



MEDIA RELEASE

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PRESCRIBING 'EXERCISE AS MEDICINE' IN SICK CHILDREN

NEW RESEARCH PAVING THE WAY FOR AUSTRALIA'S FIRST CLINICAL EXERCISE SERVICE

- One in five Australian children lives with a chronic disease – which can have serious consequences for their long-term physical and mental wellbeing
- New multidisciplinary research project will inform Australia's first clinical exercise service at Perth Children's Hospital
- Project made possible through funding from The Stan Perron Charitable Foundation and Perth Children's Hospital Foundation, with support from Mineral Resources Limited, Channel 7 Telethon Trust, Amazon, Globe BD and the WA community

A ground-breaking multidisciplinary research project is paving the way for Australia's first clinical exercise service at Perth Children's Hospital for children living with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cerebral palsy or burns related injuries.

One in five Australian children lives with a chronic disease that often leads to mental and physical illnesses in adulthood.

This unique service will harness the concept of 'exercise as medicine', prescribing personalised physical exercise and health promotion advice as part of routine clinical care.

The Stan Perron Charitable Foundation and Perth Children's Hospital Foundation – along with principal support from Mineral Resources Limited via Channel 7 Telethon Trust and additional funding from Amazon, Globe BD and the WA community – have committed \$5.6million to fund the new research project, *Move to Improve*. The Child and Adolescent Health Service has also committed in-kind support for the project.

Perth Children's Hospital Foundation CEO, Carrick Robinson, said the Foundation is proud to fund another world-class project providing life changing benefits for children and their families.

"This is another first for the Foundation and Australia," Mr Robinson said. "Thanks to our generous donors and supporters WA children living with chronic disease will have access to a service that will significantly improve physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life," Mr Robinson said.

Mineral Resources Psychologist and Head of Mental Health, Chris Harris, said Mineral Resources is committed to supporting initiatives that build healthier, happier communities, with physical and mental wellbeing a key focus.

"Move to Improve has the potential to make a life-changing difference to children with chronic diseases and Mineral Resources is proud to provide support to this



ground-breaking initiative as the Perth Children's Hospital Foundation's Principal Partner, committing \$1 million over the next four years," Chris said.

Regular physical activity is vital to a child's physical and functional development. However, many children with chronic disease face significant barriers to the healing powers of physical activity, such as low confidence and self-esteem, lack of access to appropriate physical activity providers and fear of how to manage their health condition in front of peers.

A less active lifestyle can have serious long-term health consequences, putting children at increased risk of developing other chronic conditions such as obesity, heart disease, stroke or depression. Children living with chronic disease have a 2 – 3 times greater risk of developing a mental health disorder than their physically healthy peers.

Perth Children's Hospital's Head of Diabetes and Endocrinology and Co-Lead of *Move to Improve*, Professor Liz Davis, said the purpose-built clinical exercise service will be run by an expert team of clinicians and researchers across multiple health disciplines.

"We've become really good at prescribing medicines and surgical treatments but one thing we just haven't done is incorporate exercise as a medicine," Professor Davis said. "Exercise has enormous benefits not only for mental and physical health but helps re-engage confidence and connection."

An initial pilot study exploring the effectiveness of surfing as a form of therapy in a multi-pronged approach to care has now led to a larger surfing intervention program as part of the *Move to Improve* project. Available for children with a range of conditions at Perth Children's Hospital, the pilot study found the ocean improved wellbeing, aided recovery and eased stress on families. For nine-year-old participant, Mary Rogers, it was life-changing.

"When I'm out in the water and I'm surfing, I feel like I'm more free. My body feels stronger, more in control of things," said Mary, who has cystic fibrosis. "When I have freedom, I feel like I can be myself and when I can be myself, I can be most happy."

Available for interview:

Perth Children's Hospital's Head of Diabetes and Endocrinology and Co-Lead of *Move to Improve*, Professor Liz Davis

Perth Children's Hospital Foundation CEO, Carrick Robinson

Professional photos and vision of broll/interview grabs available for use:



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service



<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/dvw35lpnrzgsnmrohmlm/h?dl=0&rlkey=0uzu2r6izb0ss81x7r0ecmghr>

(Includes interview with Prof Liz Davis as well as participant Mary Roger's mother, Rachel Rogers. Also includes broil of clinician and family at PCH as well as Mary Rogers participating in surfing intervention)

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Notes to journalist/editor:

- Perth Children's Hospital Foundation is the official and largest fundraiser of Perth Children's Hospital. We fuel the fight on the frontline, to help children get well and stay well.
- By working closely with those on the frontline, the Foundation has an in-depth understanding of what clinicians, researchers and families need to ensure we make a tangible impact where it counts most.
- This knowledge guides the solutions we fund, ensuring sick children have access to world-class care through the most advanced equipment and technology, research, expertise and positive patient experiences.
- Perth Children's Hospital Foundation and Perth Children's Hospital are separate entities, please do not shorten Perth Children's Hospital Foundation to PCH Foundation, PCHF or PCH.