

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Community Funds Significant 10 Year Research Funding for Brightest Stars in Breast Cancer Research

New Endowed Chairs Program Keeps Emerging Talent in Australia to Achieve the Next Big Breakthrough

16 March, 2017: The **National Breast Cancer Foundation** announced two Endowed Chair Program Awardees on Thursday 16 March: Associate Professor Elgene Lim from the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in NSW (UNSW Australia) and Associate Professor Sherene Loi from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Victoria (The University of Melbourne).

Funded by money raised entirely by the Australian public, the **National Breast Cancer Foundation** Endowed Chairs Program comprises two long-term 10 year research grants for a total value of \$5 million each, which includes a co-contribution from the recipients' host institutions. A new and unique concept for breast cancer research in Australia, Endowed Chairs are designed to keep mid-career researchers in Australia and focused on research that will lead to the next major breakthrough.

National Breast Cancer Foundation CEO Professor Sarah Hosking congratulated Associate Professor Lim and Associate Professor Loi and thanked the Australian community for their generous support in funding the new Endowed Chairs Program.

"The Endowed Chairs Program is a new direction that the **National Breast Cancer Foundation** has taken in 2017 to create more stability for emerging leaders in breast cancer research in the current landscape of Australian medical research funding," said Professor Hosking.

"The longer term duration of Endowed Chairs will help these researchers advance ground breaking breast cancer research projects that will have maximum impact on patient treatment and care, meaning that the benefits of the research will be passed on to affected women and men much faster," she continued.

Associate Professor Elgene Lim, researcher at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, The Kinghorn Cancer Centre and medical oncologist at St Vincent's Hospital, said that he was honoured to be an awardee in the **National Breast Cancer Foundation** Endowed Chair Program.

A major focus of his lab is overcoming resistance to the hormone treatments used on the largest subtype of breast cancer – estrogen receptor positive breast cancer. Over the next 10 years, Associate Professor Lim's research program will look at new ways to overcome hormone resistance and to sensitise breast cancer to hormone therapies.

"Research funding is increasingly challenging in Australia, which had a major impact on the number of talented researchers in our country with great ideas who are limited by a lack of research investment," said Associate Professor Lim.

"The longer duration of the Endowed Chair funding gives my team, my collaborators and I a unique opportunity to pursue bold and more impactful projects, with the confidence to pursue our research agenda, which ultimately aims to improve the lives of breast cancer patients. This forms the bedrock of my commitment to research," he continued.

Associate Professor Sherene Loi, researcher and oncologist at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, said that the opportunities provided as a **National Breast Cancer Foundation** Endowed Chair Program Awardee would take her research to the next level.

"Over the 10 year course my aspirations are that my research team will see significant advances in breast cancer survival and quality of life through the implementation of genomics and immunotherapy research," said Associate Professor Loi.

“Advanced or metastatic breast cancer is still considered incurable and affects women at the prime of their lives. I believe that understanding how to manipulate the immune response favourably to combat cancer via immunotherapy offers women the greatest chance of long-term survival,” she continued.

As part of her program, Associate Professor Loi will also investigate if promising new drugs are working in breast cancer through an active clinical trial program at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Parkville Precinct – giving Australian women access to promising new therapies.

“The longer term means that our Endowed Chair Program Awardees can really put the accelerator on new breast cancer innovations and advancements so that the National Breast Cancer Foundation can realise its vision of zero deaths from breast cancer by 2030,” added Dr Alessandra Muntoni, **National Breast Cancer Foundation** Director of Research Investment.

The 2017 Endowed Chairs Program is a total investment of \$10 million contributed by the **National Breast Cancer Foundation**, the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. The Program is new research funding category that falls under the umbrella of the **National Breast Cancer Foundation’s** Research Academy. The Research Academy provides a range of leadership, mentorship and collaboration opportunities for Australian breast cancer researchers that will be introduced over 2017.

Associate Professor Lim and Associate Professor Loi will be announced as **National Breast Cancer Foundation** Endowed Chair Program Awardees at *‘An Evening with the National Breast Cancer Foundation’*, a special event on 16 March at Sydney Grammar School in Darlinghurst.

For further information or to arrange a media interview, please contact Sophie Cooley, Senior Marketing Manager at the National Breast Cancer Foundation on 02 8098 4800/0417 421 683 or sophie.cooley@nbcf.org.au

About the National Breast Cancer Foundation:

The National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) is the only national body that funds life-changing breast cancer research with money raised entirely by the Australian public. Breast cancer is the most common life-threatening cancer facing Australian women, with eight women dying from the disease each day – mothers, sisters, wives, daughters and friends.

Research is the only way to prevent deaths, and improve how breast cancer is diagnosed, managed and treated. By funding only world-class research, NBCF is working towards a goal of zero deaths from breast cancer by 2030.

NBCF research has helped develop better therapies, greater understanding of possible ways to stop the spread of breast cancer to other areas, and improved quality of life for patients and their families. Since its establishment in 1994, NBCF has awarded more than \$140 million to around 470 Australian-based research projects to improve the health and well-being of those affected by breast cancer. With no Government funding, this money has been raised entirely by the Australian public.