



Media release
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Funding received for FECRI's most important research asset.

Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute (FECRI) has expanded its tissue bank after receiving philanthropic funding to support a much-needed upgrade to the facility.

Two hundred thousand dollars of funding has been received from the Bendigo Bank Community Bank branches of Buninyong, Creswick, Beaufort, and Ballan & District, with assisting grants from the Percy Baxter Charitable Trust, James Kirkpatrick Charitable Trust and Patricia Madigan Charitable Trust for the new equipment and relocation works.

The Bendigo Bank Tissue Bank is a collection of human tissues that are stored as live cells in liquid nitrogen at -200°C and used later for research.

The Institute's tissue bank has continued to be managed at this difficult time and gratefully accepting and processing tissue and blood samples. The Bendigo Bank Tissue Bank houses nearly 4500 patient samples- many from cancer patients as well as healthy samples that are vital to researchers work. This has seen significant growth in recent years with the development of the research program and profile of the Ballarat laboratory. In the last year biobank samples have increased by 52% on the previous year.

An upgrade to this facility was imperative for the ongoing momentum of research interests and has resulted in relocating the Bendigo Bank Tissue Bank facility to a designated area in the Laboratory. The funding also allowed for the purchase of new equipment with safeguard controls and further workflow efficiencies in the laboratory.

Stephen Falconer representing the Bendigo Bank Community Banks said "We are all been so pleased to be involved in this project. Not only has it become a collaborative project for the four local banks which we're extremely proud of, but the similarities with FECRI as small regional enterprise making a significant impact very much align with our own purpose. This is exactly why the community banking model exists, to invest back into meaningful initiatives such as the Tissue Bank."

"This project has a whole of society impact and we're also extremely pleased that the relocation of the Tissue Bank has enabled FECRI to further expand operations in its current location. It's been a win-win all round for everyone", he said.

The Bendigo Bank Tissue Bank supports the important work of the Institute, that looks to determine protein targets on cancer cells that may be involved in evading the immune system, by creating a camouflaging “fog” around these cells. It is hoped that by identifying these proteins, druggable targets can be developed that would “lift the fog” from these cells and allow the immune system to attack the cancer.

Institute Director, Professor George Kannourakis said “We are so grateful to receive this funding to upgrade the Tissue Bank to keep up with its growth to support our research. The Bendigo Bank Tissue Bank is fundamental to all of our research at the Institute and is our most important research asset.”

“This expansion is key to the ground-breaking work that the team here at the Institute is doing into the immunology of cancer. It is only through research that we can improve the outcomes for patients with cancer. Our program is building great momentum and will continue to positive outcomes.” Said Professor Kannourakis.

FECRI currently has 8 PhD students from Federation University and 13 senior scientific staff. The program is community funded and the only cancer research Institute in regional Australia. Key projects being undertaken at the Institute include:

- Ovarian cancer.
- Breast cancer
- Chronic lymphetic leukaemia
- Histiocytic disorders.
- Bowel cancer
- Renal cancer
- Immune studies into the biology of various cancer and leukaemia’s.

All media enquiries, please contact Sarah Stapleton- Marketing and Fundraising Manager at FECRI on 0475 383 687 or sarah@fecri.org.au. Phone interviews are available with representatives from the Community bank on request.

Please tag the Institute on all social media using @fionaelseycrri