



Media release

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Renowned philanthropist announced as Patron of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute

- *Melbourne philanthropist Primrose Lady Potter is announced as the new Patron of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute.*
- *The aim of the patronage is to shine a light on the institute's work into the immunology of cancer to the broader community outside Ballarat.*
- *In attendance: Primrose Lady Potter AC, Mr Sam Newman, Professor George Kannourakis, Institute Director, Mr Roland Rocchiccioli and Mr Graeme Dixon, Chair of the Institute.*

The Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute announced today at the Ballarat Technology Park that renowned Melbourne philanthropist, Primrose Lady Potter AC, has accepted the honorary position of Patron of Institute. This patronage is hoped to highlight the research of the Ballarat Institute to a wider audience.

Lady Potter has had a significant career of service in the support and development of philanthropy in Australia and in the administration of many organisations of which she has supported. This including previously as Director and Victorian Chairman of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust 1989-91; Director of the Bell Shakespeare Company 1990-91; a Trustee of American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia since 1989; National President of the Australian Ballet Special Events Committee 1993; member of the Howard Florey Institute; member of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research; Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art from 1999; and Life Governor of the Ian Potter Foundation. Lady Potter was founding Honorary Patron of the Melba Foundation, Founding Patron of the Victorian Opera Company, and Patron of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

Lady Potter will be accompanied to the Institute with friends, AFL identity, Sam Newman and musical theatre icon and author, Roland Rocchiccioli.

Professor George Kannourakis, Director of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute said "We are fortunate and humbled to have Primrose Lady Potter accept the patronage of the Institute. We are grateful for her interest in our work here in Ballarat and look forward to working with her in expanding our profile."

"As a community funded organisation, the Institute relies on the generous support of donors to continue and grow. We are proud to be Australia's only regionally based cancer research facility, based in Ballarat. We are an example that internationally recognised research can be performed outside of the metropolitan centres." said Professor Kannourakis

Cancer is something that touches many Australia families, with current rates, it is expected that 1 in 2 Australians will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85.

The Institute currently has 5 PhD students and 15 staff. The research program is focused on how the immune system can fight cancer, with this approach becoming the future treatment alternative to chemotherapy and radiotherapy. We are working to identify new proteins on the cell surface, that enable cancer cells to escape immune attack by immune cells. These proteins act as a "fog" around

cancer cells, which can be targeted by antibodies to “lift the fog” from these cells. This will allow the patient’s own immune system to then kill the cancer.

Key projects are in: Immunology, Breast cancer, Bowel cancer, Ovarian cancer, Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, Renal cancer, Langerhans cell histiocytosis and Brain tumours.

Recent research results include:

- Identification of proteins involved in chemo resistance in Ovarian cancer that can potentially be used as targets to prevent progression and circumvent chemoresistance in patients.
- World first work in describing the behaviour and function of a pregnancy associated plasma protein (PAPPA), in triple negative breast cancer. This research has led to understanding the mechanism for progression of cancer during pregnancy.
- Bowel cancer research team reported discovery on a subset of immune cells in the bowel that can misbehave and release chemical messengers that promote cancer and inhibit other immune cells.
- Identification of a new immune cell subset in histiocytic disorders.