



**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**



2020 IMPACT REPORT

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GASTROPARESIS RESEARCH TO CHANGE LIVES



Front cover photo: **Joyce Wairimu, Hazlett Family Scholarship, Bachelor of Nursing student.**

This page: **Simon Kumar, George WH Lan Business Scholarship, Bachelor of Laws (Honours), 2014, Bachelor of Business and Commerce, 2013**

IN HINDSIGHT, 2020

The world ground to a standstill. Businesses closed. Employment was lost. We lived through a health, economic and social crisis.

At Western Sydney University, our students faced financial distress. In March 2020, requests for emergency assistance rose by 70%. International students, unable to return home, were left scrambling as casual jobs ended and government support subsided.

Lulu, international student says “We didn’t know the future, and I didn’t find any jobs in Australia. We cried through the video chats.”

The Student Assistance Fund was established, urgently raising funds to support students like Lulu.

“It eased my financial stress because at that time my parents lost their job and I cannot find a job here. The fund helped me make sure... I wouldn’t be hungry. But more than that, it helped my mental health because a lot of racist problems showed in that time. I saw the news every day. So when I get the help, the assistance, I knew that I was accepted by my Uni ...I feel supported. It made me feel better.”

On behalf of our students, thank you to everyone who so generously contributed to our Student Assistance Fund. Thank you for the exceptional support of the James N Kirby Foundation and the Harold Mitchell Foundation. Our students benefitted tremendously from your kindness.

“I just want to say thank you, because I know the staff working in the Uni, they have the love and care for students like me, international students with different backgrounds. And they would like to help others, and it did help... When I have a chance in the future and I can support more people, I will....”

Thanks to the generosity of the people of Western Sydney, \$2.83million has been raised and distributed to our students through emergency funds, grocery vouchers and other vital support.

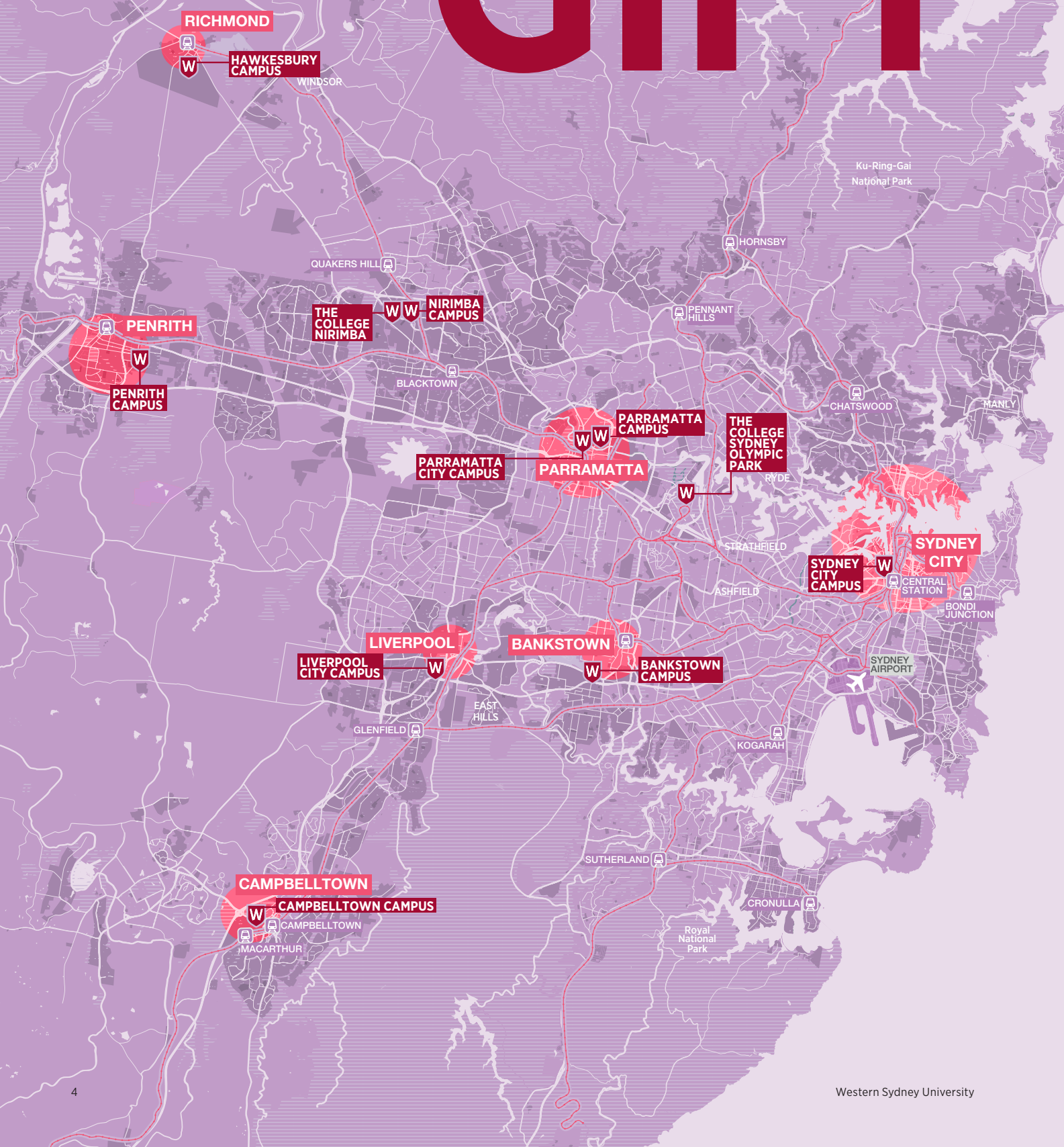
- \$2.83million raised to date
- 2,112 individual students supported
- 6,714 grocery vouchers distributed
- 2,484 meals via Soup Kitchen
- 872 cash grants for living expenses
- 420 laptops
- 393 food parcels



