

# Malaria Vaccine Project Newsletter 4 - March 2019



## *Federal Government matches Rotary's mighty effort*



Graham Jones and Gold Coast Benji

Friday March 8 2019 was an epic day for the Malaria Vaccine Project, Rotarians all over Australia, and Professor Good and his scientific team. On that day almost two years after the Project was launched by the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove, the Minister for Health the Hon Greg Hunt MP announced that the Federal Government would match the \$500,000 that Rotary has

raised with a further \$500,000

from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). This means that the total going forward to the malaria vaccine research at the Institute for Glycomics (Griffith University) is now \$1.04 million.

The Minister noted that he was impressed by the efforts of Rotary Australia enabling the clinical trials which test the effectiveness of the new novel vaccine PlasProtect®, which commenced in August 2018. These much needed additional funds from the Federal Government will move forward the clinical trials in a non-endemic country (Australia) and take us closer to the ultimate goal of saving the lives of over 435,000 people who die from malaria every year. Most of these people are young children and pregnant women living in places like Africa, PNG, and South America.

The announcement by Minister Hunt was widely circulated in the media in most states and I was delighted to see that the efforts of Rotary were strongly highlighted. Some of the press grabs were a little bizarre but "Rotary sausage sizzles help fund new vaccine" would have touched the heart of every Rotarian. Besides appearing in the Herald Sun (Melbourne), the Courier Mail (Brisbane), the Advertiser (Adelaide), the Gold Coast Bulletin and various Australia Associated Press (AAP) outlets, there were several interviews on radio (ABC, 3AW, 91.7 Gold Coast ABC) and on Channel 7.

At about the same time as Professor Good and I made a submission to Minister Hunt and the MRFF fund in January, the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove surprised us with a return visit to receive an update on the malaria research and the Rotary fundraising. There is more about this in a later article but there is no doubt that Sir Peter's passion for the Project and the media his visit generated laid a very favourable foundation for our proposal to the Federal Government. I would also like to extend our thanks to Hon Karen Andrews, Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, Hon Steven Ciobo, Minister for Defence Industry, former Queensland Premier Hon Rob Borbidge and former Australian Senator Santo Santoro for supporting our submission.

I add a big thank you to our Rotarian Malaria Ambassador (D 9570) Bruce Howlett and John Nugent who grasped the initiative to inform Minister Hunt about the Malaria Vaccine Project at a function hosted by George Christensen MP in Mackay. This set off a whole chain of events that led to the Federal Government matching the incredible work that Rotarians and our sponsor Zarraffas have done all over Australia. We are over the moon with your help-THANK YOU. I also extend our special thanks to Minister Hunt and Kylie Wright from the Health Department for this wonderful grant. Hopefully Big Business will step up and pitch in alongside Rotary and Government to give this promising vaccine a much needed additional \$500,000.

That is our next frontier!!

PDG Graham Jones

Chair of the Malaria Vaccine Project Committee



Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health

# Governor-General revisits Griffith for an update on malaria vaccine trial



Malaria  
Vaccine  
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## PATRONS

Hon Lawrence Springborg  
PRID Noel Trevaskis OAM  
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Before Christmas the Project Committee invited the Governor General, His Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) to return to the Institute for Glycomics to celebrate the second anniversary of his launch of the Malaria Vaccine Project on 27 March 2017.

Unfortunately, due to his other commitments Sir Peter was unable to come on the date of the anniversary. However in his response he indicated his continuing support for the Project by saying that he was keen to visit the laboratory to see how the Project was progressing before he retired from office. He proposed a visit on 29 January. Accordingly with the kind assistance of the University arrangements were expeditiously made for him to meet with a small group at the Institute on that day. Professor Ned Pankhurst, Acting Vice Chancellor of Griffith University and Dr Chris Davis the General Manager of the Institute met Sir Peter on his arrival. Olga Chaourova assisted with the arrangements for the visit and Danielle Stanisc conducted the tour of the laboratory. Graham Jones, Gerard Brennan and Laraine Brennan from the Committee met with Sir Peter and participated in the visit.

Dr Danielle Stanisc gave the Governor General a detailed briefing on the status of the Project. Danielle described how the trials had proceeded with a small number of volunteers at the Gold Coast University Hospital during the last four months

of 2018. Each of the participants received three injections of the vaccine and was then tested with a live malaria parasite. She noted that the vaccine approach is safe. She said that the trials were going well and that the results looked exciting.

