



AUSTRALIAN
MELANOMA
RESEARCH
FOUNDATION



Annual Impact Report



Melanoma in Australia



One in three Australians will develop a skin cancer. The most dangerous is melanoma.



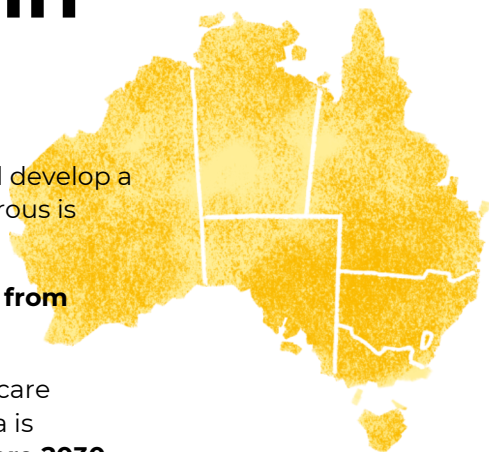
In Australia, **one person dies from melanoma every 6 hours.**



The direct cost to our health care system of treating melanoma is expected to **exceed \$3b before 2030.**



Over 90% of melanoma **can be treated successfully** if detected early.



Survival rates of advanced melanoma are **improving**, thanks to research.

2011
Less than 10%



2024
Over 55%



Our Impact at a Glance - 20 Years of Research



30 MELANOMA
RESEARCH
PROJECTS



AT 12 AUSTRALIAN
RESEARCH
INSTITUTES



WITH OVER
\$500K
INVESTED

A message from our Executive Chair

The Australian Melanoma Research Foundation began 20 years ago as a small charity. Two people were motivated by their own experiences with melanoma and began raising funds for research. The Foundation continues to be driven by people with their own personal experiences with melanoma and with confidence in the capacity of young, enthusiastic researchers to make a difference.

While progress has been made in recent decades, too many individuals and families continue to experience effects of this preventable cancer. The Foundation's work remains as important as ever.

This year, thanks to the generosity of our donors, supporters and corporate partners, we have continued to invest in innovative research that has the potential to transform melanoma diagnosis and treatment.

We remain a low-cost organisation, without premises, with minimal but motivated staff and with board members determined to see the Foundation grow in its mission to significantly contribute to the prevention, early detection and treatment of melanoma in Australia.

By investing in the next generation of scientific leaders, we are helping ensure that new discoveries continue to improve outcomes for patients for many years to come.

Beyond research, we have continued to grow our community of supporters, raise awareness of melanoma, and strengthen the partnerships that make our work possible. Every achievement outlined in this report is a direct result of the collective commitment of people who believe that research can change lives.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to our mission over the past year. Your support is contributing to progress towards zero deaths from melanoma.



Dr Wayne Harvey
Executive Chair

Featured Research

Improving the Early Detection of Invasive Melanoma

Project Title: The Lentigo Maligna Project

Researcher: Dr Bruna Melhoranse Gouveia

Institute: Melanoma Institute Australia and University of Sydney

With support from the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation in 2022, Dr Bruna Gouveia's Lentigo Maligna Spectrum Project has advanced our understanding of how to distinguish early-stage melanoma from invasive melanoma.

Lentigo maligna is the most common form of melanoma in situ in Australia, and determining when it progresses to invasive disease remains a significant clinical challenge. Through her research, Dr Gouveia investigated the use of Reflectance Confocal Microscopy (RCM), a non-invasive imaging technology that allows clinicians to examine skin cells in real time.

The project identified imaging features associated with melanoma invasion and led to the development of the new *Lentigo Maligna Spectrum Score*, a diagnostic tool designed to improve the accuracy of melanoma assessment.

Dr Gouveia's work represents an important step toward improving melanoma detection, earlier diagnosis, targeted biopsies, and ensuring patients receive the right treatment at the right time.