2,112

**WESTERN STUDENTS
HAVE RECEIVED SUPPORT
THROUGH THE STUDENT
ASSISTANCE FUND**

LEADERSHIP GIFT





L-R: Professor Peter Shergold AC, Western Sydney University Chancellor; Professor Deborah Sweeney, Western Sydney University Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise & International; The Hon. Stuart Ayres, Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney; Amanda Larkin, South West Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive; Lang Walker AO, Walker Group Executive Chairman; Terry Goldacre, Ingham Institute; Lindy Deitz, Campbelltown Council General Manager; Professor Barney Glover AO, Western Sydney University Vice-Chancellor and President

The Lang Walker Family Foundation will contribute up to \$26 million in philanthropic gifts to Western Sydney University in order to realise its ambitious vision for the new Lang Walker Macarthur Medical Research Centre. This dynamic hub for medical education and research will transform Campbelltown Hospital into an internationally engaged research precinct and foster greater scientific, clinical and industry collaborations.

The Foundation's generous support will also establish a Lang Walker Professorial Chair in Urban Transformation to advance innovation and sustainability in the property, design and delivery spaces.

"My family and I are proud to be able to expand our continued commitment to medical research across Sydney, through this partnership with Western Sydney University. Investing in Greater Western Sydney communities is a priority for the Walker Group and builds on the community programs we are already supporting," said Lang Walker AO, Executive Chairman of Walker Group.

The strategic partnership between Western Sydney University and the Lang Walker-founded Walker Group will deliver some of the highest quality educational and medical research facilities for south-western Sydney. As part of a broader partnership, Walker Group will also deliver Western Sydney University's new state-of-the-art vertical campus in the Bankstown CBD, which is set to open in 2022 and accommodate up to 12,000 students.

The Lang Walker Macarthur Medical Research Centre is a major new opportunity for the region – a place to grow the health and medical workforce of the future, and a home for the world's best and brightest researchers to bring together cutting-edge research, clinical expertise and innovation to improve the health and wellbeing of the local communities.

"The Lang Walker Macarthur Medical Research Centre brings together the expertise and commitment of an unprecedented array of partners committed to the health of the south west, now and over the coming decades," said Western Sydney University Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Barney Glover AO.

"South-western Sydney is the most rapidly growing region in Australia. By 2036, it will be home to more than 1.5 million people. One in three new NSW residents will live there. This rapidly growing population will present unique and sometimes complex health challenges. We need to act now if we are to meet those challenges."

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA LITERACY SURVEY SHOWS MORE AWARENESS NEEDED

After the significant events of the past year, it is clear that the accuracy of the news we consume is essential. The rising influence of ‘fake news’ and the importance of media literacy amongst Australians aged eight to sixteen has been explored in a report by Western Sydney University and Queensland University of Technology academics.

Dr Tanya Notley, Institute for Culture and Society (ICS) at Western, says

“Amid a wave of anxiety about misinformation – also referred to as ‘fake news’ – we found there was no significant research about young people aged under 18 and news engagement. Our project sought to address this.”

Research found:

- 53% of young Australians pay attention to the source of news
- 46% pay very little to no attention.
- Just one third say they know how to distinguish between real and fake news.
- One in five young people (21%) surveyed in 2020 had found out they had shared a false new story, compared to 7% in 2017, suggesting a growing awareness of the issue.

