

# FAQS

## Why should I make a donation through a giving circle?

The impact of your philanthropic investment is maximised through the power of collective giving. By pooling funds, members can make a bigger difference for our female researchers through transformational grants.

## Can I make my annual donation in instalments?

Yes, you can choose to make monthly, quarterly or annual payments.

## Is my contribution tax-deductible?

The Council of The Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR Berghofer) is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) for tax deductible benefits.

## Can only women join?

While the program is designed to bring together women in a collective giving model, this is an inclusive program and members of all genders are welcome.

## How can I get my family involved?

We welcome mother/daughter/daughter-in-law/sister, and spouse giving teams! These 'teams' will share a single membership and combine their votes as one member.

## How long is my commitment when I join?

The commitment is made for a financial year, one year at a time. Members who donate by 30 June will be eligible to vote the next financial year.

## Will there be opportunities for women's giving circle members to meet?

The Josephine Circle Members engage with QIMR Berghofer through a curated calendar of social activities.

**MARCH:** Members are invited to attend our annual International Women's Day Event.

**MID-YEAR:** Researcher "Pitch Night", where shortlisted applicants will pitch their projects to The Josephine Circle Members, members vote and select grant recipients.

**YEAR-END:** A unique and exclusive end-of-year event provides the opportunity to network and make valuable connections.

**YEAR-ROUND:** Members will be included in other opportunities throughout the year to engage with the QIMR Berghofer leadership team, researchers and community.

## Why do female researchers need my support?

Women in medical research can face significant hurdles in getting their work funded, compared with their male colleagues, contributing to the loss of women from the sector and their contributions to Australia's research and innovation future.

### DID YOU KNOW?

A 20 year study of Australian competitive grants (2000-2020) by UNSW found that men receive two and a half times more grant funding than women in medical research, contributing to the loss of women from the sector, and, in turn, their contributions to Australia's research and innovation future. During this time, "cumulative funds awarded to women-led grants were lower (\$7.4 billion) than cumulative funds awarded to men-led grants (\$19 billion)" with 63,639 fewer grant applications led by women in the period.<sup>[1]</sup>

Despite more women than men completing research higher degrees in Australia, the loss of female talent (the so-called 'leaky pipeline') is a significant problem in research and academia. Fewer women researchers mean fewer women applicants, in turn leading to fewer women receiving grants.<sup>[2]</sup>

Anna-Maria Arabia, CEO of the Australian Academy of Science asserts that "the most important barrier to women's participation and retention is the funding environment and the resultant job insecurity."<sup>[3]</sup>

Support from The Josephine Circle will provide the crucial funding and stability for talented Early- and Mid-Career female researchers to pursue potentially transformative discoveries.

## Why support QIMR Berghofer?

For nearly eight decades, QIMR Berghofer has stood as a world leading medical research institute, renowned for ground-breaking health and medical discoveries which genuinely improve lives.

The Institute's exceptional researchers cover a range of disciplines from cancer to immunology, genetics and mental health. QIMR Berghofer's research is published in globally leading journals and it is one of only two Australian research institutes included in the prestigious Nature index of the world's top 40 not-for-profit science institutions.

With 1000 dedicated scientists, students and support staff, QIMR Berghofer embraces cutting-edge techniques and technologies to advance significant innovation in health. In doing so, we offer hope for a healthier, better tomorrow.

[1] Kingsley, I, Slavich, E., Harvey-Smith, L., Johnston, E. L., & Williams, L. A. (2023, May 22). Gender differences in Australian research grant awards, applications, amounts, and workforce participation. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/cpvqk>

[2] Kelso, A. (2023). Towards gender equity in Australian health and medical research funding. *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 218: 58-60. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51767>

[3] Barrett, R. (2024, March 8) Plugging the gaps in a leaky pipeline. *The Australian*. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/special-reports/plugging-the-gaps-in-a-leaky-pipeline/news-story/012f26584239f515009fde b762b2b5b5>



# The Josephine Circle

## Supporting women in research through collective giving



To learn more, scan the QR code, or visit:  
[www.qimrb.edu.au/support-us/the-josephine-circle](http://www.qimrb.edu.au/support-us/the-josephine-circle)  
To discuss joining, please contact:  
Heidi Hynd, Major Gifts Associate  
P +61 437 042 432 | E [Heidi.Hynd@qimrb.edu.au](mailto:Heidi.Hynd@qimrb.edu.au)  
[www.qimrb.edu.au](http://www.qimrb.edu.au)





# The challenge with medical research...

...Isn't the science, it's the funding. Put simply, there's not enough of it. And as if the odds weren't stacked high enough, the burden weighs more heavily on the shoulders of women in medical research. In Australia, men receive two and a half times more grant funding than their female counterparts—a stark reflection of the systemic gender inequities that persist within the field.

