

# Kirby Institute

## Strategic Plan 2019-2023

### Our purpose

**Ensure no infectious disease is left unchallenged.**

Focused in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region – but with global impact – our work improves and protects human health, wellbeing and ability to thrive.

### Our vision

**A world free of infectious disease.**

At the Kirby Institute, we are relentless in our pursuit of new and better ways to prevent, diagnose, and treat infectious disease.

### Our values

There are four values that are key to our success. They drive everything we do:

- **Equity:** We believe all people deserve equal access to high-quality, accessible, and appropriate health care and prevention services – no matter who they are, where they were born, or which communities they belong to.
- **Impact:** We work with people, for people. This ensures our research will have a direct impact, through transforming healthcare practice and policy.
- **Collaboration:** We work with a diverse range of partners, including at-risk communities, governments, health care professionals, other research organisations and industry, in Australia and abroad. This results in better- informed research and more effective solutions.
- **Excellence:** We are committed to producing research that is innovative, rigorous and reliable. Our excellence in research not only serves to inform the best possible solutions; it elevates our work to the global stage where it can transform health and save lives.

# 1. About the Kirby Institute

The Kirby Institute is a world-leading health research institute that sits within the Faculty of Medicine & Health at UNSW Sydney. **We work to eliminate infectious diseases, globally.** Our specialisation is in developing health solutions to reach the most at-risk and marginalised communities and by doing so, building a safer, healthier world for everyone.

Our work began in 1986, in response to the emergence of HIV in Australia. Established as the *National Health and Medical Research Council's Special Unit in AIDS: Epidemiology and Clinical Research* and led by the late Professor David Cooper, our researchers pioneered a unique approach to disease treatment and prevention where they worked alongside affected individuals and their care providers, urgently finding solutions to HIV from within the community itself.

For over 30 years the Kirby Institute has built on this foundation and today, under the leadership of Professor Anthony Kelleher, we apply our full spectrum of expertise to a range of existing and emerging infectious diseases.

The Kirby Institute is comprised of over 300 staff and postgraduate students who work across 13 research programs and the operations unit.

## Our approach

Just as infectious diseases work by spreading through individuals, communities and populations, our team of world class experts distribute solutions by starting with those at the heart of the issue – people who are most at risk and/or affected by infectious disease. By taking this approach, we are able to develop the most accessible, appropriate and effective tests, interventions, treatments and cures possible for populations, and from there get them into the hands of those that need them the most.

Our teams of highly skilled, passionate people work across a broad range of research traditions that span the full spectrum of care – all the way from the lab to impacted individuals and communities. This unique approach allows us to attack infectious disease from every angle and maximises our chances of success.

Our teams work within and across the following four distinct streams:

- **Discovery and development:** understanding infectious diseases and their behaviour at the cellular and molecular level in order to develop tests, vaccines and treatments
- **Clinical trials and intervention research:** Developing and assessing therapeutic interventions for maximum individual and community impact
- **Populations and prevention:** Working with populations that are most impacted by infection, we study community knowledge, behaviours and barriers to inform effective and accessible solutions
- **Community implementation:** Co-designing evidence-based programs that are implemented in a way that maximises successful health outcomes for all.

This unique spectrum of expertise allows Kirby Institute to develop solutions that can be scaled for maximum impact across diverse communities and populations.

## **Our future: Kirby Institute 2020-2023**

Our tried-and-true approach to tackling infectious disease has resulted in great success over the last three decades, most notably in meeting the challenges of HIV, hepatitis, and sexually transmissible infections. Yet despite the impressive progress so far, many urgent questions and pressing issues remain unsolved as we pursue our ultimate goal: a world free from infectious disease.

As we look to the near future, we will be taking what we've learnt and applying those insights and approaches to other infectious diseases and to a greater diversity of at-risk communities and populations. We will be building our capacity to discover, develop and implement interventions in our existing and emerging fields of infectious disease research.

The revised organisational structure presented in the document to follow outlines what we see these new opportunities for impact to be, and how we will organise the Kirby Institute to realise them by 2023.

## 2. Strategic Priorities 2019-2023

The Kirby Institute's strategy can be summarised as follows:

- **Consolidate** – build on existing research strengths.
- **Expand** – extend research activities into new and related fields.
- **Collaborate** – sustain and develop collaborations and partnerships.
- **Translate** – facilitate the rapid and effective application of research findings into new health system-wide innovations.
- **Support** – ensure that our organisational structure enables us to achieve and grow our research aspirations and strategy.