Courtesy of funding from the US-based National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) and Facebook, Dr Notley and her team expanded upon initial research to examine media literacy in adults. This included a national survey of adults and will include development of a national media literacy strategy.

Sherrri Hope Culver, NAMLE, says, “Dr Notley’s research will be vitally important in helping Australia develop a strong national media literacy strategy. Effective media literacy skill development happens when it is shaped by the type of knowledge and best practice Dr Notley will be assessing”.

In December 2020, Dr Notley and her team surveyed 3,000 adult Australians to understand the different types of media they use, the value they place on different media activities, their confidence in their own media abilities and their access to media literacy support.

Findings show most Australians use several types of media daily, and believe a diverse range of media use is important. Research also shows increasing media literacy can yield direct benefits for increasing people’s civic engagement.

However, people’s confidence in their own media literacy is unexpectedly low. Research also shows Australians do not have access to any media literacy support. This demonstrates that if we accept that media use is integral to our lives, more needs to be done to address the needs of people who are the least confident about their media abilities and who have access to the least support.

Dr Notley and her team are working to ensure that all Australians are equipped with the knowledge and ability to determine if the media they are consuming and producing is fair and accurate.

To find out more, see the team’s reports:

[News and Australian Children in 2020: How young people access, perceive and are affected by news media.](#) Authored by Western Sydney University’s Dr Tanya Notley, Associate Professor Michael Dezuanni, from Queensland University of Technology’s Digital Media Research Centre, Dr Flora Zhong from Western’s Institute for Culture and Society, and Western’s MARCs Institute PhD candidate Simon Chambers.

Notley, T., Chambers, S., Park, S., Dezuanni, M. (2021) https://westernsydney.edu.au/ics/news/report_adult_media_literacy_in_australia [Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs.](#) Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra.



1 IN 5
YOUNG PEOPLE
 (21%)

SURVEYED IN 2020
HAD FOUND OUT
THEY HAD SHARED A
'FAKE' NEWS STORY

PEOPLE WHO USE MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS MORE LIKELY TO BE CRITICAL AND COMPETENT MEDIA USERS

Adults who use multiple social media platforms are more likely to think critically about the media they consume and are more likely to be highly media literate.

- Most adult Australians use two to three different types of media on a daily basis. Overall media use is lower among adults who live in regional areas, have lower levels of education, or have a long-term disability.
- Social media is the media type most frequently used on a daily basis by adult Australians (followed by television).
- More than four in five adults (83%) reported using social media on a daily basis.
- Just under half of adult Australians (49%) used four or more different social media platforms in the past week.
- People who use a greater number of social media platforms were found to be more likely to be critical media consumers. That is, they are more likely to believe it is important to think critically about the media they consume. Research found people who use more social media platforms have higher levels of confidence to perform a range of media tasks.

