



## Media release

Friday 24 June 2022

### New Chair for Ballarat's Cancer Research program

- *Paula Nicholson appointed the Chair of the Board of Directors at the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute following the tenure of Graeme Dixon.*

The Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute has announced the appointment of Paula Nicholson as the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Ms. Nicholson's appointment follows the tenure of Graeme Dixon after four years in the position leading the Ballarat based cancer research centre.

Ms. Nicholson takes on the new role after re-joining the Board of Directors in 2021, she previously retired from the Institute's Board in 2016 after seven years' service. Based in Ballarat, she is heavily involved in the community, philanthropy, and the arts. Other Ballarat appointments include serving as a Board member of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute, Chair and Board Member of the Ballarat Arts Foundation and Board Member and Chair of Ballarat Evolve.

The Institute was established in 1998 and has grown to be a world class cancer research facility based in Ballarat. As Australia's only regionally based cancer research centre, it is community funded, and relies on the generous support of the community to continue research into more effective ways to diagnose and treat cancer.

Ms. Nicholson stated that she was excited to take on this new role as Chair of the Institute and what the immediate two to five years will bring.

"The Institute is at a pivotal stage, both in its research potential and profile. The Ballarat regional community should be so proud of what they have underpinned in all that has been achieved at the Institute; now is the time for State-wide and National communities to be informed and invited to share in the success of the organisation through financial support and involvement, as cancer touches everyone in some way." stated Ms Nicholson.

"The research at the Institute has world-wide implications and is highly regarded internationally. The fundraising team at the Institute work tirelessly through events and other campaigns, to ensure that research of this calibre can continue right here in Ballarat in turn offering everyone the opportunity to be part of the exciting journey to effective treatments." Ms. Nicholson said.

"...Cancer research is a long-term investment, and we are making headway and contributing to the international pool of knowledge on this disease and the various forms it takes. The team right here in Ballarat have such momentum and are delivering very promising developments in their research"

Professor George Kannourakis, Honorary Director at FECRI, commenting on Ms Nicholson's appointment, "The leadership and community connection that Paula brings to the position as Chair of the Institute along with her understanding of the importance of developing our

research, will be a key element in our growth and success moving forward; the appointment marks an exciting new phase for the organisation.”

Opened in 1998, the Institute was inspired by Ballarat teenager, Fiona Elsey who lost her fight with cancer in 1991. The Institute started in a shed in the back of St John of God Hospital with one part time researcher, and today has a state-of-the-art facility at in the Ballarat Technology Park, employing five PhD students from Federation University and fifteen staff.

The internationally regarded research program is focused in understanding the mechanism and interrelation between the immune system and cancer. Looking to determine proteins on the cancer cells, that produce camouflaging “fog” that allows it to evade the immune system. This, with the aim for developing druggable targets potential clinical treatment therapies.

Immunology research at the Institute covers a variety of cancers including Bowel, Ovarian, Breast, Renal, Lung, Melanoma, Brain and Pancreato-Biliary cancers, as well as haematological cancers.

***All media enquiries, please contact Sarah Stapleton- Marketing and Fundraising Manager at FECRI on 0475 383 687 or sarah@fecri.org.au***

***Please tag the Institute on all social media using @fionaelseycr***