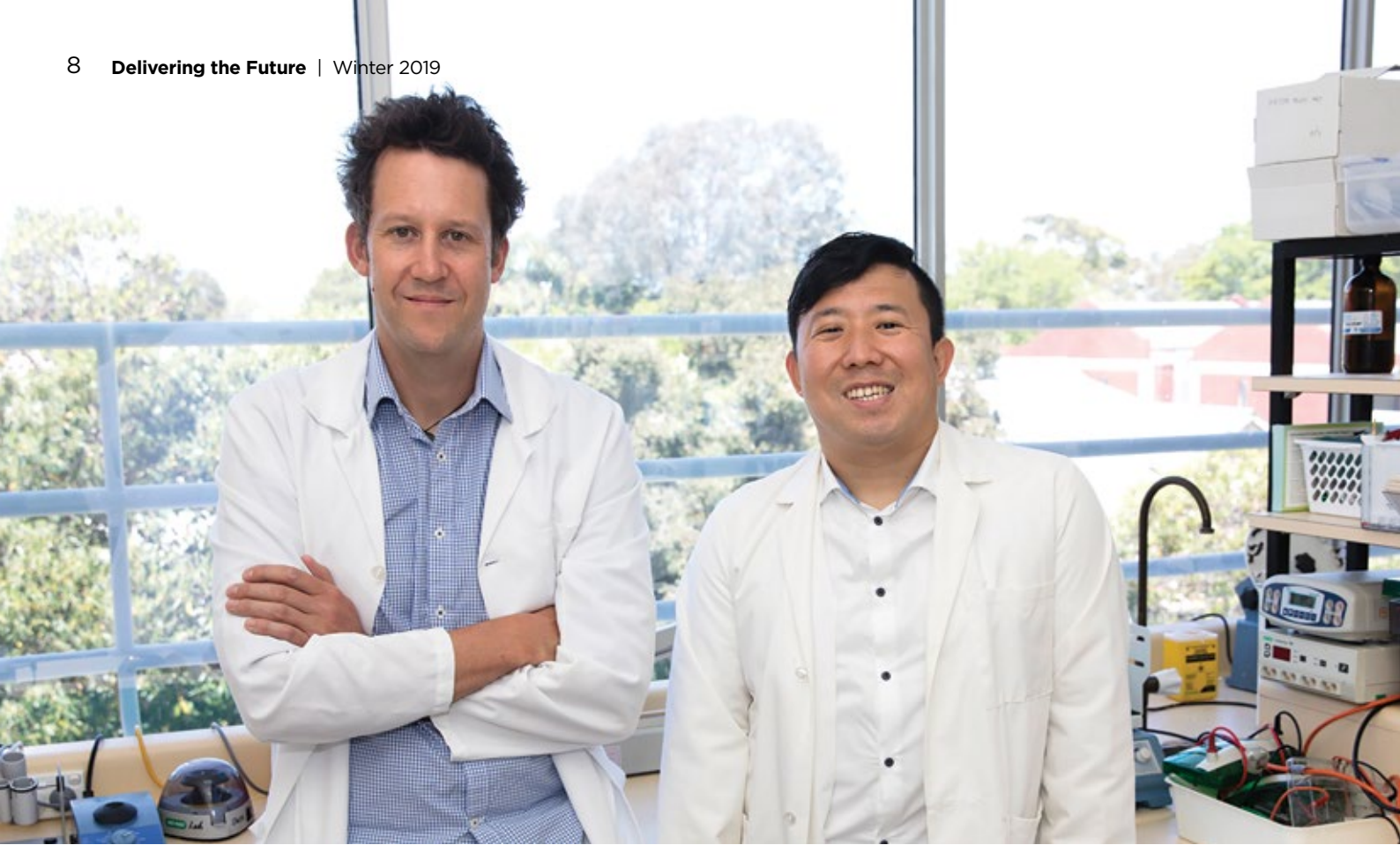
To those that have so generously donated to WIRF this end-of-financial-year, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your support will make an enormous difference to the lives of countless women, infants & families.

If you would like to join this amazing community of people and support WIRF's research and programs, please donate before 30 June 2019 to claim your tax deductible receipt.

Please support WIRF this EOFY by visiting www.wirf.com.au/donate or returning the donation form on the back page.

- all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.





Assoc Prof Matt Kemp and Dr Haru Usuda

Artificial womb technology breaks its 4 minute mile

A major advancement in WIRF's pioneering technology based around the use of an artificial womb to save extremely premature babies has been hailed as a medical breakthrough.

