



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



HARRY PERKINS INSTITUTE  
OF MEDICAL RESEARCH



# Chair's Report



**2020 was a stark reminder of the critical importance of medical research. As the world grappled with the worst pandemic in over 100 years, researchers around the globe responded quickly and decisively.**

Here at the Perkins, our researchers and staff stepped up to support and protect the community. Several key COVID-19 initiatives were supported including a vaccine clinical trial via Linear, supporting the resource sector in setting up testing protocols, offering up of staff and resources to support our hospital staff, and the design and manufacture of face shields by our biomedical engineers to support frontline workers.

If medical research is good at anything, it's pivoting. And that is exactly what we did as an organisation. The safety of staff was of paramount importance. The Institute moved quickly to suspend community interaction - including the cancellation of high school activities at the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre. Staff who could work from home transitioned without disruption and the building staff focused on protecting and supporting critical staff and experiments.

I was impressed with how adaptive staff and researchers were. As a medical research institute that values collaboration, the agility in which a workforce was able to regroup and work at a distance was impressive.

I was equally impressed with our amazing supporters who, despite challenging times, did not desert us. The Hawaiian Walk for Women's Cancer and MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research were both in danger of being cancelled due to the pandemic. But, thanks to the ingenuity of the Community Engagement team and with incredible support from our loyal participants, both events were transformed into virtual fundraisers that provided vital funds for the Institute's work.

We thank every one of our donors for their support and loyalty. Every single person's support counts and we are immensely grateful to each one of you.

As part of the Perkins' commitment to excellence in research, every few years, an organisational-wide scientific review is undertaken. This just so happened to fall in late 2019. Many of the recommendations of this review were implemented this year. This included the addition of two Associate Directors and the creation of three programs - Cancer, Cardiovascular Science and Diabetes, and Genomic Biology and Genetics. These programs are overlayed with four themes: Synthetic Biology, Biomedical Engineering, Therapeutic Targeting and Improved Patient Care.

This new vision for research is supported by a group of new leaders who represent some of the brightest minds in science. I am very excited to see where this talented group will take the Perkins in the future.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the researchers who continue to inspire and investigate, the staff who work to ensure the research can thrive and our incredible supporters and stakeholders who continue to back this vital work.

On behalf of the Perkins Board, I look forward to supporting this wonderful Institute through a new era of discovery and growth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wayne Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**The Hon. Wayne Martin AC QC**  
Chair, Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research

# Director's Report



**On New Year's Eve for 2020, if someone was to ask me what the year ahead would be remembered for, I would never have said in a million years, a global pandemic that reinvented the way we work, live, communicate and travel through this world. My goodness, it's been a year.**

I am particularly proud of the Perkins and its ability to flex when faced with the very real possibility that research as we knew it would be curtailed by forces beyond our control. But if there is any group of people anywhere that are perfectly adapted to respond to this situation, it would be scientists. We are natural collaborators; we embrace risk and we value technology and safety.

Without knowing it, we have been training to be the best placed group to help in this completely unexpected crisis.

2020 was the year we reviewed our research and set a new course based on the feedback of our esteemed Scientific Review Committee. It was a time of acknowledgment for the incredible research leaders who must be credited for the reputational growth and profile of the Perkins, as well as a time of renewal as new leaders stepped up to take on new roles as part of our scientific restructure.

The future of medical research in WA couldn't be brighter with this combination of authority and experience, supporting the next cohort of brilliant scientific leaders.

I am equally proud of the profile that the Perkins built in the community this year. With COVID-19 challenging so many parts of our business, strong fundraising results was something that no one would have predicted. With the forced closing of the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre and the agreement that we'd press pause on both of our major events in 2020, financial support from the community was looking very dire.