Further trials with larger groups will take place in Brisbane with the complete results being announced in mid-2020.

Sir Peter was very impressed with the progress that had been made since he launched the Project. In his response he pledged his ongoing support for the malaria vaccine research at Griffith University and for the fundraising efforts of Rotary. Sir Peter recalled the near death experience of one of his friends in the Army from malaria and commented:

“This is just the kind of research that is needed to wipe out the absolute scourge of malaria from places like Africa and parts of Asia”.

Sir Peter’s return visit gave the Project a tremendous boost of media support both in the Gold Coast Bulletin and in TV coverage in the evening news bulletins on Channels 7, 9, and 10.

Gerard and Laraine Brennan

Members of the Malaria Vaccine Project Committee



Professor Ned Pankhurst, Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor; Dr Chris Davis, General Manager of the Institute for Glycomics; PDG Graham Jones, Chair of the Malaria Vaccine Project Committee; Dr Danielle Stanisc, Institute for Glycomics; Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)



Professor Ned Pankhurst, Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor; Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)



# Message from Prof Michael Good



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## *Progress towards the malaria vaccine, PlasProtect<sup>®</sup>*

As you are all aware, malaria is a dreadful disease and continues to take the lives of over 435,000 people, mostly African children, each year. The latest WHO World Malaria Report was released on November 19, 2018 and shows no significant progress in controlling malaria in the years 2015–2017. An effective vaccine is urgently needed. Thanks to Rotary, we are making progress.

At the end of last year, we published a study in which volunteers received a single dose of the PlasProtect<sup>®</sup> vaccine that we have developed. The volunteers all developed an immune response to the vaccine, which was extremely encouraging. We have now embarked on a 'challenge' study in which volunteers will be given a malaria infection after they receive 3 doses of the vaccine to ask whether they are protected. This is obviously a very important study and will take some time to complete, but it has started. At the completion of this study different volunteers will have received different doses of vaccine to enable us to find the optimal dose. Our next challenge, after successfully completing this arm of the study, is to make the vaccine in a manner such that it can be delivered to malaria-endemic parts of the world where we can test the vaccine amongst those populations whose lives are directly affected by malaria. Currently, the vaccine is made fresh just before being given to volunteers. However, the ideal way to present the vaccine is in a manner in which the doctor or nurse simply takes a vial from the fridge and injects it. Work has already commenced to develop this form of the vaccine and a prototype has been successfully tested in laboratory animals.

Rotary has been instrumental in getting us to where we are. The support of the Rotary community is inspirational and we could not progress without this support. Already, Rotary has raised over \$550,000. As well as undertaking the vital research, we are working closely with the Rotary team to identify other potential sources of funding to enable the research to move ahead more quickly.

As you would all be aware, thanks to Rotary's support, the Federal Government has announced a grant of \$500,000 to support our vaccine development program. This was a wonderful result and I thank many people for their support, including Graham Jones and his Committee, Bruce Howlett, Santo Santoro and of course Minister Hunt.

Michael Good

4 March 2019



Professor Michael Good, Institute for Glycomics



# Federal Minister's visit



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As a Rotarian, I am very proud of the work that Rotary does to help rid the world of Malaria. I am also a medical researcher so I am incredibly aware of the important work the Malaria Vaccine Committee is undertaking to sponsor the clinical trials. Developing a vaccine is truly the best weapon to have in the arsenal against such a malicious disease.

At the Rotary breakfast meeting on the 14th of March, the following guests attended: the Hon Karen Andrews MP, as the guest speaker, the new Vice Chancellor of Griffith University Professor Carolyn Evans, David Crisafulli MP and Sam O'Connor MP. In addition, we welcomed our five Filipino Vocational Exchange friends and an array of distinguished Rotarians and friends.

The room was full of vibrant energy and enthusiasm. The Vice Chancellor thanked the generous efforts of the Malaria Vaccine Committee and reiterated how supporting a clinical trial of this magnitude is a great feat. She asked Rotary to stand by the University's side for as long as it takes because clinical trials are lengthy and challenging processes. She concluded by emphasizing that the payoff for such selfless dedication would be measured by the lives saved from this malicious disease. Moreover, Rotary would have paved the way for the eradication of yet another deadly disease.