Recently published in The American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, the study presents world-first data demonstrating the ability of an artificial placenta-based life support platform to maintain extremely preterm lamb fetuses (600-700g); equivalent to a human fetus at 24 weeks of gestation.

Whilst previous research had demonstrated the feasibility of extended survival with artificial placenta technology in late preterm fetuses, there had been no published evidence that demonstrated the use of the platform to support extremely preterm fetuses - the eventual clinical target of this technology.

"For several decades there has been little improvement in outcomes of extremely preterm infants born at the border of viability (21-24 weeks gestation)," Research Lead, Associate Professor Matt Kemp said.

"In this study, we have proven the use

of this technology to support, for the first time, extremely preterm lambs equivalent to 24 weeks of human gestation in a stable, growth-normal state for five days.

This result underscores the potential clinical application of this technology for extremely preterm infants born at the border of viability.

"In the world of artificial placenta technology, we have effectively broken the 4 minute mile."

The latest findings represent a significant milestone in the technology's future implementation into clinical use.

"If we are to improve outcomes for babies born at the border of viability we must recognise that they are not 'small babies'; rather, they are a unique patient demographic that, due to their extremely underdeveloped lungs and limited cardiovascular capacity, require an entirely different treatment approach from older preterm infants," Assoc Prof Kemp said.

"With additional refinement, what today might be considered as futuristic technology might soon not be so futuristic and might be standard of care."

This work has been supported by the Channel 7 Telethon Trust, the Department of Health, Government of Western Australia, Nipro Corporation, WIRF, and the National Health and Medical Research Council.



Whole Nine Months gives rise to national alliance to prevent preterm birth

In a world first, the key practice points and public health campaign developed as part of WIRF's Whole Nine Months program have now been used to inform and shape a national approach to preventing preterm birth.

In June 2018, the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance (APBPA) was established with a singular goal; to safely lower the rate of preterm birth across Australia.

The early success of The Whole Nine Months program, as reported nationally in November 2016, led to a successful NHMRC application to extend the WA Initiative and roll out various versions of the program into New South Wales and Victoria.

The decision was then made by key representatives from each state and territory to apply the partnership across the nation as a whole.

Chair of the Alliance, Prof John Newnham said the challenge was



always to work out how to expand the effect and translate the success of the WIRF program into other health care environments.

"The Alliance will provide a platform to lead and coordinate, but every healthcare practitioner who works in the field of reproduction has a role to play in

our goal to prevent early birth," he said.

To-date, the Alliance has held launch events in Tasmania and in the Australian Capital Territory, with plans for a launch in the Northern Territory in early June and other states in late 2019.

Reducing the rates of early birth in Aboriginal populations

In the Northern Territory, the preterm birth rate for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies is almost double that of the non-Aboriginal population at over 14 per cent.

The biggest discrepancy is in the extremely preterm gestational age. Aboriginal women in the NT are four times more likely to lose a baby between 20 and 23 weeks gestational age. That is before the baby even gets a chance to survive.

There is no doubt that women who experience poorer health overall are also at higher risk of preterm birth. The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These conditions directly affect people's health.

Overall, people who are more vulnerable to poorer health because of the conditions in which they are born, grow and live are more vulnerable to problems such as preterm birth.

The result is a vicious cycle of very challenging health conditions.

So then what hope do we have of closing the gap in health discrepancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families? First we must start to address health status holistically. We cannot solve specific health problems without taking into account a person's living conditions and life circumstances.

We need to better understand risk factors of preterm birth and think more broadly when addressing these factors. We need to do much research and carefully consider the elements of causative factors and how to appropriately treat them.

It's a long road ahead, but every mother deserves to walk out of hospital with a healthy baby in their arms. It is well worth the investment.

To read Kiarna's article in full visit www.wirf.com.au



Dr Kiarna Brown

Dr Kiarna Brown is an obstetrician working in the Northern Territory. She is also a proud Aboriginal woman. Adjacent is a condensed version of Kiarna's editorial from the 2019 edition of The Whole Nine Months in which she canvasses a way forward for the unacceptable rates of preterm birth experienced by Aboriginal women and their babies.



Alastair put his legs on the line for premmies

Alastair Milne believes in the power of optimism. When his wife's (Dawn) waters broke at 25 weeks pregnant with their daughter Eilidh, he had to be.

In total, Dawn and Eilidh would spend more than 3 months in the Neonatal Intensive Care and Preterm Birth Units at King Edward Memorial Hospital before being able to come home.