We simply didn't know what our donors and participants would do. But they didn't let us down. They responded to our letters, emails and calls. They embraced walking and riding solo to raise funds for events they could not attend. And they gave significant financial gifts to ensure the Perkins would fare well during this time. And for that we are deeply grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge the resilience of all staff and volunteers at the Perkins. Although we were physically separated, we stayed connected and checked in regularly. I particularly enjoyed the Friday virtual morning teas where everyone zoomed in to share a cuppa and hear about each other's week.

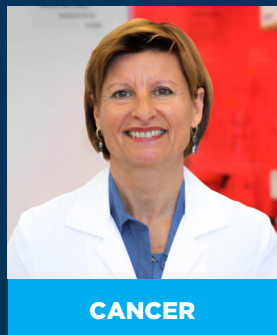
In 2020, we also instigated a new initiative called Gratitude Month. Each day in October, we acknowledged someone who had contributed to the betterment of the Institute. This culminated in a day of gratitude where researchers, board members, staff and volunteers joined forces to say thank you to our amazing donors. This was a wonderful show of support and a tangible way of measuring how people felt about the work we were doing on their behalf. It was a great way to round out what was a challenging, enlightening and unforgettable year. Let's try not to have another like it.

**Professor Peter Leedman AO**

Director, Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research

# Our research focus

## KEY RESEARCH PROGRAMS



**CANCER**

**Associate Professor  
Pilar Blancafort**



**CARDIOVASCULAR SCIENCE  
& DIABETES**

**Associate Professor  
Barry Doyle**



**Professor  
Shirley Jansen**



**GENOME BIOLOGY  
& GENETICS**

**Professor  
Ryan Lister**

## KEY RESEARCH THEMES



**SYNTHETIC  
BIOLOGY**

**Professor  
Oliver Rackham**



**BIOMEDICAL  
ENGINEERING**

**Dr Brendan  
Kennedy**



**THERAPEUTIC  
TARGETING**

**Associate Professor  
Juliana Hamzah**



**IMPROVED  
PATIENT CARE**

**Professor  
Daniel Fatovich**

## INVESTIGATING MAJOR DISEASE TYPES IMPACTING OUR COMMUNITY, AND DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE BIOMEDICAL SOLUTIONS, INCLUDING:

**Cancers**, liver cancer, melanoma, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer, bone cancer (sarcoma), bowel cancer, head and neck cancer, lung cancer, cancer of unknown primary, multiple myeloma, neuroendocrine cancer, brain cancer, myelodysplastic syndrome (leukemia), endometrial cancers, **Diabetes heart/cardiovascular disease**, coronary artery disease, aneurysm, aortic dissection, valve disease, stroke, cerebrovascular disease, **Development and ageing**, fetal programming of CVD, vision loss, tendon and ligament injury, oncofetal reprogramming, **Kidney disease**, wound healing, **Genetic diseases**, muscle disorders, nerve diseases, autism, mitochondrial diseases, neurological disorders, complex genetic diseases, severe Mendelian recessive genetic diseases, prevention, biomedical technologies/approaches, bioinformatics, genomics, systems biology, single cell, 3D printing/bioprinting, protein expression/purification/function/structure/interaction, synthetic biology, biomedical engineering, therapeutic targeting, improved patient care, biomechanics, high-performance computing (HPC), material characterisation, medical devices, genetic analyses, genetic and genomic diagnostics, induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR), preclinical models.

# Our shared vision and purpose

## Vision

Pioneering medical research with local focus and global impact.

## Purpose

To drive discoveries, provide answers and give hope.

**Together, we're tackling the diseases that most affect our families and creating kinder treatments and better health outcomes for the world in which we all live.**



Cancer



Cardiovascular  
Science & Diabetes



Genome Biology  
& Genetics

## 2020 at the Perkins

The Institute's increased resilience was driven by the year of COVID impact, enabling the Perkins to transform and continue research as usual – pivoting our lives and work places as well as modifying fundraising events. Despite the challenges of COVID and how it affected the way we lived, loyal supporters of the Perkins ensured that donations continued. Event participants who committed to walking or riding in 2020 as part of the two mass participation events embraced the concept of fundraising for the Perkins even if they did it alone. Donors did not desert the cause either. In 2020, fundraising budgets were met. Thankfully, this is a strong testament to the loyalty of the Perkins' supporters.

