



# The Josephine Circle

Supporting women in research  
through collective giving





## Early-Career Research Inaugural Grant Recipient 2025

**Dr Chandra Choudhury**

*“Without the support of The Josephine Circle, I would not be working at QIMR Berghofer today. This grant quite literally kept me in research and allowed me to continue working toward improving brain cancer patient outcomes. I am profoundly grateful for the belief and commitment shown by the women of The Josephine Circle.”*

Dr Chandra Choudhury is an early-career researcher at QIMR Berghofer whose work is focused on improving outcomes for brain cancer patients through innovative medical research. In a challenging funding environment, the inaugural Josephine Circle grant played a decisive role in enabling Chandra to remain employed at QIMR Berghofer and continue her research.

## Mid-Career Research Inaugural Grant Recipient 2025

**Dr Suzy Ossipow**

Dr Suzy Ossipow is an emerging researcher at QIMR Berghofer with a strong commitment to improving health equity through medical research. She is deeply passionate about her work on Strongyloidiasis research, a neglected parasitic disease that disproportionately affects Indigenous Australians. Suzy’s research is focused on improving understanding, detection and treatment of Strongyloides infection, with a particular emphasis on community-led research undertaken in Arnhem Land.

By supporting this work, Suzy aims to contribute to closing the health gap for Indigenous Australians through research that is culturally informed, collaborative and grounded in real-world impact.

The philanthropic funding provided through The Josephine Circle has been critical in enabling her to continue this vital work, and build a sustainable research career.



## 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.

As a Major in the Army Malaria Research Unit during WWII, Josephine played a significant role in substantially reducing

the incidence of malaria for soldiers in the field. This work earned 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 innovative women at QIMR Berghofer. We pay homage to her and the many other high-performing women researchers who paved the way for today’s women scientists.



# Why do women at QIMR Berghofer need my help?

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

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.

Anna-Maria Arabia, CEO of the Australian Academy of Science contends that 'the barrier to women's participation and retention in research is the funding environment and the resultant job insecurity.'

Support through The Josephine Circle grants will provide the crucial funding and stability for talented early- and mid-career female researchers to pursue potentially transformative discoveries.

## 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 women researchers who will receive funding.

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



### Members donate

Members commit to making a gift of \$50,000 per annum. 100% of members' donations are awarded to deserving women researchers, once each year.



### Members select recipients

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.

# The challenge with medical research...

It's not 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 women, contributing to the loss of women from the sector.

In 2016 QIMR Berghofer pioneered the Women's Financial Assistance Program; however, there is still more to be done.

The critical issue women are facing is lack of funding for their research and enough to support their lab members' salaries, despite having high-quality grant applications.

In December 2025 the NHMRC Ideas Grant application outcomes were deeply concerning, with only 84 grants awarded to female-led projects out of 190 grants awarded in total.

While over 60% of QIMR Berghofer staff are female, only 29 research labs out of 72 are led by women.

**We can change this... with your help.**

## How to join The Josephine Circle

Becoming a member of The Josephine Circle is simple, and your generosity will immediately help advance the careers of women in medical research.

As a member you will receive exclusive research updates and engage with researchers, directly gaining insight into real-world outcomes your support makes possible. Each annual gift is tax deductible.

### Make Your Gift:

#### Credit card or BPAY

To pay securely by credit card or set up your own BPAY reference number, please contact our team: 1800 993 000 or [supportus@qimrb.edu.au](mailto:supportus@qimrb.edu.au)

#### Direct Bank Deposit

**BSB:** 034 071

**Account Number:** 000476

**Account Name:** QIMR Berghofer Donations

**Reference:** Surname & Initials and/or Donor ID



# Meet the Josephine Circle

Founding members—Barbara, Maureen, Robyn, Jane and Gwen (absent)—come from diverse backgrounds but are united in their commitment to supporting women in research.



## 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 women 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 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, and members vote and select grant recipients.
- **YEAR-ROUND:** Members will be included in other opportunities throughout the year to engage with the QIMR Berghofer leadership team, researchers and community.

### Member Benefits

You will have an opportunity to develop a rich connection with QIMR Berghofer, our leadership team, and our passionate and motivated researchers as they strive to find answers and drive change. You will receive regular updates on our research and recognition in our donor report and other publications.