I SPY WITH MY GROWN EYE

Q&A WITH ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MICHAEL O'CONNOR

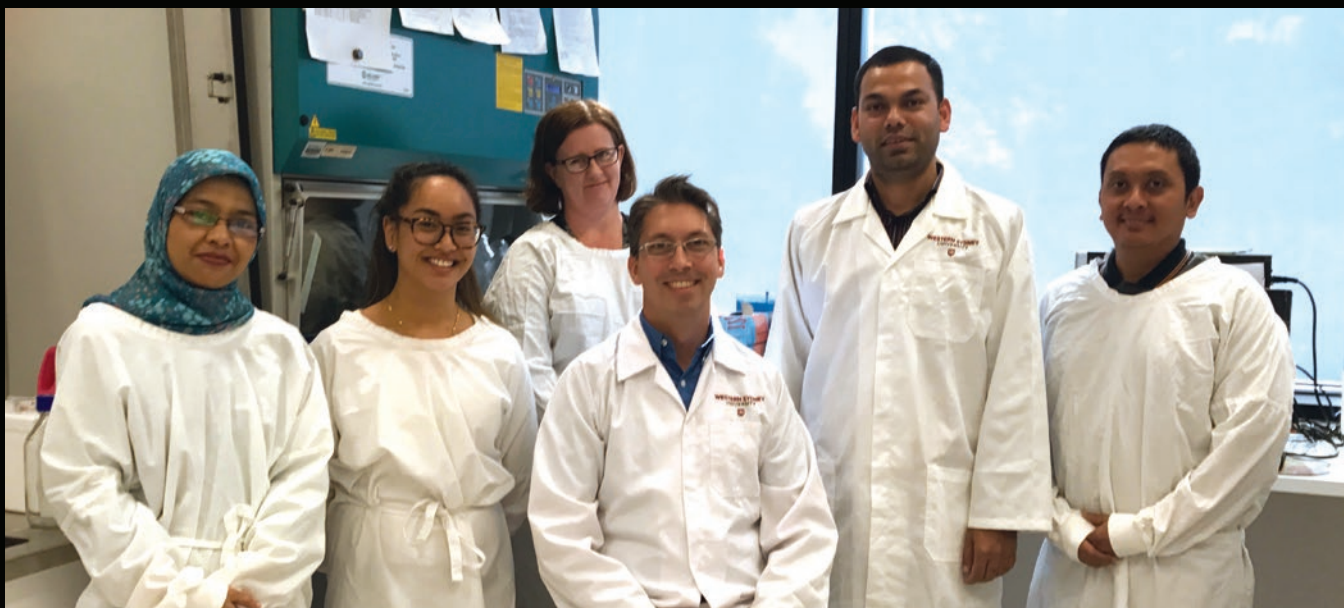


An anonymous donation of \$600,000 to Western Sydney Integrative Health Centre marks the largest gift to Western Sydney University in 2020.

The donor's generosity in the past has extended to medical research including facilitating Associate Professor Michael O'Connor's critical research into retinal tissue regeneration.

We sat down with Michael to find out more.

Associate Professor Michael O'Connor, School of Medicine, Western Sydney University



Why is retinal tissue regeneration important?

“Macular degeneration is Australia’s leading cause of blindness, affecting one in seven Australians over 50. Currently, there is no cure for ‘dry’ (atrophic/non-neovascular) macular degeneration, a disease that affects approximately 135,000 Australians and nearly 20 million people worldwide.”

What does retinal tissue regeneration have to do with macular degeneration?

“One of the early aspects of macular degeneration is loss of, or damage to, the neural retina. The neural retina is the part of the retina that receives the light signals, processes and then sends them off to the brain to be interpreted as vision.

My research uses human pluripotent stem cells to better understand how macular degeneration develops on a cellular level and how we might intervene to identify new treatments.”

What are human pluripotent stem cells, and why do we need them?

“You can’t easily access human retinal tissue for drug discovery; people have got it in their eyes, and even if it’s diseased, they usually want to keep it there.

Progenitor stem cells provide us the opportunity to make a three-dimensional human tissue in the lab, but it’s not as simple as a cell culture in a petri dish. You need all these types of cells layered onto each other and wrapped around in a three-dimensional arrangement or you don’t have a functional tissue. This is what we’re working on right now.”

What do you see for your research and the lab, moving into 2021?

“Our goal is to make enough retinal progenitor cells to grow human retinal tissue in the lab for drug discovery. Once we have grown the right three-dimensional retina structure, we can study the causes of macular degeneration and identify new drug targets.

Our research also offers the possibility of developing cell therapies for macular degeneration, by transplanting retinal progenitor cells into the eye to grow replacement retina tissue.

If we can identify whether we can use our progenitors to make human retinal tissue in the laboratory, then we will have made a step that’s really important for the whole world.

And so now, moving into 2021, our lab is poised to answer that key question; can we make a 3D human retina in the lab?”

L-R: Ms Chitra Umala Dewi, Dr Seakcheng Lim, Ms Michele Mason, Associate Professor Michael O’Connor, Dr Humayun Kabir, Mr Szeifoul



AUSTRALIANS IN 2030 WILL HAVE VISION LOSS CAUSED BY DRY MACULAR DEGENERATION

IN 2010, THE COST OF CARING FOR AUSTRALIANS WITH DRY MACULAR DEGENERATION WAS NEARLY

\$1.5 BILLION A YEAR

A LEGACY OF A THOUSAND FUTURES

In 2016, Westpac launched Australia's largest corporate higher education scholarship fund - the Westpac Scholars Trust - making a commitment to award 100 scholarships every year in perpetuity, to individuals who have the potential and drive to help shape the future of Australia.



L-R: Westpac Young Technologists Scholarship recipients: Marcus Belcastro, Bachelor of Computer Science (Advanced) student, Sam Morris, Bachelor of Cyber Security and Behaviour student, Navpreet Kaur, Bachelor of Information Systems (Advanced)/Bachelor of Business student

Marcus, Bachelor of Computer Science (Advanced) student and recipient of Westpac Young Technologists Scholarship in the inaugural year of the Trust, describes his scholarship as “...the kick start to ambition”.

Marcus has developed a business platform that integrates cryptocurrencies with the real world and has big plans for supporting the scholars through a micro-donation service.

“Cryptocurrency makes finance more accessible to everyone, and it’s not all about making money, it’s about fostering community and solving big issues!

