



## **Media Statement**

**31.7.19**

### **LEI researchers are finalists for prestigious Eureka Prize**

Lions Eye Institute (LEI) researchers are in the running for one of the nation's top science prizes – the Eureka Prize for Scientific Research.

The Australian Museum Eureka Prizes recognise excellence in science and celebrate outstanding achievement. The winners will be announced at a ceremony in Sydney on August 28.

The team of WA researchers led by Professor Mariapia Degli-Esposti and including Dr Chris Andoniou and Peter Fleming from LEI, along with investigators from QIMR Berghofer in Brisbane led by Professor Geoff Hill now at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, collaborated on ground-breaking research into improving the outcomes of viral infections in bone marrow transplant recipients.

Using a world-first pre-clinical model, they found a way to manage one of the most common life-threatening viral infections (Human Cytomegalovirus) that affects bone marrow and organ transplant patients. The team discovered that antibodies can prevent the virus from coming back and causing disease if they are matched to the infecting strain of Cytomegalovirus (CMV strain-specific antibodies). The research was published earlier this year in the prestigious journal [Science](#).

Professor Mariapia Degli-Esposti, who is now based at the Monash Biomedicine Discovery Institute but remains Head of the LEI's Experimental Immunology Group,

said being selected as a finalist in the Eureka Prize was a great honour for the whole team.

“I’m thrilled that our team has been selected as a finalist for this illustrious research award. This discovery is the result of a fantastic collaboration between viral and transplant immunologists who want to see patients protected from the life-threatening impact of CMV,” Professor Degli-Esposti said.

LEI Managing Director Professor Bill Morgan congratulated the Experimental Immunology group for their contribution to genuinely ground-breaking research.

“The Eureka Prize is among the nation’s most prestigious and well-known scientific research prizes,” he said.

“Being named a finalist is a reflection of the potential of this research to improve outcomes for patients not just in Australia, but globally.”

More information about the Eureka Prize is available from the [Australian Museum](#).

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