



Kirby Institute Annual Report 2025



The Kirby Institute is a world-leading health research institute at UNSW Sydney.

We work to eliminate infectious diseases, globally. Focused in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, our work improves and protects human health, wellbeing and ability to thrive.

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A note about this report

This edition offers a concise overview of the Kirby Institute's achievements in 2025. A special publication celebrating our 40th anniversary and four decades of impact will follow later in 2026.



The Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney
is located on the Traditional Lands
of the Bidjigal Peoples.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners
of Country throughout Australia, and
First Nations peoples' continuing
connection to culture, land, sea,
waters and community.

We pay our respects to Elders
both past and present.



Message from our Patron and Director

We are delighted to share with you our 2025 annual report. You will notice a pared-back report this year. This is in light of our 40th anniversary, which we celebrate in 2026. We have produced a much more comprehensive report reflecting on our four-decade history, which we invite you to explore.

2025 was as productive and successful as ever, and there are important highlights and achievements we are excited to share.

Our research across our spectrum of infectious diseases and related disciplines continued to drive impact and improve health for individuals and communities, in Australia and globally. Notably, researchers from across the Kirby Institute responded to the accelerating HIV epidemic in Fiji, providing surveillance and health system support. It is a highly complex situation we will continue to support. Also in our region, we were pleased to partner with our colleagues in the Marshall Islands, whose government announced a plan to establish a cervical cancer screening program, prioritising early detection of cancer-causing HPV to drive down instances of the preventable illness. This is just one of many examples of impactful partnerships in the region. International partnerships and collaboration such as these are even more vital as we face global cuts to infectious disease funding.

Additionally, in this report you can read about the many significant achievements and recognitions of our outstanding staff, including promotions and individual awards by highly regarded research and public bodies. A highlight was Dr David Khoury winning the Prime Minister's Prize for Science. In other staff news, we acknowledged the retirement of a Kirby Institute leader, Emeritus Professor Andrew Lloyd AM, and celebrated the graduation of the inaugural David Cooper Scholar, Dr Gail Cross. These recognitions are a testament to the high calibre of talented individuals that we are proud to employ at the Kirby Institute.

We were honoured to host several local and international leaders, experts and collaborators throughout 2025. The Kirby welcomed Her Majesty Queen Nanasipau'u of Tonga during her visit to UNSW in recognition of our collaborative work on progressing cervical cancer elimination in the Pacific. Professor Michael Kidd AO, Australia's Chief Medical Officer, delivered an insightful and touching lecture about his vast experiences with health leadership, in tribute to one of our early researchers, the late Dr Brett Tindall. The 2025 David Cooper Lecture was delivered by the President of the International AIDS Society, Dr Beatriz Grinsztejn, who shared an important message of adaptation, global collaboration, and hope in continuing global health initiatives and progress, especially in the context of the relatively sudden withdrawal of United States funding to many initiatives.

We hope you enjoy this 2025 annual report. We thank you for your support, and look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary with you throughout the year.

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG
Patron

Professor Anthony Kelleher
Director

News in numbers

In 2025, the Kirby Institute received:

\$65,232,345

From new and continuing external grants, including **\$25,736,504** in Australian Federal and State/Territory Government funding

\$4,180,774

Total in philanthropic funding



55

NHMRC grants in total



9

NHMRC Partnership Grants



4

NHMRC Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grants



5

NHMRC Ideas Grants



11

Medical Research Future Fund Grants



26

NHMRC Investigator Grants



11

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grants



6

NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence Grants



2

ARC Research Grants



317

staff members (including casuals)



14

PhD completions



8

academic promotions



22

Kirby Institute Seminar Series talks held



65

postgraduate candidates



20

international postgraduate candidates from 13 countries



1,047

collaborative partners in 53 countries on 6 continents



712

peer-reviewed publications



In 2025, the Kirby Institute had 733 media mentions (over **1,600** including syndicated) across online, radio, TV and print media.



At the Kirby Institute, we speak **28** different languages at home; we hail from **28** different birth countries and identify culturally with **45** different ethnicities.



Our research

At its core, our mission is simple: to ensure no infectious disease is left unchallenged. Focused in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region – but with global impact – our work in 2025 continued to improve human health and wellbeing.



HIV

We have made major contributions to the health and lives of people impacted by HIV. We continue to work to prevent HIV transmission and to improve health outcomes for people living with HIV, in Australia and globally.

- ✦ A new cross-sector project will help [improve care models for people living with HIV](#), with a focus on survivorship care.
- ✦ Latest national data shows that [new HIV diagnoses are decreasing](#), down 27% in the past decade.
- ✦ A [rapid assessment](#) carried out by the Kirby Institute and partners provided critical and actionable insights into how injecting drug use is contributing to Fiji's HIV epidemic.