Following on from the Vice Chancellors words, the Hon Karen Andrews took to the podium. She delighted the audience with tales of her own education and the battle she fought as a female within a scientific field. The Minister informed us of the kind of endeavours she is pursuing in her Cabinet role of Industry, Science and Technology. In particular, she emphasised the need for and importance of innovation within a society, and observed that innovation is strengthened by supporting both young women and men to pursue their dreams in STEM.

The Minister was able to convey to me and others why she believes the work that the Rotary-Griffith partnership is doing on the Malaria vaccine is so vitally important. In her mind, any progress made towards eradicating malaria will remove one of the largest killers globally- one that more commonly takes children than adults. However, the vaccine not only saves lives it drives innovation! For every child it saves there is a child that will have a healthier upbringing and henceforth a greater opportunity for education that can itself generate further innovation.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Honourable Karen Andrews, the three members of Parliament in attendance, the Vice Chancellor, PDG Graham Jones and myself made our way to the Glycomics building where Dr Danielle Stanisic gave us a tour of the laboratory and demonstrated the work they were doing.

It was during this tour that our goals for hosting this meeting were achieved. The Minister asked Danielle many questions about the vaccine and the progress it was making. This opened up a line of conversation amongst those present that led to Minister Andrews offering her unequivocal support for the vaccine trials. The Vice Chancellor committed to staying personally involved with the project and emphasized that she would maintain a line of communication between the team on the ground and the Federal Government. This was the outcome we had hoped for because enterprises like this triumph when community and philanthropy work hand in hand with the Government-all pursuing a common goal.

Samuel Hall

President



Mr Michael O. Torres; Ms Jama M. Ramos; Ms Mary Char Bey N. de Castro; Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for industry, Science and Technology; Ms Joyce A. Ancuna; Vice Chancellor Prof Carolyn Evans, Griffith University; Ms Grace Fojas Vinarao

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# Bruce Howlett captures the moment



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About a year ago PDG Ross Smith, an Ambassador with the Malaria Vaccine Project, spoke about the Project at the Rotary Conference of District 9570. This inevitably led to Bruce Howlett, a member of the Rotary Club of Mackay West, becoming the District 9570 Ambassador for the Malaria Vaccine Project. In a very short time Bruce has done an amazing job - visiting and talking to clubs all over District 9570 and raising more than \$15,000 for this project. A great effort but his big triumph was yet to come!

Bruce had told his very good friend John Nugent, a Director of the Northern Queensland Primary Healthcare Network about Professor Good's promising vaccine and the work of the Malaria Vaccine Project. In January 2019 John was invited to a cocktail party hosted by George Christensen MP (Dawson) and attended by the Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for Health. John eagerly informed the Minister about the Malaria Vaccine Project and this opened the door for Bruce to speak to Kylie Wright, a senior executive in the Federal Health Department. Bruce grabbed the moment and set up the opportunity for me to follow up with Kylie Wright and this created the chain of events that generated Minister Hunt's matching grant of \$500,000 to the clinical trials research at the Institute for Glycomics. THANK YOU BRUCE AND JOHN for these perspicacious initiatives.

Bruce and his wife Kerry live in Mackay where Bruce was a veterinary surgeon for 38 years. His father-in-law, Mike O'Riordan was Past District Governor in District 9570 and inspired Bruce to join Rotary in 2015. Bruce is also the Chair of Rotarians Against Malaria [RAM] in District 9570 and like all of us finds the magnitude of the death toll of children from malaria profoundly disturbing. Bruce, your passion for eliminating malaria is only exceeded by your insight in opening doors.

PDG Graham Jones,

Chair of the Malaria Vaccine Project Committee



Bruce and Kerry Howlett



**MACKAY WEST ROTARY**

# News from Social Media



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## Welcome to the Malaria Vaccine Project

To find out more about the project go to [www.malariavaccineproject.com](http://www.malariavaccineproject.com)

The website has extensive information about the project, the charter, goals, partnerships, patrons, how to donate, how to contact us, the latest posts and a calendar of upcoming events.

The home page features a 'Donate Here' button where you can donate and receive a tax-deductible receipt - your donation could save a life!

Videos, information of interest and links to the Malaria Vaccine Facebook page, Rotary District 9640, RAM (Rotarians Against Malaria) and Griffith University, Institute for Glycomics are all available on the Home page.

The Menu bar underneath the image of the mosquito links to more detailed information on each topic, click on a topic to find out more!

