



## ***Our journey thus far and outlook***

As a charitable not for profit medical research entity registered with the Australian Charities and Not For Profit Commission, Lighthouse Laboratories was established in Western Australia in 2003 with a vision for a head-quarter and accompanying satellite operations across the country.

Commencing with the founding research theme for child cancer, but with a view to expand the research with complimentary themes and an interdisciplinary approach, Lighthouse also emerged with a novel constitutional policy that demonstrates a commitment to animal free medical research. The journey thus far has been a mixture of inroads and setbacks; however, such setbacks, figuratively like a string on a bow pulled back, have also poised Lighthouse with the potential to re-launch our purpose much further with greater direction and effect. As such, the outlook is encouraging and I therefore invite you to share in this venture. Please take a moment to let me tell you a little more about this journey and how your support will not only impact on scientific exploration and discovery, but it will also impact in a way of historical significance in regard to Lighthouse Laboratories possibly being recognised as the first medical research institution committed to animal free medical research.

My motivation in this journey as the founding director and chief executive officer was underpinned by an experience in 1998 when my daughter was diagnosed with child cancer neuroblastoma (NB). Coming from an engineering trade background I put myself on a steep learning curve and re-entered education to become a researcher. My research interests and inquiries revolve around understanding and therapeutically exploiting the phenomenon of spontaneously regressing cancer – Whereby cancer disappears by a means that cannot be attributed to medical intervention (i.e. Nature's showcase for a cure). Upon finishing my training I could not get an opportunity to engage in NB research. Tired of waiting for that opportunity I decided to create my own with the establishment of Lighthouse Laboratories. However, this motive was not self-centred; I chose a path of creating a platform for many researchers isolated from their profession. But in doing so I did not want to engage in harming animals in my research; further I did not want to aid and abet fellow researchers to engage in animal studies – As such, Lighthouse was developed with an animal free policy.

Our message is 'medical research to stop the human hurt without hurting animals.' Our tact among officials, peers and the public is that we are affording the public and the researcher the opportunity of 'choice' to be able to support or partake in animal free medical research. I have deliberately refrained from scientific and ethical debate. Also, our tact is not intent on being confrontational or derogatory to peers engaged in animal studies. I believe our presence and example (tolerated in line with equal opportunity values and law) will be a beacon - Whereby a polarization of support and involvement will be reflective of democracy at work and indicative of what the community want rather than being lead to believe by a higher echelon that it is their way or no way.

Lighthouse was developed with three fundamental priorities: presence, position and performance. Between 2003 and 2008 I built up infrastructure, capacity and positioned Lighthouse Laboratories in a local university to support/engage 3 post-doctoral workers and 10-20 joint funded PhD studentships. I also poised Lighthouse to show case the technology and research outcomes of animal

free science – Notably by means of obtaining a local government seed fund grant to develop an inaugural systems biology conference in Australia. Further, I aligned Lighthouse Laboratories with a strategic priority of government with regard to OMIC technology transfer. Unfortunately, these inroads attracted negative attention from some key competitive research leaders and some key officials concerned that our animal free medical research message was drawing unwanted public attention to an issue that they would rather keep shrouded. Subsequently, we were given notice to leave this local university based on synergy concerns. With negative chatter spreading to other public research facilities we found ourselves isolated. Lighthouse relocated to an autonomous private setting with a view to have a headquarter for admin, support services and science/research activity (e.g. a basic equipped wet lab, an independent review body with its ethics committee outsourced on a fee for use basis to the clinical trial sector and bioinformatics personnel remotely accessing a database). Parallel to this Lighthouse had partners overseas to assist with projects and additional resources.

Unfortunately, with some opposition perched in official positions of influence, our annual transparent reporting would repeatedly ruffle feathers with evidence of our ability to overcome obstacles put in our way. However in 2009 and 2010 significant sabotage occurred in the hope of sinking the Lighthouse cause. Despite my/Lighthouse's effort to control the damage and recover, I found myself responsibly dismantling our team of circa 70 people (some paid - most voluntary – a science team of 6) and being conveniently shackled for two years in order to build a falsified and fabricated argument of ineffectiveness and inefficiency. In an imposed period of dormancy between 2013 and 2015 Lighthouse remained afloat undiminished in its mission, its vision, its objects and its aims.

Today, I am trying to re-emerge Lighthouse Laboratories from a down trodden position no less determined and confident in what we have to offer in terms medical research inquiry and our animal free policy. It would appear that the climate has not changed and the old guard is still in a position to obstruct. However, this time around Lighthouse will put greater emphasis on minimising vulnerability. Further, risk will be minimised in terms of responsibilities; however, our ambition is high risk in search of high rewards such as a cancer cure and redefining the medical research scene with and for animal free studies. As an example of our 'have a go attitude' please see the link below – It points to a research institute being vacated and leased out. Ironically, the current occupant/owners have a central place in underpinning the emergence of Lighthouse. Whilst this facility is circa 4000sqm with dedicated research laboratories and infrastructure, a smaller footprint circa 1000sqm might also be possible. Other options currently available, which range in size, would require a timely and costly fit out, along with potential planning challenges.

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If I could rally support and cooperation from the various like-minded persons and organisations that share our aspirations, I think together we can make a very big collective statement with Lighthouse Laboratories being a hub for change and hope- not just as a lab or centre, but possibly as a pinnacle defining institute. From that example, it is hoped that we will be able foster opportunity and know-how via satellite examples (labs/centres) at various universities/hospitals.

To give weight to this concept/proposal I need to build a portfolio showing support and engagement, from some heavyweight persons/parties, including philanthropist, entrepreneurs, corporate/business, researchers/clinicians and political figures from across Australia and the globe) – Particularly if we are to overcome our opposition in higher circles. It can be done if there is a will. (United we stand or divided we fall.) The choice exists – The choice is mine and yours - Who will act? I certainly hope that those who shout for the change that Lighthouse exemplifies will unite with us. I also hope the public and the researcher, aware of the choice we afford, will consider supporting us with participation, association and perhaps by way of sponsorship or donation. I would additionally welcome ideas and suggestions to help pave the way forward.

For me it matters not who crosses the finish line in a race for change or cure - it just matters that the finish line is crossed - but not forgetting that oath in medicine of first doing no harm - whether that be to people or animals.

In keeping with our non-intrusive policy of passive presence only, we expect nothing but are hopeful and grateful for everything – My efforts are a labour of love and as the leader of this cause that example will hopefully ramify throughout the organisation and be a beacon beyond.

Lastly, my commitment to this quest was coupled to a vow on the night that my daughter was diagnosed with child cancer at the age of ten months. I continue to feel much for the suffering of those confronted with disease such as child cancer (past, present or future). However, I also feel much for the unjust suffering imposed on innocent animals in the guise of medical research. As I continue my struggle (not a fight) I try not to dwell on the political, competitive and malice antics to discredit and isolate my/Lighthouse's efforts. I'm not looking for confrontation nor am I looking for a pat on the back – I just aspire and strive to contribute to resolving issues that are yet to be resolved by the status quo. My voluntary contribution is fast approaching 20,000 hours and my personal financial contribution could easily exceed that number in dollar terms with an extra zero. My personal financial position could probably be regarded by many as modest; however, what matters to me is family and caring for others; I'm also eternally grateful that my daughter (now the oldest of four daughters) survived.

Many thanks

Graeme Tucker  
Executive Chairman & Scientific Director  
Lighthouse Laboratories