Viral hepatitis

Hepatitis impacts some of the world's most vulnerable communities, but life-saving preventions and treatments are not widely accessed. We work to ensure equitable access to hepatitis B and C treatment, prevention and care.

- ✦ A [new national research program](#) will evaluate facilitating hepatitis C management in Australia's prisons to guide elimination efforts.
- ✦ The Kirby Institute and our partners in the National Prisons Hepatitis Network [launched an interactive dashboard](#) featuring national data and information to shed light on hepatitis C in prisons.
- ✦ Kirby Institute researchers were among a team of global experts who developed the [first international guidelines for viral hepatitis care in prisons](#) to progress elimination.



Sexual health and HPV

Sexual health is the ability to engage in sexual activity in a way that maximises physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Our work focuses on understanding and optimising sexual health in Australia and within our region.

Human papillomavirus, or HPV, is a sexually transmissible infection that can lead to cancers including cervical cancer and anal cancer. We work to evaluate and improve vaccination and screening programs designed to eliminate HPV-related disease before it progresses into cancer.

- ✦ A new project will [help boost anal cancer prevention services](#) in regional and rural NSW.
- ✦ Australia is on track to eliminate cervical cancer, but HPV vaccination and screening rates are falling, according to the [2025 Cervical Cancer Elimination Progress Report](#).
- ✦ A new Kirby Institute-led study aims to [increase anal cancer screening uptake and accuracy](#) among people living with HIV, a population at particular risk of anal cancer.
- ✦ Our work in the Pacific region on cervical cancer elimination continues, which you can read more about under '[Global health](#)'.



COVID-19 and emerging infections

COVID-19 showed us how a local outbreak can become a global pandemic. In order to stay ahead of these crises, we need to be able to predict and plan for future threats and challenges. We do this by analysing and modelling epidemics, and by developing and testing diagnostics and interventions that prevent the spread of disease.

- ✦ Kirby Institute-led research revealed why [receiving a booster vaccine in the same arm](#) as the first dose improves immune responses.
- ✦ An international study found that [long-acting antibiotics could be a safer](#), simpler option for treating serious infections.
- ✦ Fighting outbreaks with FEEVA: Collaborative project could [support faster approvals](#) of infectious disease vaccines.



First Nations health

Some of our most important work starts at home. We work in close collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services on solutions for key health issues.

- + The Kirby Institute and our collaborators are working in partnership to boost point-of-care testing in Australia and our region, revolutionising [the way that infectious diseases are diagnosed and driving down infections](#).
- + RAPID 2.0 is accelerating the [scale-up of point-of-care testing](#) for infectious diseases in remote Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

Global health

Our health solutions target global problems and have global impact. We use best-practice research methods, adapted to meet urgent health needs in our region, such as neglected tropical diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

- + Research evaluating a new rapid test is set to support [same-day diagnosis and treatment of gonorrhoea](#) in Papua New Guinea.
- + Kirby Institute researchers [respond to GOARN call for assistance](#) in Fiji's HIV response, as part of our contribution to support the Pacific island nation to develop responses to its unfolding HIV epidemic. The partnership focuses on surveillance and prevention.
- + **EPIWATCH®** is an AI-driven, global early warning system for epidemics, pandemics and other health events. In 2025, EPIWATCH® was used in a pandemic exercise by US Indo-Pacific Command. Demand for EPIWATCH® led to a company being formed in the same year. This is the first commercial spin-off arising from Kirby Institute research.



Joining the conversation on Australia's health

- + Kirby Institute researchers explained the evidence behind the rule change enabling [gay and bisexual men to donate blood and plasma](#).
- + COVID, flu and other viruses: how to prevent seasonal illness and [understand lingering symptoms](#).
- + The [Kirby Institute data site](#) provides interactive graphs to help explain how HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections are impacting Australia, and how we're tracking against national strategies.

BELOW Members of the Biosecurity Program at the 2025 AmCham Australia Alliance Awards.



Our people

At the heart of the Kirby Institute are our teams of highly skilled, passionate people who possess knowledge and expertise across a broad range of fields. Together, we work towards providing solutions to health challenges across the globe.

- + [Dr Sarah Sasson](#) was appointed head of the Immunovirology and Pathogenesis Program.
- + [Emeritus Professor Andrew Lloyd AM](#) retired in 2025, and a special event was held to celebrate his impactful career.
- + **Scientia Professor John Kaldor** took on the role of Chair of the UNSW Scientia Professors Forum.
- + **Professor Susana Vaz Nery** was reappointed as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), the principal advisory group to the WHO for the control of NTDs, reporting directly to the Director-General of WHO.
- + The Kirby Institute's **Yandamanjang First Nations Health Research Program** was featured in the inaugural *Future of Health* exhibition at the opening of the UNSW Health Translation Hub, showcasing how community-led point-of-care testing is improving health outcomes in remote communities.