# Join The Josephine Circle, a sisterhood of purpose

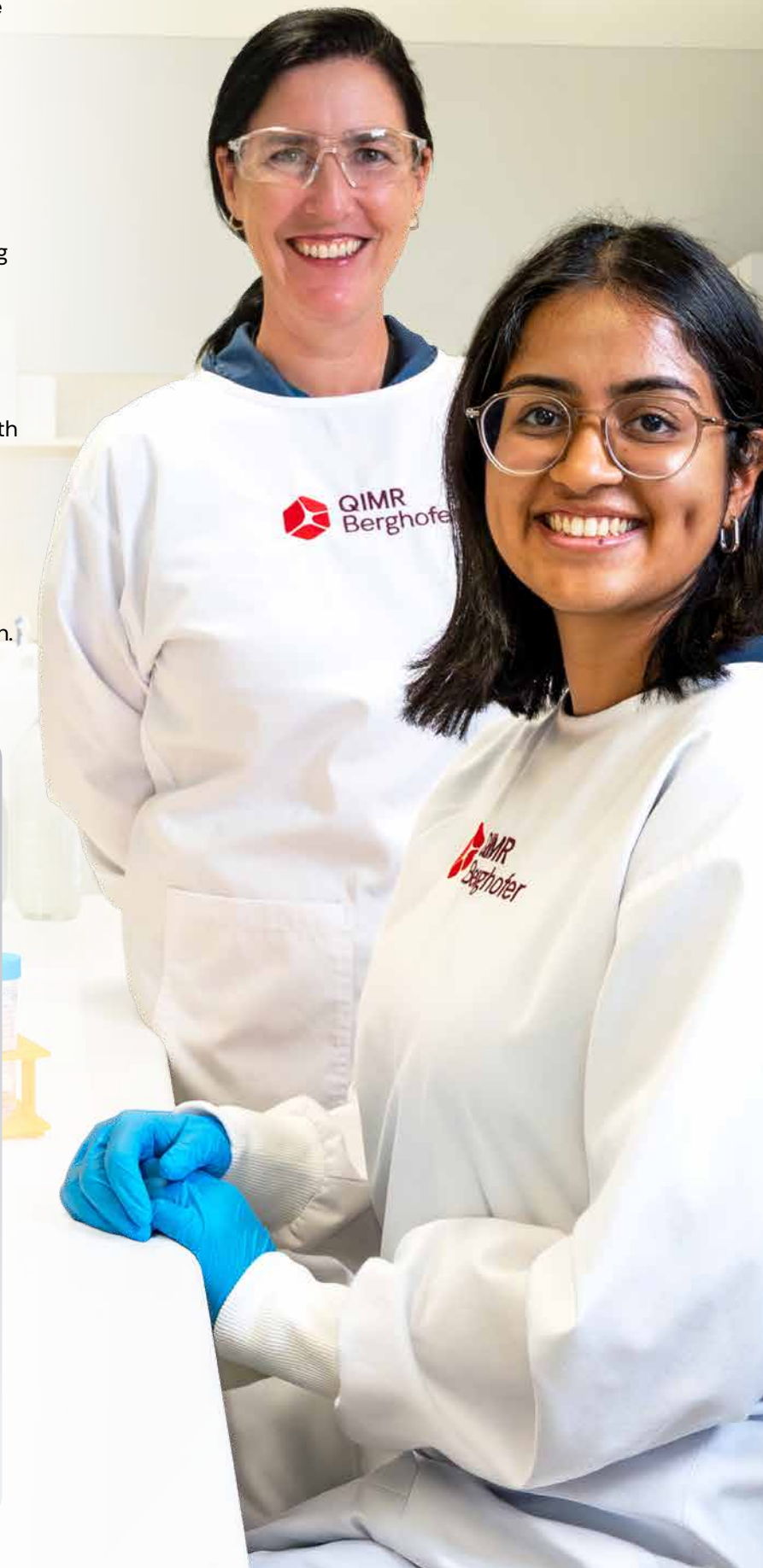
The Josephine Circle is a collective of philanthropic leaders united by a shared commitment: to close the gender funding gap that continues to limit the careers of women in medical research.

Your gift delivers immediate and tangible impact. Collective giving enables early-career and mid-career women researchers to remain in the field, and progress research that would otherwise stall due to a lack of funding.

These grants provide stability for female researchers at pivotal career moments, protecting talent, sustaining momentum, and accelerating discoveries that improve health outcomes for future generations.

Beyond funding, members of The Josephine Circle are deeply connected to the research they support. As a member, you will engage directly with researchers, gain insight into the breakthroughs your generosity makes possible, and be part of a trusted network of like-minded supporters who believe in the power of purposeful philanthropy.

Together, we are not only funding research, but we are changing the trajectory of women's careers in science and shaping the future of medical research.



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:

**Natalie Shillitto**

Senior Philanthropy Associate

Mobile 0467 803 065

Email [Natalie.shillitto@qimrb.edu.au](mailto:Natalie.shillitto@qimrb.edu.au)



[www.qimrb.edu.au](http://www.qimrb.edu.au)