"It is an honour to have been awarded the Inaugural Warren Meanwell Melanoma Research Grant 2022. We hope our work will make a real difference that will ultimately improve outcomes for melanoma patients."



Tackling Melanoma Treatment Resistance

Project Title: Targeting epigenetic drivers of undifferentiated melanoma

Researcher: Dr Jessamy Tiffen and Dr Laura Nicholls

Institute: Centenary Institute and University of Sydney

Immunotherapy has transformed melanoma treatment, but many patients eventually stop responding to these life-saving therapies.

Supported by the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation in 2024, Dr Laura Nicholls investigated the role of a gene known as MECOM and its influence on melanoma progression and treatment response. Her research found that MECOM may help melanoma cells survive under stress and adopt characteristics associated with more aggressive disease.

Importantly, the study also revealed that higher MECOM levels were associated with better responses to immunotherapy, while lower levels were linked to brain metastases, one of the most serious forms of advanced melanoma. These findings provide valuable new insights into how melanoma behaves and may one day help clinicians predict which patients are most likely to benefit from treatment.

The project also marked a significant milestone in Dr Nicholls' research career, culminating in the successful completion of her Master's thesis and contributing important new knowledge to the melanoma research community.

“Despite enormous advances in melanoma treatments, the development of treatment resistance remains a major challenge that plagues long-term outcomes. This project offers hope for melanoma patients in improving long-term responses.”



Understanding the Link Between Diet, the Gut Microbiome and Immunotherapy

Project Title: Research into the role of the gut microbiome during immunotherapy

Researcher: Dr Rebecca Simpson

Institute: Melanoma Institute Australia and University of Sydney

With support from the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation in 2021, Dr Rebecca Simpson investigated how diet and the gut microbiome may influence the effectiveness of immunotherapy for people with melanoma.

The project contributed to a landmark international study published in *Nature Medicine*, which analysed patients from Australia, the Netherlands and the United States receiving immunotherapy for melanoma. The research found that patients with more diverse, healthy gut microbiomes were more likely to respond positively to treatment, while poorer outcomes were associated with less favourable microbiome profiles.

Importantly, the study identified links between higher dietary fibre and omega-3 intake and gut microbiome characteristics associated with improved treatment responses. Researchers also found that patients with these beneficial microbiome profiles had lower levels of inflammation before treatment began.

These findings provide some of the strongest evidence to date that diet, the gut microbiome and the immune system are closely connected during melanoma treatment. The research lays important groundwork for future studies exploring whether personalised dietary interventions could help improve immunotherapy outcomes and reduce treatment-related side effects.

By supporting researchers like Dr Simpson, the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation is helping generate the evidence needed to develop personalised nutrition and microbiome-based strategies that could improve immunotherapy outcomes and quality of life for people with melanoma.



Searching for New Treatments for Uveal Melanoma

Project Title: Investigating effects of fimepinostat, a dual HDAC and PI3K inhibitor, in uveal melanoma

Researcher: Dr Vivian Chua

Institute: Edith Cowan University

With support from the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation in 2024, Dr Vivian Chua investigated a promising new treatment approach for uveal melanoma, the most common form of eye cancer in adults and one of the most difficult melanomas to treat once it spreads beyond the eye.

Unlike cutaneous (skin) melanoma, which has benefited significantly from advances in immunotherapy and targeted therapies, patients with advanced uveal melanoma continue to face limited treatment options and poor outcomes.

Dr Chua's research focused on a drug called Fimepinostat, which is already being evaluated in clinical trials for other cancer types. Laboratory studies demonstrated that the drug effectively reduced the growth and survival of multiple uveal melanoma cell lines, including aggressive forms associated with a higher risk of metastasis. Importantly, the treatment remained effective even at low doses, suggesting it may have potential as a powerful therapeutic option.

The research also examined whether factors produced by liver cells could reduce the drug's effectiveness. Encouragingly, the study found that Fimepinostat continued to suppress tumour growth despite the presence of liver-derived factors, suggesting it may retain its effectiveness.