## Collaborating globally, fostering excellence in WA

Since founded in 1998 as a not-for-profit, the Perkins attracts, nurtures and retains the brightest minds – working with scientists from all over the world – to progress medical research. The Institute is now home to more than 250 scientists, doctors and researchers who work collaboratively in three state-of-the-art research facilities strategically located alongside Western Australia's major teaching hospitals: Sir Charles Gairdner, Fiona Stanley and Royal Perth Hospitals. Our team amounts to more than 450 researchers and trial staff when we encompass our wholly-owned subsidiary Linear Clinical Research.

Our facilities provide a foundation on which to expand and develop multidisciplinary teams that are well integrated into the WA hospital and medical health care sectors. It is a stimulating environment for science and medical students where they are exposed to the latest technology, new ideas and a culture of innovation and collaboration.

Research outcomes achieve so much more in the Perkins' work on cancers, cardiovascular disease, genetic sequencing and diabetes when many minds collaborate on discoveries.

# 2020 at a glance



**4**

**new collaborations  
between researchers  
and industry**



Professor Ruth Ganss  
with Eisail Inc USA



Professor Kevin Pflieger with  
Inosi Therapeutics, RAGE Biotech,  
and Veintech Pty Ltd



**7**

**new clinical  
trials at the  
Perkins**



4 new clinical trials  
(investigator-led) by  
Professor Girish Dwivedi



3 new sponsored  
trials led by  
Dr Aron Chakera



**4**

**patents  
lodged**



3 provisional patents by  
A/Prof. Pilar Blancafort, A/Prof. Barry Doyle  
and Prof. Aleksandra Filipovska



1 Patent Cooperation  
Treaty by Prof. Aleksandra  
Filipovska.



**49**

**postdoctoral  
researchers**

**73**

**research  
staff**

**34**

**technical  
staff**

**88**

**postgraduate  
students**



**146**

**scientific  
publications  
by the Perkins**



**114%**

**Perkins success rate of  
the national average for  
NHMRC Ideas Grants**

Success rate for the Perkins in 2020 was 21% compared  
with the national average of 9% for National Health and  
Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Ideas Grants.



# Connecting the people of Perth to the Perkins research

The Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre at the Perkins is a fully functioning, state-of-the-art teaching laboratory offering programs to thousands of Western Australians every year.

With classes for high school students, specialist programs for gifted students and school holiday activities, as well as 'Tour & Talk', 'Guest Speaker' and 'Live in the Lab' programs for community groups, the BioDiscovery Centre helps cultivate a passion for science and an understanding of how medical research impacts us all.

Sessions are conducted by medical researchers and university science undergraduates making the BioDiscovery Centre a landmark Community Education Program in WA.



**2101**  
school-aged students  
attended a program



**121**  
school-aged groups visited  
Including schools and mixed groups in holiday  
and immersion program collaborations.



**13**  
community groups  
visited for Perkins  
experiences



**247**  
people from 13 internal and  
external community groups  
visited for Tour & Talk or  
Live in the Lab experiences

# The Perkins supporters

**The Perkins relies on the goodwill of the community and the continued support of a growing group of financial supporters.**

Thanks to your loyal support, the Perkins was able to produce over 10,000 face shields for frontline staff. Your donations directly contributed to ensuring research could continue without interruption. And there was significant growth in the monthly giving program, The Spark – with more than 500 people now giving a regular gift which supports stability and sustainability.

Fears that COVID-19 may lead to the community acting with caution when it came to financially supporting the Perkins in 2020 were unfounded. Instead, the community stepped up to support our Emergency Face Shield appeal.

Several loyal major donors proactively contacted us to say that they would be donating early this year because they thought we might need it. Generous regular donors ensured our appeals for support did not go unnoticed.