To attract and retain the best and brightest female researchers from Australia and around the world, QIMR Berghofer pioneered the Women's Financial Assistance Program, offering female researchers financial assistance for critical support such as payment of child care, or employment of a research assistant to help with lab experiments, making it easier to keep publishing research and advancing their careers. Eight years after its launch, we are still the only Institute in Australia offering the Women's Financial Assistance Program. But there is still more to be done.

## A Sisterhood of Purpose

The Josephine Circle is a small group of influential leaders and philanthropists who are committed to closing the gender funding gap for female researchers to make impactful medical research discoveries for 'a better future of health'.

Through The Josephine Circle, our brilliant female scientists will receive the support they need to advance ground-breaking medical research with the potential to solve some of the most pressing health issues of our time.



## A Legacy of Greatness

The Josephine Circle is a philanthropic group named in honour of pioneering QIMR Berghofer zoologist, entomologist and parasitologist, Dr Josephine Mackerras née Bancroft.

"Mrs Mack", as she was affectionately known, was a prominent researcher from a long line of eminent Queensland scientists. Renowned for her research into malaria and parasites, Josephine dedicated her life to science, inspiring and mentoring young scientists.

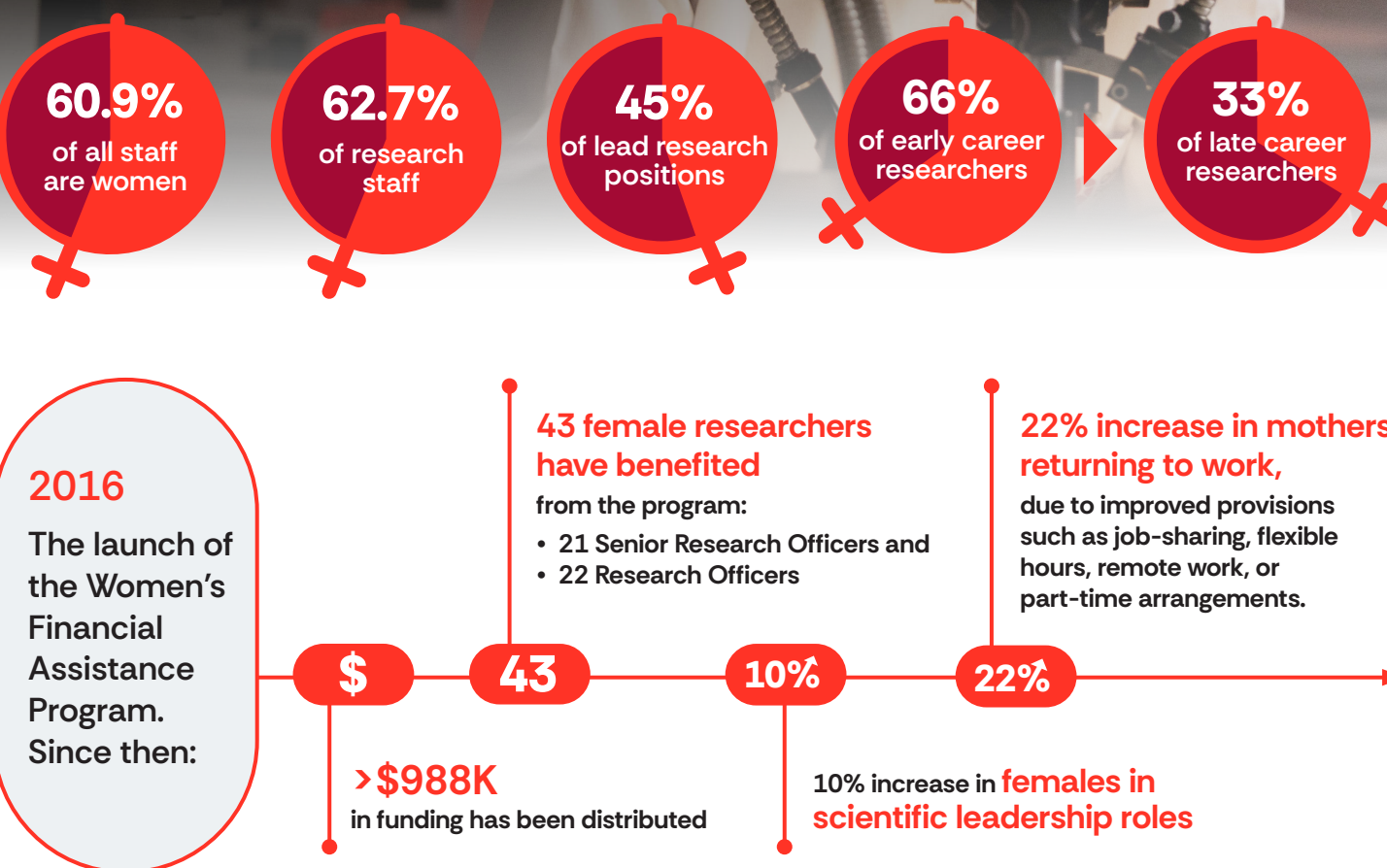
Josephine played a significant role as a Major in the Army Malaria Research Unit during WWII, with her work substantially reducing the incidence of malaria in soldiers in the field and earning her a recommendation to be made an Order of the British Empire, noting "few women can have made a greater contribution to the Allied war effort".