One thing I plan to do is micro-tipping. I went to the bookstore the other day and bought a new book for \$29.95 and they asked if I would like to round it up five cents to give to charity. Imagine what would happen if everyone in Australia donated one cent to a charity.”

For fellow scholarship recipient Ferah, Bachelor of Information and Communications Technology student, in the Westpac Scholars Program “you learn how to develop connections and network, and the support that you get with having other people like you is invaluable”.

Amelia Carrozzi, Program Lead at the Westpac Scholars Trust explains,

“It’s all about how we can help Australians succeed. In collaboration with Western Sydney University we identify and invest in the next generation of young Australians who have the drive and potential to create a better future.

The Scholarship is more than money. We provide the scholars with access to networks beyond university and create opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise have. For example, our new Disruptive Leaders Program provides an opportunity for students to see innovation on an international stage and ignite their confidence in their ability to drive change and truly reach their full potential.”

Ferah’s advice for women aspiring to enter STEM?

“Try for things even if you think you’re not going to get it, whether it’s a scholarship, a job, your degree. Get inspiration from other people and just give it a go. There are so many opportunities and starting your career through studying a STEM-degree can truly put you ahead. It’s hard when you’re in the moment, but don’t give up.”

As Marcus aptly puts it, “to be with the Westpac Scholars is the best decision of my life”.

And at 100 scholarships every year, forever, we look forward to what, and who, the future will bring.



**WESTPAC
SCHOLARS TRUST
WILL AWARD**

100

**SCHOLARSHIPS
PER YEAR,
IN PERPETUITY**

Marcus Belcastro, Westpac Scholars Trust Scholarship, Bachelor of Computer Science (Advanced) student

YOUNG AUSTRALIANS TELL US **WHAT MATTERS?** TO THEM

“For the children of Australia... the answer is to involve the creative energies of our children and our youth in a creative, concerned community.”

Former Prime Minister, The Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC, 1972



Whitlam Institute
WITHIN WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

“I gaze at my Grandma - whom I call Nanu - with wonder as she placed the still bubbling pot of curry on the table. In her eyes, I see a twinkle. Of love? Of Fairy dust, maybe? Where I’m from we call that spice. A sensation that runs through your body - more than a feeling, spice is an emotion in itself that resonates within you. Stronger than magic - it’s a way of life. I inhale through my nose till there is no longer space in my lungs, and I’m overcome with joy.”

Excerpt, ‘The Masala of My Soul’, *What Matters?* 2020 Overall winner, Tanisha Tahsin.

The Whitlam Institute, within Western Sydney University, established the *What Matters?* writing competition as a way to connect with young Australians to share the issues they care about in their own words.

The competition is a key part of the Institute’s annual suite of events and an important way to honour the legacy of Australia’s 21st Prime Minister, the Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC, who was committed to ensuring young people were empowered to participate in national conversations.

Designed to support teachers with an engaging classroom activity, *What Matters?* also offers free learning resources with inspiration, links to the Australian Curriculum and thought starters for students to help them develop their voice and ideas.

As shown in 2020 *What Matters?* competition winner Tanisha’s story, a personal and moving piece of writing which speaks to the love of family, the migrant experience and food, entries are as diverse and unique as the young people who enter the competition.

One of the most compelling aspects of *What Matters?* is the opportunity to reward young writers for their heartfelt, insightful and always moving entries through Year Awards, which are supported by the Institute’s valued partners.

What Matters? also includes an artistic merit award, and introduced the Graham Freudenberg award in 2020, to recognise an entry that offers outstanding commentary on Australian social and political issues.

“...the beauty of the competition is its simplicity, because we just ask kids from year five to year 12 *What Matters?* and they can write whatever they like... we think it’s important that kids are encouraged to be able to write about what they’re passionate about... everybody says that young people are disengaged and don’t care about politics. And if you read just the short list of these entries, it’s really clear that they’re not, but they have something to say and that, they’re very good at expressing it.” Ms Leanne Smith, Director, Whitlam Institute.

The generous support of the Crescent Foundation allowed *What Matters?* to expand beyond NSW’s borders to be nationwide for the first time in 2020, providing the opportunity for students from all over Australia to share what is important to them. Mr Talal Yassine OAM, Crescent Foundation, says,

“As Founder and Director of Crescent Foundation, on behalf of the Board and the team, our commitment is to be the difference in the world. With *What Matters?* we continue to demonstrate our commitment to opening up opportunities to all Australians.

It has brought us much joy to work with the Whitlam Institute to bring *What Matters?*, the writing competition, to a national level, especially in such a turbulent time. The thousands of entries from Australia have been remarkable...”



