

Media Release

Biomedical researchers awarded over \$2 million through philanthropic foundations

Ramaciotti Foundations recognise strides in Australian-based research

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Australian Biomedical researchers have been recognised for their contributions to the health and medical community, with Perpetual announcing the recipients of the 2019 Ramaciotti Awards for Biomedical Research.

The Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Foundations were established in 1970 by Vera Ramaciotti following the death of her brother in 1967 and to date have awarded over \$61 million to biomedical researchers. This year over \$2 million was distributed to ten recipients, which will be used to research and address diseases like Cystic Fibrosis, Multiple Sclerosis and Cerebral Palsy.

Commenting on the significance of the awards, Perpetual's General Manager of Community & Social Investments, Caitriona Fay, said: "As trustee of the Ramaciotti Foundations, we are proud to support the continued development of Australia's biomedical community and honour the almost 50-year legacy of Clive and Vera Ramaciotti.

"The Ramaciotti Foundations are one of the largest private contributors to biomedical research in Australia. They showcase the importance of building capacity in the sector by funding projects that would not normally attract funds elsewhere often enabling support to leverage further funding.

"It is remarkable to not only witness the impact philanthropy has in making strides in biomedical research but also the benefits that can be felt by the wider community."

Professor Heidi Smith-Vaughan and her team at Menzies School of Health Research have been awarded the biennial **Ramaciotti Biomedical Research Award**, worth \$1 million, with funding to be used to construct the Ramaciotti Centre for Excellence in Building Regional and Remote Biomedical Capability.

The Centre will lead the way in developing a sustainable, local and Indigenous biomedical workforce in regional and remote northern Australia and will facilitate biomedical career progression for regional and remote youth, with a focus on career development for Indigenous youth.

Accepting the award, Professor Smith-Vaughan said:

"This Centre will provide previously unimagined opportunities for regional and remote youth. It will support young people into further studies and right through to become industry-ready graduates to fill the gaps in our regional and remote health and biomedical workforce."

"Having the Ramaciotti name behind this Centre, will help Menzies build capacity in the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health staff and develop a model which can be implemented beyond the Northern Territory."

The awards also include the **Ramaciotti Medal for Excellence**, an annual award of \$50,000, to a researcher that has made an outstanding discovery in clinical or experimental biomedical research.

This year's Medal for Excellence was awarded to Professor Tim Hughes, Precision Medicine Theme Leader, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) for his work in the development and refinement of kinase inhibitor therapy for chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML), transforming CML from a universally fatal disease into one associated with nearly normal survival.

Accepting his Ramaciotti Medal of Excellence, Professor Hughes said: "This is a huge honour and I am delighted to accept this award on behalf of a stellar team of scientists and clinicians. I want to thank the Ramaciotti Foundations for recognising our work which is focussed on improving outcomes for patients with leukaemia.

"This recognition from the Foundations and from our peers is crucial for our research program. The funding support we need from philanthropic and government sources is highly competitive. This will greatly enhance our prospects of future funding both nationally and internationally.

"It will also help us attract the next generation of scientists and clinicians to join our team to help us address the many challenges ahead."

As part of the awards, the **Ramaciotti Health Investment Grants** have allocated up to \$150,000 for each of the eight recipients in universities, public hospitals or institutes to support their progress in taking their research to clinical application within five years.

The recipients of the **2019 Ramaciotti Health Investment Grants** are:

Researcher	Institution	Project Title
Dr Anne Bruestle	The Australian National University	Demonstrating detection of validated and candidate relapse indicators of MS using a first in class portable device
Dr Gerard Kaiko	The University of Newcastle	Developing a personalised clinical test in cystic fibrosis: Patient-derived stem cell technology to predict CFTR drug responsiveness
Dr Euan McCaughey	University of New South Wales	Abdominal stimulation to reduce mechanical ventilation duration after spinal cord injury
Prof Vanessa McDonald	The University of Newcastle	The Treatable Traits Study: A personalised medicine approach to severe asthma treatment
Dr Joshua Ooi	Monash University	A targeted regulatory cell-based therapy to treat lupus
Dr Leanne Sakzewski	The University of Queensland	Intensive rehabilitation to improve motor skills of children, aged 2 to 5 years, with bilateral cerebral palsy.
Dr Chameen Samarawickrama	University of Sydney	Corneal collagen glue: inducing corneal regeneration in the treatment of acute corneal perforations
Associate Professor Thomas Snelling	Curtin University	AuTOMATIC: Adaptive trial of messaging to improve immunisation coverage

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Note to editors

About the Ramaciotti Foundations

Managed by Perpetual, the Ramaciotti Foundations were established with \$6.7 million in 1970 with the first major grant going to the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in 1971. This assisted with the establishment of the new Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Research Laboratories building. Since then, the Foundations have donated over \$61 million to biomedical research and are one of the largest private contributors to the field. The Ramaciotti Foundations continue to support biomedical research and each year make significant distributions via the Ramaciotti Awards, providing funding support to areas such as molecular biology, genetics and immunology, and assisting young investigators taking up new challenges in biomedical research. For more information about the Ramaciotti Foundations visit www.perpetual.com.au/ramaciotti

About the Ramaciotti Biomedical Research Award

The Ramaciotti Biomedical Research Award is awarded every two years to a group or individual undertaking biomedical research within universities, public hospitals, medical research institutes or other similar organisations. The award funds projects including personnel, equipment, major infrastructure improvements or new laboratories that help an existing, well-funded program of research or enable a major new program to begin. Traditionally, it funds a need that would not attract funding elsewhere. The Ramaciotti Scientific Advisory Committee helps Perpetual select the winner from nominations received.

About the Ramaciotti Medal for Excellence in Biomedical Research

The Ramaciotti Medal is an annual award of \$50,000. The Medal honours an individual who has made an outstanding discovery (or discoveries) in clinical or experimental biomedical research that has had an important impact on biomedical science, clinical science, or the way in which healthcare is delivered. To be eligible for the Ramaciotti Medal, the greater part of the nominee's work leading to the discovery (or discoveries) must have been conducted in Australia and they must still be actively engaged in this work. The applicant must be peer nominated and the final recipient is selected based on a recommendation by the Ramaciotti Scientific Advisory Committee to Perpetual. Many past winners are highly regarded individuals in the top echelon of the biomedical research industry. Recent recipients include Professor Susan Clarke, Professor Jane Visvader & Professor Geoff Lindeman, Professor Carola Vinuesa, and Professor David Craik. Professor Dietmar W Hutmacher was the 2018 recipient.

About the Ramaciotti Health Investment Grants

Ramaciotti Health Investment grants of up to \$150,000 are awarded to individuals in universities, public hospitals or institutes for a contribution towards the undertaking of health or medical research with the potential path to clinical application within five years. A Health Investment grant is intended to provide enabling research support for an autonomous early career investigator who is taking, or has recently taken, a substantive position. Grants are awarded by Perpetual, Trustee of the Foundations, on the recommendation of the Ramaciotti Scientific Advisory Committee.

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers of philanthropic funds, with \$2.9 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds as at 30 June 2019. Perpetual is trustee for approximately 1,000 [charitable trusts and endowments](#) and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Perpetual also assists charities and not-for-profit organisations with [investment advice and management](#).

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