The continued implementation of this strategy is contingent on funding and the capacity to retain, attract and develop outstanding academic and professional staff. In addressing these realities, the Kirby Institute will continue to be flexible and strategic in responding to changes in funding, the emergence of new disease threats such as COVID-19 and shifts in government policy.

### **Priority 1: Consolidate – Foster scientific excellence and impact in current areas of strength**

We will continue to build on and evolve the Kirby Institute's strengths and capabilities in preventing and treating HIV, hepatitis C and STIs, both within Australian and overseas, and in the context of national and global strategies. Our focus on at-risk and marginalised populations is core to our research principles and will continue to be a key feature of the Kirby Institute's research.

#### **Key strategies**

- Implementing interventional (e.g. randomised trials) and observational (e.g. cohort or population impact) studies designed to guide the critical pathways to effective, acceptable and accessible treatment and prevention of HIV, hepatitis C and STIs, leading to their elimination.
- Ensuring continued alignment of research efforts with global, national and jurisdictional strategies to control and eliminate HIV, hepatitis C, hepatitis B and STIs.
- Strengthening laboratory capacity in in key cellular, molecular and data science techniques relevant to applied biology of host-pathogen interactions.
- Maintaining the upward trajectory of key research metrics at an organisational level.

### **Priority 2: Expand – Research activities into new and related infectious diseases**

Based on national and international health priorities and opportunities, we have and will continue to identify key research areas to initiate or substantially expand, particularly those that complement existing capabilities. This expansion is being facilitated using any sources of new strategic funding, hires and collaborations, that support interventional research and is underpinned by partnerships with key stakeholder organisations. We will continue to successfully compete for key research support schemes both internal and external to UNSW to fund the appointment of highly productive researchers.

## Key strategies

- Expanding research in other infectious disease areas:
  - COVID-19
  - HPV and other infectious causes of cancer.
  - Hepatitis B virus infection.
  - Neglected tropical diseases.
  - Malaria.
  - Tuberculosis.
  - Antimicrobial resistance.
  - Biosecurity and emerging infectious disease threats.
  - Drug user and justice health.
  - Sexual, reproductive and maternal health.
- Further developing core disciplines of:
  - Interventional clinical science.
  - Infectious disease screening and diagnosis.
  - Data science, analytics and modelling.
  - Implementation science.
  - Health economics and health systems research.

## Priority 3: Collaborate – Strengthen and expand collaborations and partnerships

As an Institute of UNSW Medicine, we will continue to explore mechanisms and opportunities to build even stronger relationships with strategically aligned partners. Our goals and achievements align with and embody the aspirational goals of UNSW 2025 and Medicine and Health's Health '25 strategy. We will continue to establish new and grow existing strategic collaborations with other parts of UNSW and with external partners. This includes governments, researchers, health practitioners, industry, community organisations and NGOs, nationally and globally. This approach is integral to the effective working of the Kirby Institute.

## Key strategies

- Government: further deepen collaborative work with Australian government departments and agencies at national and jurisdictional level, in health strategy-focused research.
- University:
  - Continue to make leadership contributions to UNSW Medicine's Infection, Immunity and Inflammation ("Triple I") theme.
  - Grow and further enhance research partnerships with relevant UNSW schools, centres and institutes, including Futures Institutes, affiliated MRIs and teaching hospital/LHD partners.
  - Deepen collaboration and seek opportunities within SPHERE.
  - Build enhanced capacity through:
    - Growth and enhancement of postgraduate research program.
    - Mentoring and career development of early and mid-career researchers.
    - Initiatives such as focused short courses at the Kirby Institute (e.g. CHART program).
    - Establish sustainable models for coursework teaching within UNSW and the Plus Alliance.
- Continue to strengthen relationships with health and prevention services, including doctors (specialists, general practitioners), nurses and other healthcare workers.

- Community organisations: Sustaining our effective involvement with organisations best representing the interests of those most affected by the diseases under investigation.
- Academic collaborators: Sustain and enhance our strong collaborative relationships with individual academics and institutions, both in Australia and overseas.
- Convene meetings and events with key stakeholder groups and organisations to communicate the Kirby Institute’s activities and strategic direction.

