

## **WA Today**

One of WA's richest men, Ralph Sarich, has donated \$20 million to medical research in what is believed to be the state's largest single donation of its type.

The donation by the orbital engine inventor and property developer will be used to help develop the neurosciences wing of the \$360 million research centre at Queen Elizabeth Medical Centre in Nedlands.

The research centre, designed to find cures for deadly and chronically debilitating illnesses and will eventually include the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, the WA Institute for Medical Research and state-of-the-art laboratories for PathWest.

It will house more than 1500 researchers and will also include staff from the Lions Eye Institute and the University of Western Australia. The facility will be built next to the "super hospital" comprising Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and the new children's and women's hospitals.

Mr Sarich, 69, is Australia's 38th wealthiest individual according to the BRW Rich List, with a net worth of about \$1.05 billion. He invented the orbital engine in the early 1970s and later expanded into property development.

His family has donated about \$17 million to medical research and other causes, principally helping children, in the past.

He said he was "delighted" to see the new research centre taking shape.

"(It) will be tasked with finding new treatments for a host of conditions including head injuries, brain tumours, epilepsy and spinal problems," he said.

"It will also work to address the heavy burden of Alzheimer's disease that affects our community today."

Mr Sarich's son, Peter Sarich, said the family felt it had a "moral obligation" to give something back to the community after doing so well financially.

His father was involved in a major car crash, leaving him hospitalised for six months with back injuries. The incident was what initially prompted him to look into what could be done in the field of back injury and neurology.

"(Donating money is) a lot better feeling than making money from business. It gives you a sense of immense satisfaction that you can help people in that way," Peter Sarich said.

Health Minister Jim McGinty said Ralph Sarich's donation was "the largest philanthropic donation ever made in WA".

"Many Western Australians have done extremely well financially in recent years and it is great to see people like Mr Sarich making such an enormous contribution and helping projects like this get off the ground," Mr McGinty said.

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research director Fiona Stanley said the institute would benefit from being close to a wide variety of experts.

"Moving to the research precinct will be important for our institute, so that we retain our close relationships with the major teaching hospitals to ensure that research can both inform and respond to clinical needs," she said.

Construction of the first of the buildings - containing the WA Institute for Medical Research and the laboratories - is expected to start next year and be completed in 2011, with the whole project expected to take about eight years to complete.