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A family legacy of care joins the fight against COVID-19

When Ray Houston established a charitable trust in his Will in memory of his parents, he left instructions that the Trust, now valued at more than \$1.6m direct funding to health and medical causes. Little did he know it would become one of the essential funders of the fight against COVID-19.

A grant of \$100,000 from The William Henry and Vera Ellen Memorial Trust Fund, established in 2003, has been directed to Epworth HealthCare to expand a newly created special COVID-19 Biobank, to better understand why COVID-19 affects some people differently.

The research project led by Epworth HealthCare infectious diseases expert Dr James McMahon, is building a Biobank of blood samples and throat swabs taken from COVID-19 patients admitted to hospitals across Melbourne during the pandemic.

Co-trustee, Kay Currie said: "This research project comes at an important time for Australia and should provide some greater insights for health care professionals."

The William Henry and Vera Ellen Memorial Trust Fund is one of many charitable trusts Equity Trustees has been able to pivot to support the Australian medical and health research sector as part of the global effort to better understand this strain of coronavirus, development treatments and ultimately find a vaccine and a cure.

"It's important to take a moment wherever we can and acknowledge the contributions large and small that are helping us through this pandemic," said Jodi Kennedy, General Manager of Charitable trusts and Philanthropy, Equity Trustees. "All contributions are essential – the people at the front line in medical and mental health services, the essential services workers and what each of us do to help drive positive social outcomes in our communities.

"Ray was a WWII veteran and a devoted son, whose father died in 1942 leaving behind Ray and his two siblings. Ray cared for his elderly mother Vera until she passed away in 1982. In honour of his parents, their strong family bond and their shared commitment to a number of social causes, including medical research, Raymond created this trust in his Will.

"It means that each year Equity Trustees is able to grant money to support the community in the ways they would have wanted. Their generosity, as well as their memory, remains with us," she said.

The Trust has previously granted funds to causes including funding for Royal Children's Hospital and support for people with Autism and Multiple Sclerosis however, current events shifted its funding to support the COVID-19 response.

More about this project is available [here on the Epworth website](#).

More about Equity Trustees Philanthropy, including the 650+ charitable trusts and foundations we manage can be found [here](#).

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