Our incredible walkers and riders also came out in force – even though we could not come together for physical events – to raise significant funds for WA cancer research at the Perkins in the Hawaiian Women's Cancer Challenge and MACA Cancer 200 Challenge.



COVID-19 certainly brought out the best in Western Australians who embraced local causes and got the Institute through what was an unsettling time.



**1222**  
**Riders**

Funds raised:  
**\$3.73m**  
inc. sponsorship



**650**  
**Walkers**

Funds raised:  
**\$836,569**  
inc. sponsorship



# The Perkins community

**It's thanks to contributions of the Perkins' supporters – both financial and non-financial – that the Institute's research can continue tirelessly.**

Together with you, generous individuals and community groups, the Perkins is spearheading bold projects to address big health problems. As a not-for-profit organisation, the Perkins relies upon research grants and donations to continue its vital work towards keeping families together longer with kinder treatments and better health outcomes for people faced with major diseases.

## The Perkins partners

Medical research takes time, money, resources (equipment and facilities) as well as bright, brilliant scientific minds and a good support team to back them. Your support and investment in research make it possible for the Perkins to remain at the forefront of scientific endeavours – innovative and world-leading. The Institute's researchers are committed to deliver better health outcomes through discoveries.

Without the support of our donors, the Western Australian community and businesses that invest in medical breakthroughs, many important research projects simply could not continue. The Perkins is deeply grateful for every contribution that helps move communities closer to a future free from disease, including that from major supporters and partners such as:



**Private Trusts  
and Foundations**

**Kailis  
Family**

**Kirkbride Family  
and donors**

**As well as the many State and Federal government  
funding bodies who support Perkins researchers**

# A combined effort

Our teams are working with researchers from all over the world to find new and better ways to improve health for our families and yours. Thank you for contributing to this important work.



**467 collaborations**  
**44 countries**  
**6 continents**

## Collaborating with researchers in

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK and USA.





# Staff contributions 2020



“ **2020 was a good year to do research.** The lock downs meant our ability to perform laboratory work was reduced. This allowed us to pivot, take a deep dive into our unpublished work, explore the granularity of the data we had, divide this up, focus on writing and publish, publish, publish. It also allowed us to focus on grant applications and we were rewarded with a number of grants, which will support our work over the next few years. ”

**Professor Nigel Laing AO**

Group Leader, Genome Biology & Genomics – Preventive Genetics



“ **Working arrangements had to become very flexible and it is great to see this has still continued even though we are back to ‘new normal’.** It really did highlight what was important in life and make more people aware of generating a very good work life balance. It was great to see (especially in the Perkins) how people came together to help out others, whether it was with work on site, or at home or just listening when you were having a bad day. I did feel very supported by the Perkins so that I was able to continue to work. A lot of issues were not big problems in 2020 as there were less people at work and less interaction between people; however, it means that in 2021 we need to make up for lost time. Due to COVID-19, we realised how big of a struggle it is to work in medical research, hospitals and aged care sectors and how underfunded these areas are. But as a result of the world pandemic, medical research in general is much more widely known about and supported as a result. ”

**Kirsty Richardson**

Research Officer (Technical)



“ **The Perkins supporters’ loyalty was tested during 2020.** So many of our plans had to be ditched to ensure the safety of our donors and event participants. We entered a new world of engagement at a distance. But the incredible fans of the Perkins rallied. They funded the manufacturing of over 10,000 face shields. They committed to walking 35km and riding 200km without real-world events to engage them. And they gave generously of their time, funds and support to ensure that research could continue with minimal interruption. ”

**Paige Gibbs**

Chief Development Officer

# Board of directors



**The Honourable  
Wayne Martin AC QC**  
Chair



**Professor  
Peter Leedman AO**  
Institute Director



**Mr John Barrington AM**



**Professor Simon Biggs**  
Associate Director



**Dr Stephen Davis**



**Mr Laurence Iffla**



**Mr Roger Port**



**Mrs Val Raubenheimer**



**Mrs Jan Stewart PSM**



**Professor Steve Wesselingh**

## Ex-officio members:

**Professor Peter Thompson AM**  
Deputy Director

**Ms Paige Gibbs**  
Chief Development Officer

**Ms Diana Forsyth**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Mr Tony Spezzacatena**  
Chief Financial Officer