TOP Dr Sarah Sasson.

ABOVE Scientia Professor John Kaldor.

BELOW LEFT Kirby Institute staff at the opening of the UNSW Health Translation Hub and inaugural *Future of Health* exhibition.



Awards and recognitions

- + **Dr David Khoury** [pictured, centre] was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Science.
- + **Kirby Institute's remote STI-testing program** was recognised by Universities Australia with the Community Champion award.
- + **Professor Raina MacIntyre** was named a multi-category finalist in the prestigious AmCham Alliance Awards.
- + **Dr Yumi Sheehan** was named an AAMRI Rising Star finalist.
- + **The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG** received the Vice-Chancellor's Community Contribution Award, recognising decades of contribution to UNSW.
- + **Dr Nila Dharan** was awarded the 2025 Australasian Society for HIV and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) Early Career Award, in the category Discovery and Translational Science.

Student highlights and achievements

- + PhD candidate **Tiana Wang** [pictured, right] won UNSW's 3 Minute Thesis for her presentation on an RNA-based nasal spray, a potential 'superhero drug' against the rare HTLV-1 virus.
- + Inaugural David Cooper Scholar, **Dr Gail Cross**, was awarded her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) for her thesis exploring the benefit of administering a short course of statins, a cholesterol-lowering medication, to treat tuberculosis.



Events

- + Ending AIDS is a global responsibility: **Dr Beatriz Grinsztejn** gives the 2025 David Cooper Lecture.
- + Australia's Chief Medical Officer **Professor Michael Kidd AO** [pictured] spoke about health leadership and its role in addressing complex challenges for the 2025 Brett Tindall Memorial Lecture.



Visitors

- + **Her Majesty Queen Nanasipau'u of Tonga** visited UNSW to highlight regional collaboration, co-led by the Kirby Institute, to eliminate cervical cancer in the Pacific.
- + **The Hon. Rebecca White MP**, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Indigenous Health, and Women, visited the Kirby Institute.
- + **Mr Naruchai Ninnad**, the Consul-General of Thailand, visited the Kirby Institute to hear about our research programs and opportunities for collaboration.



In memoriam

- + **David 'Polly' Polson AM**
- + **Dr Nicholas Medland**
- + **Dr Heather McCormack**

TOP Her Majesty Queen Nanasipau'u of Tonga shaking hands with The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG, with Professor Attila Brungs AO, UNSW Vice-Chancellor and President, standing between them.

MIDDLE The Hon. Rebecca White MP [centre] at the Kirby Institute.

BOTTOM Mr Naruchai Ninnad [second from right] at the Kirby Institute.



Significant publications

The following is a selection of significant publications from Kirby Institute research in 2025.

Bartlett AW, Proboste T, Mendes EP, Palmeirim MS, Direito A, Soares Magalhaes RJ, Lopes S, Vaz Nery S. Spatiotemporal analysis of schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth distribution in three highly endemic provinces in Angola. *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*, 2025 Apr 8;19(4):e0012974. doi: [10.1371/journal.pntd.0012974](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0012974)

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Dr Norman Swan & Dr Beatriz Grinsztejn
David Cooper Lecture 2025

TOP PhD graduates (left to right) Shane Tillakeratne, Lok Bahadur Shrestha, Haley Stone and Billal Obeng.

BOTTOM International HIV leader Dr Beatriz Grinsztejn joined Dr Norman Swan for the 2025 David Cooper Lecture, discussing the shared global responsibility to end AIDS.

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TOP IntelliGene CEO Yuki Takeuchi and Kirby Institute Director Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher formalise a strategic partnership supporting BRIDGE, the national consortium advancing RNA therapeutics and vaccines

BOTTOM Emeritus Professor Andrew Lloyd AM reflects on his career at a special celebration marking his retirement from the Kirby Institute.