4,000+

**SCHOOL STUDENTS
ACROSS AUSTRALIA
ENTERED THE
WHAT MATTERS?
COMPETITION IN 2020**

Scan the QR code to watch or read the complete story at whitlam.org/what-matters-2020-finalists-1/2020/8/10/the-masala-of-my-soul



BEAUTY OF MOUNTAINS REFLECTED IN STUDENTS' GRATITUDE

Sitting on the edge of the World Heritage-listed National Park in Katoomba, in the spectacular Blue Mountains west of Sydney, Scenic World is a family-owned business that has been an iconic part of the community since 1945.

Having partnered with Western Sydney University in 2017 as part of philanthropic programme Scenic World Shared, the Scenic World Scholarship in Natural Science and Tourism was established to support young people living in the Blue Mountains.

Developed with the view that recipients would contribute to the Blue Mountains community by working in environment, sustainability, education or tourism, two Western students, Will and Cassandra, have been supported by the scholarship to date.

Lifelong Blue Mountains resident Will is studying a Bachelor of Natural Science (Environmental Management).

Will is also employed by Western's Contact Service Centre. He is keen to work in Science Communication and has a strong following on his Tik Tok channel 'Environmental Explained'. Will says, "The scholarship has been a fantastic opportunity and it has really changed my experience as a student. It has given me so much security and I am thankful to Scenic World for that."

Scholarship recipient Cassandra has now completed a Bachelor of Tourism Management.

"The scholarship has honestly meant the world to me; it's been a dream come true".



448

WESTERN STUDENTS ARE SUPPORTED BY DONOR-FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2021

Anthea Hammon, Managing Director, Scenic World, Will Goodman, Bachelor of Natural Science (Environmental Management) student.





TRUST, CRITICAL CULTURE AND AN OPEN ACCESS ETHOS

Dr Catriona Menzies-Pike, Senior Editor,
Sydney Review of Books



THE GENEROSITY OF
DONORS TO THE SYDNEY
REVIEW OF BOOKS
APPEAL RAISED

\$20,000

TO SUPPORT WRITERS OF
WESTERN SYDNEY

Founded in 2013 by the Writing and Society Research Centre at Western Sydney University, the Sydney Review of Books (SRB) was a response to a decline in public spaces for talking about literature and culture.

“Literary culture without critics is just kind of a pile of books” says Dr Catriona Menzies-Pike, Senior Editor, SRB.

However, in April 2020, SRB received word from the Australia Council that they had been unsuccessful in their bid for four-year funding. This news was a tremendous disappointment – and landed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With limited funding, SRB faced compromise. Compromise on articles, writers, principles, or put articles behind a paywall.

Catriona looked to the SRB subscriber list, who she describes as “our most motivated readers and most engaged readers”.

“Donations were a matter of... survival.”

The generosity of donors resulted in \$20,000 given to support Western Sydney writers. Catriona says

“The success of this campaign allows us to say yes to more writers, it allows us to work with more emerging writers from Western Sydney, to work with more major award-winning high-profile writers. It gives us more latitude to publish a broad program that represents the richness and diversity of Australian literature.”

PRESENTATION SISTERS CONTINUE SOCIAL JUSTICE TRADITION

Irishwoman, courageous educator and foundress of the Presentation Sisters, Honora “Nano” Nagle utilised her relative position of strength as a well-educated woman from a privileged family and, at great risk, enabled social change.

Defying draconian 18th century British penal laws, which demanded Catholics convert to Anglicanism or be excluded from education, Nano Nagle established underground schools to teach children.

Arriving in Australia on Tasmanian shores in 1866, the Presentation Sisters followed in the footsteps of the communities they served, who left Ireland after the famine’s devastation. In 1874 another group of five volunteer Sisters left Kildare in Ireland at the invitation of a local Wagga Wagga priest to establish Catholic education in Wagga Wagga and beyond.

Nano Nagle’s legacy is reflected today through the Presentation Sisters’ support of Western Sydney University. Sr Margaret Barclay, Congregational Leader, says,

“One of the things I think about Western Sydney University, and the Presentation Sisters... it’s all about empowerment. And that’s what education is, to people who may not have had an opportunity to have tertiary education. And we do have a commitment to... walking with, our Indigenous, our First Peoples, in their lives”.



750

**OF WESTERN'S
STUDENTS ARE
INDIGENOUS**





L-R: Leadership Team of The Presentation Sisters, Wagga Wagga – Sr Margaret Barclay, Sr Lynne Crilley, Sr Bernadette Pattison, Sr Susan Miller

Dr Corrinne Sullivan's initial role at Western - Nagle Senior Lecturer Social Work and Community Development, School of Social Sciences and Psychology - was established with the support of the Presentation Sisters.