# Statement of Comprehensive Income

## for the year ended 31 December 2020

<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>	<b>2020 (\$)</b>	<b>2019 (\$)</b>
Event income	4,474,731	5,832,236
Facilities income	5,053,616	5,466,299
Other operating income	7,665,137	7,684,995
Other income	2,553,986	3,365,884
	<b>19,747,470</b>	<b>22,349,414</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>		
Administrative, events and utilities expenses	(12,243,292)	(13,585,672)
Laboratory services expenses	(5,822,023)	(5,384,105)
Depreciation and amortisation	(6,410,104)	(6,620,638)
Property, plant and equipment written-off	(27,363)	—
	<b>(24,502,782)</b>	<b>(25,590,415)</b>
<b>Operating deficit</b>	<b>(4,755,312)</b>	<b>(3,241,001)</b>
Finance income	272,551	504,086
Finance costs	(32,096)	(32,223)
<b>Net deficit before taxes</b>	<b>(4,514,857)</b>	<b>(2,769,138)</b>
Income tax expense	—	—
<b>Net deficit after taxes</b>	<b>(4,514,857)</b>	<b>(2,769,138)</b>
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		
Gain on financial assets at FVOCI	150,183	111,663
<b>Total comprehensive loss for the year</b>	<b>(4,364,674)</b>	<b>(2,657,475)</b>



# Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2020

## ASSETS

Current Assets	2020 (\$)	2019 (\$)
Cash and cash equivalents	27,539,986	28,170,853
Trade and other receivables	4,534,991	3,967,667
Prepayments	351,210	377,116
Inventories	136,904	53,130
	<b>32,563,092</b>	<b>32,568,766</b>
Non-current assets		
Investment properties	870,404	862,424
Financial assets at fair value through OCI	2,360,244	1,473,061
Property, plant and equipment	106,071,622	112,125,323
Right-of-use assets	291,221	308,862
Investment in subsidiary	1	1
	<b>109,593,492</b>	<b>114,769,671</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>142,156,584</b>	<b>147,338,436</b>

## LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	(2,278,037)	(2,791,042)
Interest-bearing liabilities	(124,609)	(118,292)
Contract liabilities	(1,408,467)	(1,132,308)
Grants held in trust	(15,256,195)	(15,943,125)
Provision for employee entitlements	(715,287)	(550,399)
Non-interest bearing loans	-	(55,397)
	<b>(19,782,595)</b>	<b>(20,590,563)</b>
Non-current liabilities		
Loan from related entity	(1)	(1)
Interest-bearing liabilities	(178,080)	(201,466)
Provision for employee entitlements	(100,216)	(86,040)
	<b>(278,297)</b>	<b>(287,507)</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>(20,060,892)</b>	<b>(20,878,069)</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>122,095,692</b>	<b>126,460,367</b>
Accumulated surplus	121,754,389	126,269,247
Asset revaluation reserve	341,303	191,120
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>122,095,692</b>	<b>126,460,367</b>

The Statement of Financial Position provided above, together with the attached Statement of Comprehensive Income, have been extracted from the audited special purpose financial statements of the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research and its controlled entities. The summary financial information reflects the activities of the Association only and does not include all the information and notes normally included in an audited financial report. The audited special purpose financial report can be obtained upon request to the Chief Financial Officer.

The audited financial report (from which the summary financial information has been extracted) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Subdivision 60-C of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and Section 80 of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015*, Australian Accounting Standards and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board.

# Thank you for your support in 2020.

Together, we are reaching  
toward the incredible medical  
solutions we know are possible  
and bringing them closer.

## Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research

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