## **Priority 4: Translate – Ensure the ongoing translation of research into health policy and practice**

As we have successfully prosecuted in the past, The Kirby Institute will continue to place great emphasis on ensuring our research findings are translated into evidence-based diagnostic methods, treatments, clinical guidelines and effective prevention strategy frameworks and public health policies, that improve the lives of people affected by infectious diseases.

### **Key strategies**

- Continue to support national, jurisdictional and international health authorities to align treatment and prevention for infectious diseases with the best possible evidence and with disease strategies, ensuring that research is fully responsive to policy and practice needs.
- Enhance our assistance to other countries to implement better practice, public health and clinical treatment regimes.
- Continue to support government and community decision makers in the development and implementation of effective, efficient and sustainable public health and clinical policy.
- Translate the Kirby Institute’s strong research experiences from Australia to assist other countries (with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region) enhance their research capabilities to better control epidemics.

## **Priority 5: Support – Strengthen enabling systems and infrastructure**

Achieving outstanding scientific outcomes requires the Kirby Institute to continue to invest and further develop enabling infrastructure, systems, organisational structures, governance and processes. Our organisational structure has been updated to support the significant growth of the Kirby Institute. Continuing to enhance media and communications strategies are also essential to ensure the development of strong recognition of the Kirby Institute’s new strategic priorities and goals. Developing relationships and content to support ambitious fundraising targets will also be vital to achieving the Kirby Institute’s goals.

### **Key strategies**

- Clearly enunciate areas of research strength by finalising “vertical” themes and “horizontal” cross-cutting research and operational initiatives.
- Establish a new Advisory Board, with an independent Chair, which would be externally focused. It will advise senior management on major strategic matters, facilitate engagement with influential stakeholders and partners in Australia and internationally and assist with fundraising.

- Ensure regular meetings of the new internal Strategic Advisory Committee, comprised of representative academic and professional staff, and students, to support and advise the Institute in its growth and development.
- Support the Advisory Committees to advise on priority areas of research growth and operational review.
- Promote the newly established Research Groups.
- Renew and continue to develop strategic partnerships incorporating funding arrangements with the NSW Ministry of Health, the Australian Government's Department of Health and other relevant departments such as DFAT.
- Ensure productive senior relationships remain in place with funders such as the NHMRC and the Medical Research Future Fund.
- Continue to develop role within the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes.
- Further refine and enhance media, communications activities and collateral, to position the Kirby Institute as an infectious diseases research institute with global reach to the general public and with key stakeholders. This includes facilitating engagement with new Medicine Philanthropic team.
- Review and implement new communication initiatives and enhanced technologies to support enhanced internal and external communications.
- Seek to attract and retain the highest quality staff, through internal UNSW schemes and through external funding opportunities, and ensure succession planning for key staff.
- Ensure equity and diversity principles continue to be taken into account among Kirby Institute staff, committees and internal appointments, with specific targets at least in line with UNSW Medicine targets.

# Kirby Institute Organisational Structure

## 1. Program Restructure

As described in the Strategic Plan, the Kirby Institute requires a restructure to address issues that have been identified in the strategic review and then by subsequent discussions with a substantial cross section of Kirby Institute staff.

For ongoing strategic growth and development of the Institute it is important to recognise the research strengths of the institute. This will be achieved by the enunciation of themes which are each of reasonable size and impact that can underpin achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan.

Therefore, the proposed alternative structure follows. The main features of this structure include:

- Maintaining the Programmatic structure while identifying thematic strengths.
- Establishing a small Executive Committee to advise the Director, providing high level executive oversight on matters of strategic and operational significance and to review the advice and recommendations of the Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Formation of the SAC, which will provide a forum for discussion on internal and external influences on the institute and for workshopping initiatives to grow and develop the Kirby.
- Introduction of Advisory Committees as review and advisory bodies for key operational and critical strategic growth areas for the Kirby Institute. These would include initiatives that span more than two themes.
- Establishing a mechanism for the recognition of Research Groups within the thematic structure.

All appointments to new positions or committees will take into account equity and diversity policies of UNSW.

The proposed structure is presented on the following page.

# Kirby Institute Organisational Structure