Beyond evaluating the drug itself, the project has also provided new insights into the biological pathways that drive uveal melanoma growth.

While further testing is required before the treatment can be assessed in patients, the findings represent an important step in the search for better therapies for advanced uveal melanoma, where therapeutic advances have historically been limited.

"This award has allowed me to generate research data that may be evidence for testing of a novel treatment strategy in patients and to continue supporting my career and my research towards improving melanoma patient survival."



Could We Predict Which Melanomas Will Return?

Project Title: Predicting Melanoma Recurrence Through Advanced Molecular Analysis

Researcher: Dr Prachi Bhave

Institute: Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre & The University of Melbourne

Dr Prachi Bhave's research, funded by Australian Melanoma Research Foundation, explored why some patients with early-stage melanoma experience recurrence while others with seemingly similar disease remain cancer-free.

Most melanoma-related deaths occur after the return of disease that was initially diagnosed at an early stage, highlighting the need for better ways to identify patients at greatest risk and tailor their care accordingly.

Using a cutting-edge technology known as spatial transcriptomics, the research examined tumour samples from patients with markedly different clinical outcomes. By analysing gene activity and the complex interactions between tumour cells and surrounding immune cells, the study sought to uncover biological differences that may help explain why some melanomas recur while others do not.

The research identified important differences in both the cellular composition and molecular characteristics of melanoma tumours. Patients who remained cancer-free had higher levels of immune cell infiltration within their tumours, while those who experienced recurrence showed distinct patterns of gene activity linked to inflammation, metabolism and tumour progression.

These findings suggest that the tumour microenvironment may play a critical role in determining long-term outcomes.

As one of the first studies to apply spatial transcriptomic analysis to primary melanoma samples from patients with extreme clinical outcomes, this project has generated valuable insights into the biology of melanoma recurrence and contributed to the growing effort to improve survival outcomes through precision medicine.

"It is an honour to have been awarded the Inaugural LEK Consulting Melanoma Research Grant 2022. We couldn't have done this without the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation's support, so we are truly grateful for it."



Funded Research

2025



AI-driven analysis of melanoma tumour biology and treatment response

Dr Priyanka Rana – Macquarie University

This project is developing a multimodal AI model that combines tissue imaging and clinical data to better predict melanoma treatment response and improve personalised care. Work is underway using multiplex immunofluorescence imaging to map tumour microenvironments and train the AI system on integrated datasets. This research could help clinicians tailor immunotherapy more precisely, improving outcomes while reducing unnecessary side effects.



Understanding immune resistance in liver metastases in melanoma

Dr Jordan Conway – Melanoma Institute Australia

This study is investigating why patients with liver metastases respond less effectively to immunotherapy and how systemic immune function is altered in these cases. Blood samples from patients receiving different immunotherapy combinations are being analysed to assess immune cell activity and drug binding. This work could lead to better treatment strategies for high-risk patients with metastatic disease in the liver.



Real-time melanoma margin assessment using advanced imaging

Dr Mary-Ann El Sharouni – Sydney Diagnostic Centre

This project is evaluating a new surgical imaging approach using ex vivo confocal microscopy and fluorescent markers to improve melanoma margin clearance during surgery. A pilot study is being conducted to validate this technology for real-time assessment of tumour margins. This could reduce recurrence rates by ensuring complete tumour removal while preserving healthy tissue.



Spatial gene expression analysis of advanced melanoma

Nathalie Nataren – University of South Australia

This research uses computational methods to analyse spatial gene expression in advanced melanoma tumours to understand why some patients do not respond to immunotherapy. Xenium spatial transcriptomics data is being processed to map immune and tumour interactions at high resolution. This could improve understanding of treatment resistance and support development of more effective immunotherapy approaches.

Reflecting: 20 years

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Australian Melanoma Research Foundation (AMRF) was established from a simple but powerful belief: that more investment in melanoma research would save lives.

