

MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland businessman is 'One in a Million'

A retiring Queensland businessman has given the 18,700 Australians diagnosed with prostate cancer each year hope for a new treatment by donating \$1 million to a Brisbane research project .

The money was donated to the Mater Medical Research Institute (MMRI), where researchers are trialling a world-first therapeutic vaccine which aims to stimulate the immune system to fight prostate cancer.

Professor Hart, Director of the MMRI, said the donation could potentially change the lives of the one in nine Australian men who will be diagnosed with this disease in their lifetime.

"The body contains specialised white blood cells, called dendritic cells (DC), which initiate an immune response," Professor Hart said.

"These cells direct the body's fight against invaders like bacteria or foreign bodies – but they don't always work effectively against cancer. Our work aims to trigger the immune system to kick in and destroy the prostate cancer and has the potential to revolutionise the treatment of other cancers down the track."

Prof Hart said on average research institutes only received around twenty per cent of the funding they applied for from the Federal Government.

"We rely more heavily on donations and corporate support to help progress our research than many people realise and this donation will make a huge difference by enabling us to finish this phase of the trial and fast-track future trials."

Gold Coast based engineer Vince Rehbein made the \$1 million donation.

"It's frightening to think that 32 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every single day in Australia," Mr Rehbein said.

"I would like to see the awareness of prostate cancer, and the wonderful work that's being done by Professor Hart and his team at the MMRI, significantly increased within our community."

The trial was kick-started with a \$1 million donation by Brisbane businessman, Bill Siganto in 2003.

"Bill's donation back in 2003 was a catalyst for me," said Mr Rehbein.

"I always thought that I would do the same thing if I ever had any extra money. Today I'm making that dream a reality – and hopefully I will inspire other people to do the same thing."

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Australian males (after non-melanoma skin cancer) and more than 3,000 men die of prostate cancer in Australia each year.

Twelve patients will be involved in the Phase 1 clinical trial at the MMRI, which is designed to test the safety of the vaccine.

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