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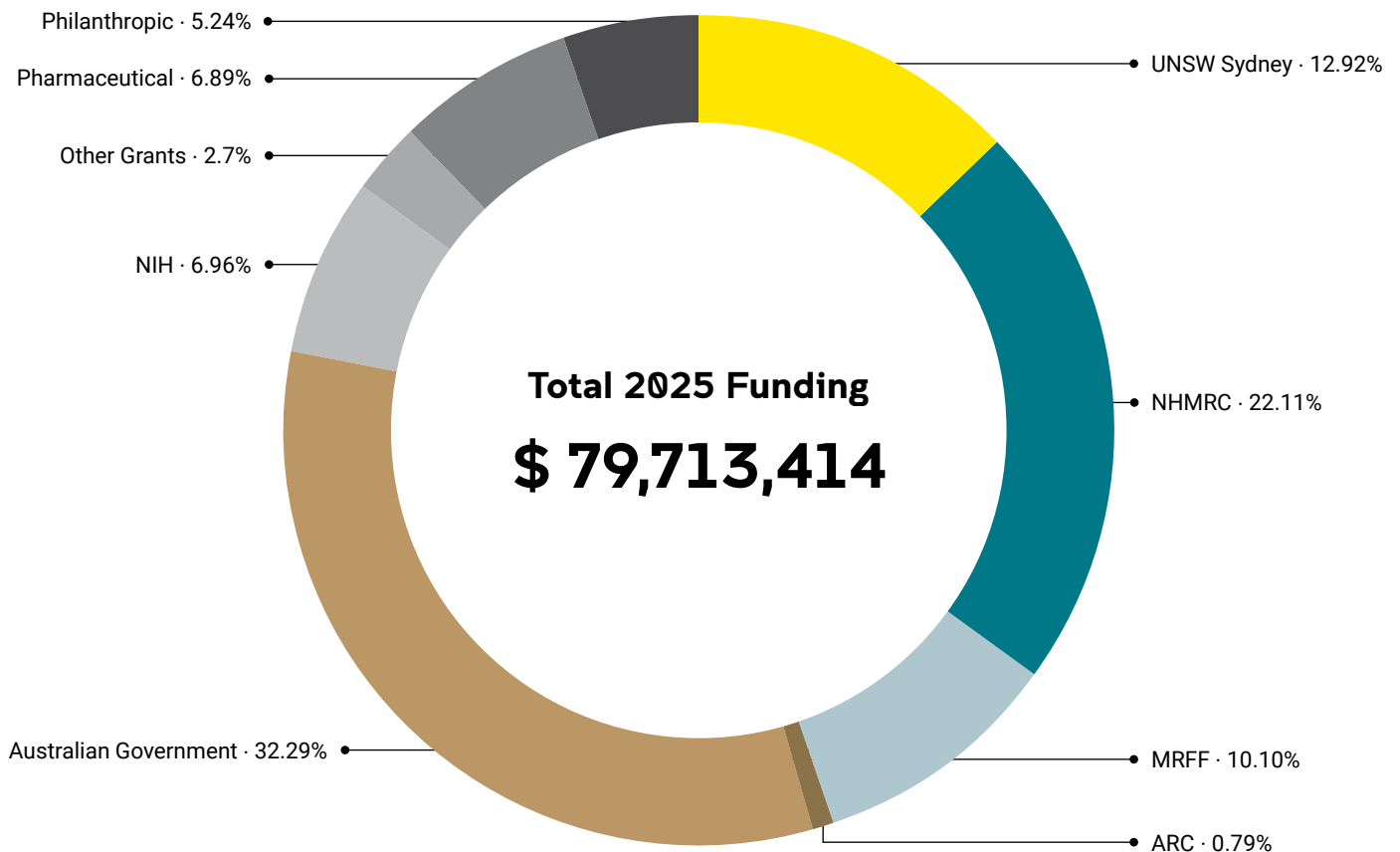
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Funding

		AU\$
● UNSW Sydney		10,300,295
● National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	Centres of Research Excellence	1,484,265
	Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies	2,166,360
	Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases	69,757
	Ideas Grants	916,935
	Investigator Grants	9,622,958
	Participation in Cancer Screening Programs	46,460
	Partnership Grants	2,400,040
	Postgraduate Scholarships	41,225
	Synergy Grants	873,000
		17,621,000
● Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)	Clinical Trials Activity	262,937
	Coronavirus Research Response	65,000
	COVID-19 Health Impacts and Vaccination Schedules	7,848
	Improving Diagnosis in Cancers with Low Survival Rates	50,259
	International Clinical Trial Collaborations	362,161
	mRNA Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure	1,881,380
	Post-Acute Sequelae of COVID-19	833,069
	Primary Health Care Digital Innovations	365,668
	Rapid Applied Research Translation Initiative	4,223,994
		8,052,316
● Australian Research Council (ARC)	Industrial Transformation Research Hubs	452,368
	Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)	180,755
		633,123
● Australian Government	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	3,787,778
	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	19,906,594
	NSW Ministry of Health	1,133,803
	Other Government Departments	908,329
		25,736,504
● National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA		5,549,118
● Other Grants and Contracts	Australian	565,908
	International	1,582,516
		2,148,424
● Pharmaceutical Industry		5,491,860
● Philanthropic Funding		4,180,774
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