In 2006, Adelaide businessman and melanoma patient Graeme Marshall recognised the urgent need for greater funding of melanoma research in Australia. At the time, melanoma treatment options were limited, research funding lagged behind that of many other cancers, and promising areas such as immunotherapy were still in their infancy.

Inspired by this vision, accountant and business leader Tony Santin led the establishment of the Adelaide Skin Cancer and Melanoma Research Foundation in 2007. Despite his own battle with melanoma, Tony was instrumental in creating the Foundation and appointing its inaugural Board of Directors in 2009. From its earliest days, the Foundation was built on the generosity of supporters, including Graeme Marshall and his family, whose philanthropy helped fund some of the Foundation's first research grants.

As support for the Foundation grew across Australia, so too did its reach and impact. In 2010, the organisation adopted the trading name Australian Melanoma Research Foundation, reflecting its national focus and commitment to advancing melanoma research for the benefit of all Australians.

Today, AMRF remains guided by a volunteer Board and supported by a small, dedicated team committed to ensuring that every possible dollar is directed towards high-quality melanoma research.



Our Community

Every breakthrough in the melanoma research we fund begins with our community that believes in the power of research. Together, our supporters are helping fund innovative melanoma research, raise awareness and improve outcomes for patients and their families.



Adelaide Melanoma March

The Australian Melanoma Research Foundation has proudly co-hosted the Adelaide Melanoma March event since its inception, celebrating 15 years of Melanoma Marches across Australia in 2026. The Melanoma March began as a grassroots event founded by James Economides in memory of his son Michael, who died from melanoma in 2008 aged 20. The event blossomed into a national campaign headed by the Melanoma Institute Australia with the Adelaide event run in partnership with AMRF.

The Adelaide Melanoma March is an all-abilities family-friendly walking fundraiser, bringing together families, friends, patients, healthcare professionals and more.. Many in the community walk to remember loved ones or support those affected by melanoma.

We wish to acknowledge the City of Charles Sturt, along with Mayor Angela Evans, for their support of the event, and extend our sincere appreciation to Melanoma Patients Australia for their ongoing attendance each year to assist participants on their melanoma journey. Thank you to all the participants over the years who stand with us and share our vision through attending the Adelaide Melanoma March.



Community Heroes



Driven by the loss of her son Aaron, Glenda has turned profound grief into purposeful advocacy. As an ambassador for the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation, she is dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of melanoma and the critical importance of early detection.

From emergency surgery and aggressive treatment to finding strength in community and rediscovering her stride, advocate and ambassador Fiona's story traces a path not unlike the trails she loves: unpredictable, challenging, and ultimately, profoundly transformative.



Adelaide University Dermatology + Plastics Society (AUDPS) once again stepped beyond the lecture theatre this year, joining the Adelaide Melanoma March joining the wider community in a shared commitment to prevention, early detection, and patient-centred care.

For more than eight years, the MGA Whittles Group Community Foundation has been turning community spirit into meaningful impact. The Foundation has raised more than \$73,000 to support melanoma research through the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation.



At just 23, Holly never imagined she would be facing a melanoma diagnosis. Holly is committed to sharing her story to raise awareness about the realities of melanoma, especially for young people, and why taking your health seriously, no matter your age, can make all the difference.

Despite being diligent about annual skin checks, Samantha never expected to hear the words, "it's melanoma." By taking on the Sydney Marathon, she hopes her story will encourage Australians to prioritise skin checks and understand that melanoma can affect anyone.



From boardrooms to remote worksites, Skin Cancer Nurse Harriet is taking melanoma awareness directly to Australians, one skin check at a time. Harriet combines clinical expertise with a passion for education, helping people understand their risk and catch potential skin cancers early.

Team Cancer Care Adelaide joined the Adelaide Melanoma March for the very first time this year. For medical oncologists, the impact of melanoma is not only measured in clinical outcomes, but in the lives of patients and families they walk alongside every day.