By scrolling down the Home page, 3 of the latest posts are featured with each post linking to further information. All posts can be viewed by clicking on the Menu 'Latest Posts'.

Explore at [www.malariavaccineproject.com](http://www.malariavaccineproject.com) or follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/malariavaccineproject> and keep up to date with the latest news of the Malaria Vaccine Project!

Teresa Dawson  
Webmaster and social media  
Malaria Vaccine Project





# Gold Coast Benji



## *My incredible journey*

Benji came into being on the 19th July 2003. From the moment that he arrived his winning smile made him a favourite with all the children that he came in contact with. His eyes seemed to light up and the children called him Benji. From that day onwards he has become a symbol of unconditional love and a fund raiser extraordinaire.

Benji soon realised that his vocation in life was to help where he could to raise as much money as possible to help others. He enlisted the help of his many friends who were only too happy to support him.

Tithing is a commitment that most of his friends believe in so he never has a problem when he needs help with his latest fundraising venture. He believes in service above self, and his friends do not need accolades or even acknowledgment of their support they just want all contributions to be given in his name.

Benji has travelled around Australia and has raised money for local charities in most states, as well as travelling around the world, where he and his friends support his favourite charities.

Benji loves to support individuals who really need help and asks nothing in return but a simple thank you. Over the years Benji has managed with his friends to raise considerable sums of money for numerous organisations and loves to do it.

The Malaria Vaccine Project is very special to him. Here he is wearing the new logo on his shirt as well as the new badge. Designed by members of the Malaria Vaccine Committee who personally funded the design and production of the badge.



Sandra Doumany and Graham Jones with Gold Coast Benji

**Look at our  
new badge!**



# Malaria Awareness Day (April 30th)

**World-wide, April 25th is declared as World Malaria Day.** Here in Australia, because of Anzac Day, this day has been moved to April 30th. It is a time to reflect on the impact of malaria upon the world and the progress we are making in fighting and controlling it in our countries of focus, namely Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.

**The battle against malaria continues to be waged on many fronts.** We should be very proud that Australia is at the forefront of world research in developing new anti-malarial treatments and in seeking to find a suitable long lasting, cheap and easy to administer vaccine. Discovering such a vaccine is imperative because the malaria parasite transferred by an infected mosquito is developing increasing resistance to sprays and drugs.

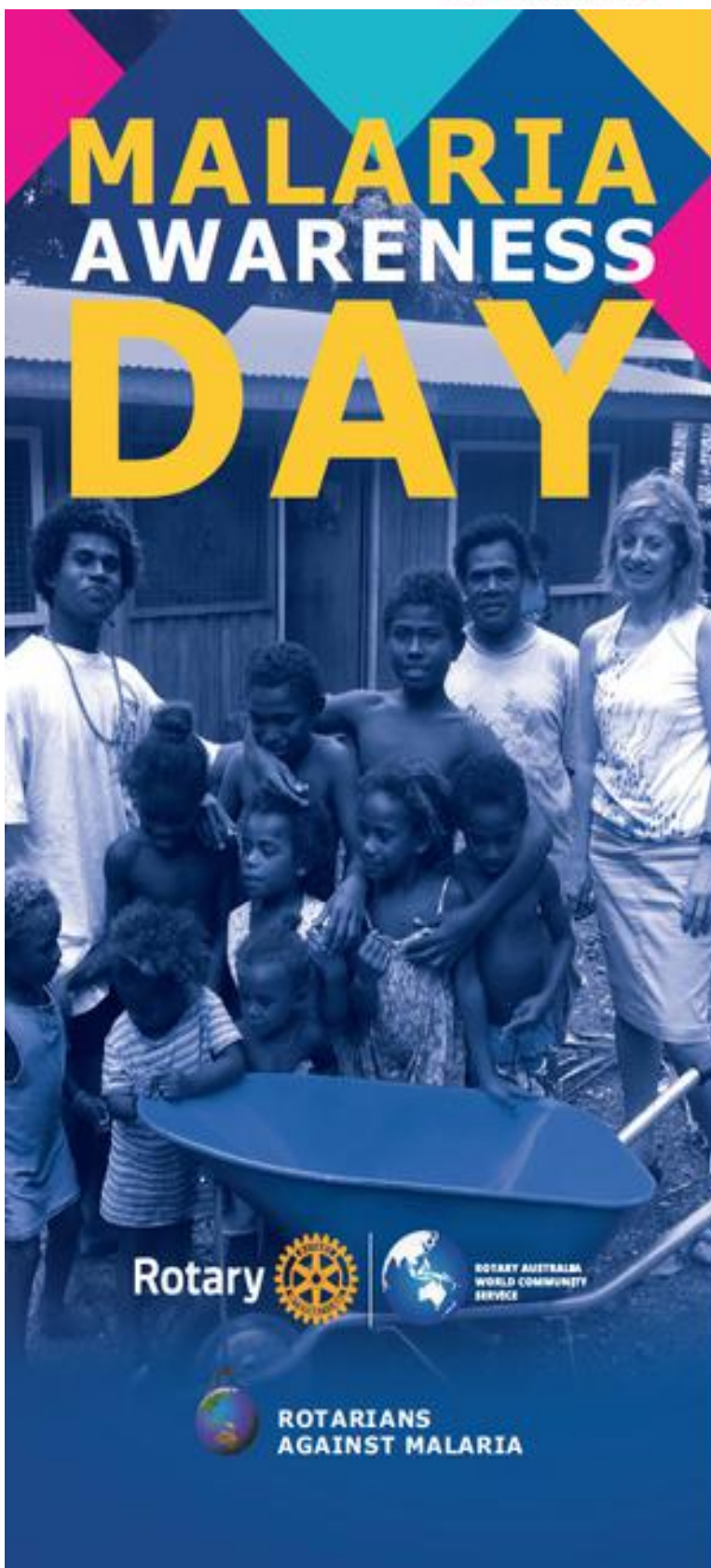
**Malaria Awareness Day is a very important day in the Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM)** It is a great opportunity to promote community understanding of the global campaign to eradicate malaria by 2040. It is also a chance to highlight the outstanding contribution RAM has made in the last 24 years, supporting in a number of ways the local health authorities in our areas of focus.



