

"Thank You"  
Day

Research Australia

An alliance for discoveries in health

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## Health and medical research winners announced

A former Federal Minister and an indigenous Australian singer are among the surprise recipients of the 2008 Research Australia 'Thank You' Day Awards announced in Sydney last night (Thursday, November 27, 2008).

Now in its sixth year, Research Australia's 'Thank You' Day Awards celebrate the achievements of six individuals or organisations that have helped further medical research in Australia.

Research Australia CEO, Rebecca James, said this year's recipients have made a substantial contribution towards building healthier communities.

"Rarely do we have an opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the impact individuals can have in improving the health of the whole community," Ms James said.

"The award winners are all leaders in their field, and have supported research through many avenues, whether individual philanthropic or corporate support, building research expertise, working with communities, generating partnerships, promoting innovation or through their personal influence and inspiration."

The 2008 'Thank You' Day award winners are:

\* **The late Jack Gibson, rugby league player and coach, and Judy Gibson** (Macquarie Group Foundation Great Australian Philanthropy Award). Jack and Judy Gibson worked tirelessly for 20 years to raise public awareness of schizophrenia after the devastating loss of their son, Luke, to the disease in 1988. Until Jack's death in May, the Gibsons had been directly responsible for raising more than \$1,500,000 for schizophrenia research. They were nominated by the Schizophrenia Research Institute.

\* **Dr Jimmy Little, AO, Aboriginal singer-songwriter** (National Health and Medical Research Council Advocacy Award). Nominated by Baxter Healthcare, Jimmy Little's long-term dedication to raising awareness of health issues affecting indigenous Australians stepped up after he had his own diagnosis with kidney disease in the 1990s. In 2006, he started the Jimmy Little Foundation to improve the health of indigenous Australians, especially in the area of kidney disease.

\* **Dr Jeff Holst, research scientist, Gene and Stem Cell Therapy Program, Centenary Institute** (Griffith University Discovery Award). One of Australia's brightest young scientists, Jeff Holst has been recognised for insights into how autoimmune diseases start. Published in *Nature Immunology*, his work has the promise of improved diagnostics and treatment of autoimmune diseases such as lupus, type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis. He is now investigating how prostate cancer cells increase their nutrient supply, which could lead to therapies designed to 'starve the cancer' by blocking nutrient uptake.

\* **Professor Fiona Stanley, AC, epidemiologist, The University of Western Australia** (Bupa Australia Leadership and Innovation Award). Fiona Stanley is one of Australia's most respected medical researchers and a champion of research as the foundation for evidence-based government health policy. The former Australian of the Year established Perth's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research to raise funds for research into child health, and was instrumental in mandatory fortification of flour to prevent birth defects.

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\* **Pfizer Australia** (Leadership in Corporate Giving Award). Pfizer Australia invests \$50 million in health and medical research in Australian institutes, universities and hospitals each year in areas as diverse as cardiovascular health, neuroscience, paediatrics and oncology. At the core of Pfizer's commitment to help build upon Australia's exceptional research capabilities is the Pfizer Australia Research Fellowship Program. Since its inception in 2003, the Fellowship program has invested more than \$14m in supporting the independent research of 14 of Australia's rising stars of biomedical research. Pfizer was nominated by Professor John Funder AO and Peter Wills AC, the two first Honorary Life Members of Research Australia.

\* **The Hon. Professor Barry Jones, former Federal Minister for Science** (Research Australia Lifetime Achievement Award). Barry Jones first attracted national interest as a history teacher in the 1960s and then went on to become our country's longest serving Ministers for Science (1983-1990). Barry serves on the board of three medical research organisations and frequently appears in the media on programs that foster a greater understanding of science and research. His best selling book *Sleepers, Wake!* set out an ambitious program for Australia as a research-based society, and he is the only person to have been elected as a Fellow of all four Australian learned Academies: Technological Sciences and Engineering (FTSE) in 1992, the Humanities (FAHA) in 1993, Science (FAA) in 1996 and Social Sciences (FASSA) in 2003. Barry was nominated by BioMelbourne Network.

The awards, nominated by Research Australia's members, were the culmination of Research Australia's 'Thank You' Day campaign to raise awareness of health and medical research in the community.

'Thank You' Day is an opportunity for Australians to send messages of thanks to researchers working in different fields. The messages show the strength of community support for Australian health and medical research, and underline the importance of continued funding for medical research.

Messages are being collected until the end of the year online at [www.thankyouday.org](http://www.thankyouday.org) and via SMS 0428THANKS.

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**Research Australia** is a unique national not-for-profit alliance of more than 190 member and donor organisations with a common mission to make health and medical research a higher national priority. For more information on Research Australia visit [www.researchaustralia.org](http://www.researchaustralia.org).

**Interviews are available with Rebecca James and selected winners.  
Photos are available at the awards dinner in Sydney at 6.30pm tonight.**

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