

CASE STUDY 10: BURNET INSTITUTE AND THE ALFRED MEDICAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PRECINCT

Initial seed funding by the Victorian Government to create a new academic precinct on the Alfred Hospital campus supported strong collaborations and partnerships between universities, hospitals and research institutes. This partnership, now known as the Alfred Research Alliance, has been able to take research from bench to bedside.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEM/GAP

Agglomeration of medical bodies has the power to create the critical mass necessary to achieve exceptional health outcomes and create linkages from discovery through to commercialisation and better patient treatment and care. In 1998, a group of universities, hospitals and medical institutes in Victoria set out to achieve this.

The Inner & Eastern Healthcare Network (including The Alfred Hospital), Baker Medical Research Institute, Macfarlane Burnet Centre for Medical Research and Monash University agreed to establish a new academic precinct on the Alfred Hospital campus. The newly formed partners sought funding from the Victorian Government to support this vision.

OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTMENT

Through the First Generation *STI Initiative*, the Victorian Government provided an \$8 million infrastructure grant for the construction of the Alfred Medical Research and Education Precinct (AMREP) to bring these various partners together. This was the cornerstone for another \$90 million contributed by partners, philanthropic organisations and the Australian Government.

In 2002, AMREP was officially opened. The Institute included the Baker Institute building, Monash laboratories, the Ian Potter Library, Precinct Animal Centre and the AMREP Education Centre. It also included the opening of Burnet Tower and relocation of the Burnet Institute from the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital.

A further \$16 million provided as part of *Healthy Futures* in 2006 was used to create a new research 'super institute' which supported the merger of the Austin Research Institute and the Burnet Institute to create the Southern Hemisphere's largest infectious disease institute to fight global diseases.



IMAGE CREDIT: 360BIOLABS

TAKING RESEARCH FROM BENCH TO BEDSIDE

Discoveries in laboratories can be tested in clinical trials, and then carried through into clinical practice at The Alfred, one of Australia's largest hospitals.

IMPACT

Since initial establishment, the AMREP partnership has continued to evolve and made a demonstrable impact on the health of Victorians through its core research strengths. In 2018, AMREP rebranded itself as the Alfred Research Alliance, acknowledging that collaboration and commitment of their partners defies place, and that it is the people who make the partnership exceptional.

The Alliance now brings together eight independent and diverse organisations to create a community of excellence in medical research and education in Melbourne. The members are recognised as leaders in their fields, and include Alfred Health, Monash University, the Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute, the Burnet Institute, Deakin University, La Trobe University, Nucleus Network, and 360biolabs.

The Alliance is particularly unique in its ability to take research from bench to bedside. Discoveries in laboratories can be tested in clinical trials, and then carried through into clinical practice at The Alfred, one of Australia's largest hospitals. These learnings in the clinical setting can then inform decision-making for health policy or future research, completing the translational research loop.

These capabilities across the research loop are being utilised to solve health challenges across eight core research strengths, including blood diseases and cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, and infection and immunity. These are complemented by comprehensive capacity in pre-clinical research and Phase I to IV clinical trials, co-located start-ups and businesses, and the clinical environment of The Alfred.

The new facilities constructed through *Healthy Futures*, Alfred Centre Stage 2, also doubled the capacity of Burnet's laboratory facilities and floor space to ensure future growth across programs. The new facilities facilitated the final phase in the merger with the Austin Research Institute enabling the relocation of all staff to the AMREP campus.

In 2019, the Alliance received \$133 million in external research funding and published over 1,895 original research papers. In the same year, it also received 14 provisional patent applications, eight international patent applications, 37 national phase entry patents, and had three patents granted. A total of 671 clinical trials were underway at the Alfred Research Alliance.