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MEDIA STATEMENT

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GIFT MADE IN HOPE OF OFFSETTING BURDEN OF ALZHEIMER'S

A South Perth couple who are in their 80s – Ron and Peggy Bell – have made a \$100,000 donation to establish a new Fellowship to accelerate research into Alzheimer's disease.

Ms Mandy Vidovich who has been appointed the inaugural Bell Research Fellow will work in The University of Western Australia's Centre for Health and Ageing (WACHA), clarifying the interaction between genetic makeup, lifestyle and memory. An Associate and Clinical Neuropsychologist at WACHA, she said a concerted effort was needed to help Australia's ageing population avoid the burden of cognitive dysfunction.

"As the population ages, the risk of dementia increases and presently there are no cures. The financial gift from Mr and Mrs Bell will be put to good use to explore practical ways to change this," she said.

The community-minded couple have already made significant donations to other causes including supporting disabled children and a women's clinic in India. Mr and Mrs Bell have five children, three of whom gained degrees at UWA. One of their granddaughters is in her third year of studying at the University.

"WACHA is an enormous asset to the Western Australian community," Mr Bell said. "It is our pleasure to help it carry out its mission by supporting leading researchers. I hope our contribution will encourage others to offer their financial support to the Centre."

WACHA Director, Professor Osvaldo Almeida, said philanthropic support for the Centre's research programs was always important, but never more so than in today's financial climate.

"We are extremely grateful to the Bell family for their generous support, and for the setting up of this Fellowship that will do so much to contribute to the professional development of our talented young researchers."

Alzheimer's Australia estimates there are at least 227,300 people with dementia in this country, a number expected to rise to around 731,000 by 2050 unless there is a medical breakthrough.

MEDIA REFERENCE:

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