Now Associate Dean of Indigenous Education, and Senior Lecturer in Geography, School of Social Sciences, Dr Sullivan has played a significant role in Western's School of Social Sciences Indigenous Strategy 2020-2025. Dr Sullivan says,

"We've increased the amount of Indigenous students in the school, increased their retention rates. We've also worked with our non-Indigenous students to ensure that they're getting a well-rounded education. This donation has enabled us to really prioritise Indigenous education within the school".

Jarred Murphy, Wiradjuri man, Indigenous Education Officer and Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Communication student, who was born and raised on Dharawal Country in Campbelltown, says,

"...Corrinne has helped reveal the excellent work that I'm capable of that I wasn't aware that I could do. She's fair and reasonable while setting this exceptionally high standard and quality... She's managed to find this beautiful balance between setting these expectations while providing me the autonomy to find out how I would like to get there".

Dr Corrinne Sullivan, Associate Dean of Indigenous Education and Senior Lecturer in Geography, School of Social Sciences, Western Sydney University

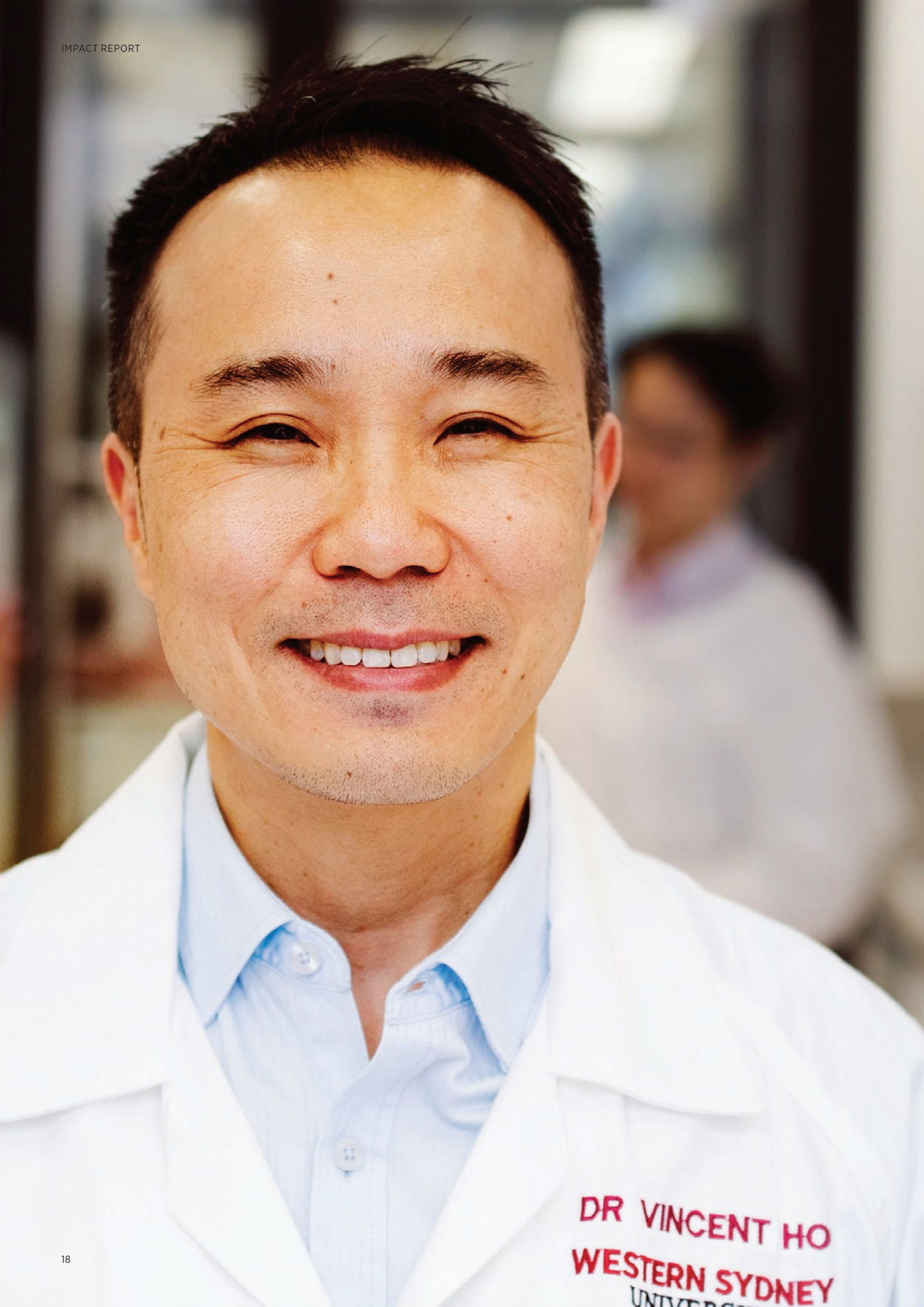
Dr Sullivan says,

"...I really love that Western is a university that is committed to the community... And the students that make up our community within the University are really good people... they're focused on the betterment of society... I think that really speaks to the ethos of the Presentation Sisters".