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# Welcome a new member

## *Olga Chaourova*

Olga joined the Institute for Glycomics as a Development Manager in October last year. Shortly after her commencement at Griffith University, she became a Malaria Vaccine Project Committee member.

Olga previously worked at the University of Queensland in various roles primarily managing international relations and community engagement. She has extensive experience in the Higher Education sector with expertise in international relations, student recruitment and engagement, including sourcing external funding for university research.

Olga is originally from Belarus. She moved to Australia with her family over twenty years ago. While completing her Master of Commerce at the University of Queensland, she became a full-time staff member of the University in 2003.

Olga enjoys her new role at the Institute for Glycomics. She is very passionate about what the Institute does and particularly the Malaria Vaccine Project. Olga receives a lot of support and encouragement from her 18-year old daughter, 22-year old son and her husband.



Olga Chaourova, Institute for Glycomics







## Australian scientists step closer to malaria vaccine

Rob Harris, National politics reporter, Herald Sun

March 7, 2019 10:00pm

Subscriber only



A world-first malaria vaccine will move to clinical trials after a community-led Australian fundraising attempt to globally eradicate the deadly disease.

Rotary clubs around the country have raised \$500,000 during the past three years for the Malaria Vaccine Project to help fund Griffith University's new novel vaccine for the disease.

The Morrison Government today provide an additional \$500,000 through its Medical Research Future Fund to undertake clinical trials to test the effectiveness of the PlasProtect vaccine.

"This was our dream and to not only have the federal government support it but so many communities from Rotary clubs around the country has been incredible," Mr Jones said.

"This disease robs children around the world of their dreams and to be involved in giving hope to them is an incredible thing."

In 2018 researchers from Griffith University's Institute for Glycomics trailed the use of a whole parasite blood-stage malaria vaccine in human volunteers that yielded safe and successful immunogenic outcomes.



The vaccine has the potential to save millions of lives

Led by Professor Michael Good and Dr Danielle Stanisic, a single dose of the trial vaccine was administered to volunteers who were healthy, malarial-naïve males aged 18-60 and it induced a broad parasite-specific cellular immune response that recognised different malaria parasites and did not adversely affect the volunteers.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt said the new vaccine differs by using the entire malaria parasite to develop the vaccine and "holds great promise".

"It has proven highly effective in animal trials and has been shown to be safe in humans, with the next step to undertake human clinical trials," Mr Hunt said.

"Rotary clubs and our Government have come together to help eradicate this insidious disease. This has the potential to save millions of lives."

[rob.harris@news.com.au](mailto:rob.harris@news.com.au)



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