Awareness & Early Detection

Regional Skin Check Program



In 2025, the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation continued its Regional Skin Check Program in Lameroo, South Australia, providing free skin spot checks and melanoma awareness education to a community with limited access to specialist services.

During just five hours of consultations, 54 free skin checks were conducted by qualified skin cancer nurses. Nine people were referred for further assessment, including seven suspected non-melanoma skin cancers and two suspected melanomas requiring treatment.



The program also generated significant local media coverage through Murray Bridge News, the Pinnaroo Border Times and SAA Radio, helping to raise awareness of melanoma prevention and the importance of regular skin checks across the broader community.

Importantly, the program is free to access, ensuring cost is not a barrier to seeking an initial skin cancer assessment.

With additional support, AMRF aims to expand this initiative to more regional and remote communities across Australia, helping more people access potentially life-saving skin checks close to home.

Spot-A-Spot MicroSkill



The Spot-a-Spot and Save a Life MicroSkill is helping turn everyday interactions into opportunities for early melanoma detection. Developed in partnership with TAFE NSW and industry leaders, the online training equips hairdressers, barbers and beauticians with the skills and confidence to recognise suspicious spots on the head and neck and encourage clients to seek professional advice.

Through this innovative approach, the program is extending melanoma awareness beyond traditional healthcare settings and empowering trusted community professionals to play a role in saving lives.

Help Fund Research



DONATE

All funding from grants awarded goes directly to researchers and project requirements, not institutional red tape.

Melanoma research takes time, collaboration and ongoing investment. Monthly giving provides reliable funding that helps researchers continue vital work with confidence. Become a monthly donor and join the Melanoma Research Collective.



FUNDRAISE

Bring friends, family and colleagues together while making a meaningful difference. Whether it be a morning tea, workplace challenge or charity fun run, together, these events help fund innovative research and bring us closer to a future with fewer lives impacted by this disease.



PARTNER

Our corporate and pro bono partners help amplify the impact of every donation by contributing resources, expertise and support that enable the Australian Melanoma Research Foundation to invest more in life-saving melanoma research.



LEGACY

Create a lasting impact through a gift in your will or a tribute for a loved one who has passed.

Named Awards stand as a tribute to the importance of research to create change for melanoma patients. Make a gift of \$50,000 or over, and choose to name an award.

For more information about donations, fundraising, partnership and legacy opportunities, please reach out to isobel@melanomaresearch.com.au

Partnerships

Together, we achieve more. We are grateful for the organisations and businesses that stand alongside us in the fight against melanoma. Their support, expertise and shared commitment help drive meaningful progress in research and improve outcomes for people affected by melanoma.



Australian Melanoma & Skin Cancer Alliance

Addressing the incidence and impact of melanoma in Australia is a matter of national significance. The Australian Melanoma and Skin Cancer Alliance advocates for the interests of researchers, clinicians, community support networks, and carers. United in purpose, Alliance members are committed to improving outcomes for individuals affected by skin cancers, including melanoma.



Annual Financial Summary

Australian Melanoma Research Foundation
ABN: 26429861213
Summary Financial Statement Ending June 2025

Total Income	\$197,293
Research Grants Funded	\$75,010
Total Expenses	\$383,177
Net Deficit	-\$185,884

Total Assets	\$1,222,586
Total Liabilities	\$106,969
Net Assets	\$1,115,617

**Full financial information is available from the ACNC website.*

Our Team

The Australian Melanoma Research Foundation team is a small but highly committed group focused on advancing melanoma research and improving patient outcomes. Working closely with researchers, donors, corporate partners and volunteers, we strive to keep our community informed, inspired and connected to the life-changing impact of research, while creating opportunities to support our mission through fundraising, events and advocacy.



Dr Wayne Harvey
Executive Chair



Nicoletta Muner
Deputy Chair



Mark Streeting
Board Member



Vickie Edwards
Board Member



Sanjay Gund
Board Member



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