Dr Corrinne Sullivan biography

Corrinne is an Aboriginal scholar from the Wiradjuri Nation in central-west New South Wales. Her research interests are multi-disciplinary and focus broadly on experiences and effects of body and identity in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Corrinne's knowledge stems from the disciplines of Indigenous Studies and Human Geography, and she utilises both to understand the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are affected by their experiences of space and place.

Corrinne's Honour's thesis entitled 'Moral Linen: Indigenous and non-Indigenous experiences of dress in Parramatta Girls Home' was awarded the University Medal in Human Geography (2012). Her doctoral research explored the lived experiences of Aboriginal sex workers. Corrinne's thesis 'Indigenous Australians' experiences of sex work: Stories of Agency, Autonomy and Self-Determination' was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Commendation for Academic Excellence (2020).



DR VINCENT HO
WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY

GASTROPARESIS RESEARCH TO CHANGE LIVES

Imagine living with a condition which means that instead of experiencing food as an enjoyable necessity of life, soon after eating you feel bloated, nauseous, and even vomit. This is what people with gastroparesis can experience.

A chronic condition in which their stomach undergoes paralysis, symptoms often commence in youth, and can be long-term, if not life-long.

The emotional and economic impacts of gastroparesis are significant, with patients experiencing poor quality of life, reduced ability to work and study, hospital admission, and subsequent psychological effects. Onset can be sudden, and often commences after a bad bout of gastroenteritis – the infection triggering an abnormal response by the immune system.

Occurring more frequently in women, gastroparesis is often initially misdiagnosed as an eating disorder. While not an eating disorder, the severe symptoms some patients experience can result in depression and anxiety.

Dr Vincent Ho, Senior Lecturer in Medicine and Academic Gastroenterologist at Western Sydney University, is leading a team trying to find both effective treatments and a cure.

“Whilst there are some good treatments out there, including medications, and even surgical interventions, unfortunately, many of those treatments are really Band-Aid solutions – they don’t really address the underlying problem of the paralysis of the stomach.”

Dr Vincent Ho, Senior Lecturer in Medicine and Academic Gastroenterologist, Western Sydney University

With the generous support of philanthropic gifts, and fundraising by not for profit organisations and people affected by gastroparesis, Dr Ho and the team at Western are committed to defeating the condition.

Dr Ho’s research team, the GI Motility group at the Translational Gastroenterology Laboratory, Western’s School of Medicine, is trying to understand what causes gastroparesis, in a bid to apply targeted interventions to treat the condition.

One aspect of their work involves studying a cell located in the stomach - the interstitial cell of the cells of kahal. Functioning as what Dr Ho describes as “pacemaker cells of the gut”, the cells are important in the process of peristalsis, the gut’s normal contracting behaviour. The team aims to develop interventions which stimulate the cells, which do not work properly in people with gastroparesis, to switch back to a more typical profile and regain their proper function.

Dr Ho’s team would also like to look at treatments for patients to improve symptoms, including exploring foods patients may find more palatable. Longer term, Dr Ho says,

“...the holy grail of gastroparesis research is to really discover at a deeper level, what’s causing it and hopefully then find a solution... we’re certainly making some headway into understanding what goes on with gastroparesis, but it will be some time before we are able to develop treatments...”

So this is why the support of donors who believe in our vision is just so critically important... we’re certainly very thankful for the donors, you know, the patients and their families who believe in our work and have supported us along the way”.

Dr Vincent Ho biography

Dr Vincent Ho completed his undergraduate degree in Medicine at the University of NSW (2002) and gained fellowship with the Royal Australian College of Physicians in 2011. He works as a gastroenterologist at Campbelltown Hospital with subspecialisation in gastrointestinal motility. Vincent leads a Translational Gastroenterology Research program at the School of Medicine focusing on basic science and clinical research in the gut. He has a strong passion in education of the science of the gut to health discipline audiences as well as the general public.

Vincent is the gastroenterology education content convenor for the School of Medicine, has written extensively for The Conversation (over 6.5 million views), and has been interviewed on radio, television and newspapers.



THANK YOU

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