With remarkable strength and wisdom, Josephine was a true leader in science and a shining example of the high calibre of female researchers at QIMR Berghofer. We pay homage to her and the many other high-performing women researchers who paved the way for today's female scientists.

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# Women at QIMR Berghofer

QIMR Berghofer has introduced a range of initiatives to foster gender equality, by supporting women in their pursuit of rewarding careers.



# Join The Josephine Circle



As women of influence and compassion, you can be the change for women like Michelle and Nancy, by joining the circle, and combining your resources and your voice.

Together, we can close the gender funding gap that claims so many brilliant female scientists. Join us in our vital mission—stand with us as we push the boundaries of what's possible, to support women who are shaping the future of medical research.

## How does it work?

As a member of The Josephine Circle, you hold an honoured role in the QIMR Berghofer community. Collectively with other members, you will be entrusted with selecting the female researchers who will receive funding.

- Members Donate**  
Members commit to making a gift of \$50,000/annum. 100% of member's donations are awarded to deserving female researchers, once each year.
- Members Vote**  
As a member, you have a say where the funding goes, by voting for one of the shortlisted applicants each year.
- Grants are distributed**  
Successful applicants receive funding, enabling new discoveries to progress from the laboratory to the clinic.  
With the support of five members in 2024/25, The Josephine Circle can make a significant impact for two women at QIMR Berghofer, with a \$200,000 grant to support a mid-career researcher and a \$50,000 grant for an early-career researcher.

## Member benefits:

You will have an opportunity to develop a rich connection with QIMR Berghofer, our leadership team, and our passionate and driven researchers as they strive to find answers and drive change.

## Benefits include:

- invitations to exclusive events
- regular updates on our research
- recognition in our Donor Impact Report, media and publications
- the chance to network with like-minded leaders
- opportunities to engage with researchers
- amplifying the power of your donation through collective giving

# A tale of two researchers

## MICHELLE WYKES' STORY



Group Leader of Molecular Immunology at QIMR Berghofer, Michelle has always been curious about how cells behave. After a breast cancer diagnosis in her early 40s, Associate Professor Michelle Wykes' research focus shifted from understanding malaria parasites to tackling cancer.

Her recent research breakthrough was the discovery of a "Masterswitch" that unleashes the body's immune system against the deadly triple-negative breast cancer and colorectal cancer. Her discoveries have advanced

our understanding of immune regulation and hold significant therapeutic applications.

But her career wasn't always smooth sailing. Before her big breakthrough, Michelle hit the dreaded 'valley of death', a period between early-stage research and commercialisation where a lack of funding is often the catalyst for many scientists to leave the research field for other careers. This "leaky pipeline" phenomenon ultimately leads to fewer women in senior research roles. She nearly gave up on her research, until she finally received the lifeline she desperately needed. But not all women are as lucky...

## NANCY CLOAKE'S STORY



Dr Nancy Cloake earned a Bachelors in Health Science with First Class Honours and then went on to complete a PhD in Neuroimmunology. Her research tested a potential treatment strategy in laboratory models for Multiple Sclerosis, a topic close to her heart after her grandmother lived with this disease for over 30 years.

After her graduation, Nancy found her research in funding limbo. Her laboratory could not cover her salary as a postdoctoral researcher to continue the project. She was also now a

new mum, with a mortgage and in need of a steady, reliable job. Nancy reluctantly pivoted her career to administrative roles in medical research.

"I loved being a medical researcher, but the prospect of begging for my salary and the funds to do my research each year was confronting. I decided to choose my family's stability over my career."

She eventually found her niche as QIMR Berghofer's Consumer and Community Involvement Lead, and while Nancy is content in her work now, we will never know what breakthroughs her promising research career may have delivered.