"Eilidh recently celebrated her 10th birthday and is a ray of sunshine for our family and everyone who knows her. This makes it even more important to remember Eilidh's very difficult

beginning to life and the people and places which have left an indelible mark on our lives," Alastair said.

To pay tribute to Eilidh, her journey, and help all the other babies born too soon, avid cyclist Alastair set his sights at raising funds for a new phototherapy treatment system for the NICU at King Eddies.

To help get his Appeal to the \$3,000 mark, Alastair made the lofty promise to finally wax his legs on 2019 Australia Day weekend – much to the delight of his fellow cyclists.

With the generous support of friends, family, other NICU parents, and the local cycling community, Alastair would smash his fundraising target, raising \$3680 in total.

In collaboration with GE Healthcare, KEMH's NICU installed the Giraffe Blue Spot Phototherapy System in March 2019.

The new Phototherapy System is a cutting-edge solution for treating hyperbilirubinemia and jaundice - a threat to the well-being of 60% of full-term infants, and 80% of preterm infants.

Spotlight on... Gillian Booth-Yudelman

Gillian Booth-Yudelman is WIRF's Business Development Manager and considers herself extremely fortunate to work with a team of multi-talented people.

Born and educated in South Africa with a PHD focussing on political imprisonment, Gillian has worked for several years in the business sector in Johannesburg, London and San Diego. In Australia she has worked in the not-for-profit sector focussing on anti-human trafficking initiatives and slavery, people experiencing homelessness, animal rights and more recently in the field of women and infants research.

What inspires me?

The best day of my life was a fortunate meeting with the great Nelson Mandela and I am constantly inspired by his words and actions - perseverance, humility and courage:

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."

An important moment in time?

Attending the UN in New York as a delegate for the 2 week global review on the status of women and children was an enormous privilege. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to consider where women and children currently stand politically, socially and economically in the world today.

I was incredibly humbled to meet amazing women and men and the most meaningful session I participated in was a presentation by a survivor of the Rwanda genocide who gave birth during the catastrophe, saw her husband hacked to death and turned her trauma into a global movement to support women and children during war. An inspiration!

What am I proud of?

Being awarded Rotary International's most prestigious prize – The Service Above Self Award.

Chosen globally out of a field of 1.3 million, 150 of these awards are presented each year with a citation that reads from the President of Rotary:

"I thank you for all you have done, and all you will continue to do, to *Be a Gift to the World*"



Gillian Booth-Yudelman

Moving forward

"I am passionate and committed to the role that I have at WIRF – building support, developing and enhancing initiatives and fundraising for the incredible programs being initiated in WA – world-first with global status – I am privileged to be part of the team and always inspire to be better than myself yesterday!"



People like Vera Coleski are the human face and lifeblood of our organisation; walking hand-in-hand with us on our journey to make preterm birth a thing of the past.

More than 180 people attended the 9 March Little Angels Gala which raised an incredible \$21,200 and were truly privileged to hear of Vera's extraordinary story and witness her unwavering commitment to honour her own Little Angel.

MC Rayne Bryant and special guest speaker and leading Perth obstetrician, Dr Suzanne Meharry, joined Vera

throughout the evening for the event which brought out the very best of generosity and giving from the WA community.

The Gala Ball comes on the back of Vera successfully hosting the Little Angels High Tea in March 2018 at which more than \$13,000 was raised for WIRF's preterm birth prevention program.

WIRF Chief Scientific Director, Prof John Newnham said Vera was an exceptional woman.

"Her strength, determination and ability to channel grief and loss into positive



outcomes is a constant source of amazement and pride for everyone here at WIRF.

"Raising more than \$34,000 for WIRF in a 12 month period is just astounding. It is people like Vera who enable us to innovate and respond to major health problems. We are eternally grateful."

On behalf of Vera, the entire Coleski family, and the countless many involved in delivering the Little Angels Gala, WIRF thanks you from the bottom of our hearts!

We want to connect with more people like you



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Women And Infants Research Foundation

Carson House, King Edward Memorial Hospital

374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008.

Ph: 08 6458 1437 Fax: 08 6458 1642

Yes, I would like to make a donation to the Women and Infants Research Foundation to improve the health of women and infants through:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Research into the prevention of preterm birth and other pregnancy complications | <input type="checkbox"/> Research to improve outcomes for women with gynaecologic cancers | <input type="checkbox"/> Research to improve resources and outcomes for women's mental health | <input type="checkbox"/> WIRF general day-to-day operations |
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\$ Other (minimum \$10)

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Thank you for your support

All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

Women and Infants Research Foundation

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