

\$10m invested into start-up developing new treatments targeting the use of CAR-T cell therapies against solid tumours

- *Cancer biotech start-up, Currus Biologics, is utilising its proprietary BEAT technology as a combination therapy with CAR-T cells targeting the treatment of solid tumours*
- *\$10 million Series A investment received from leading life science Venture Capital investors Brandon Capital-managed Medical Research Commercialisation Fund (MRCF) and Uniseed*

Melbourne 28 June 2021: Currus Biologics, a Melbourne-based cancer biotech start-up, has completed an AU\$10 million investment round to improve the success of CAR-T cell therapies against solid tumours such as breast, ovarian and pancreatic cancers.

The Brandon Capital Partners-managed Medical Research Commercialisation Fund (MRCF) led the \$10 million investment round with co-investment from university commercialisation fund Uniseed. The invested capital will support Currus Biologics' development of its proprietary BEAT technology based on research from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, one of the world's leading cancer research centres. This is the first investor-led spinout from Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre research.

CAR-T therapies have proved revolutionary in the treatment of severe, advanced blood-borne cancers, such as leukemia and lymphoma, with remission rates of up to 94 percent¹. However, CAR-T therapies have proven far less useful at treating solid tumours, which make up 90 per cent of all cancers.

CAR-T cell therapy works by extracting a patient's T-cells and genetically engineering these cells to produce chimeric antigen receptors (CARs) that can be used to specifically seek out and destroy cancer cells after infusion back into the patient.

Currus Biologics is combining its proprietary **Bispecific Engagers of Antigen Presenting Cells and T cells (BEAT)** technology with CAR-T therapy to treat solid tumours.

"The BEAT is a bi-specific antibody, which recognises and simultaneously binds to the CAR-T cells as well as professional antigen presenting cells, enabling their direct interaction. This in turn appropriately activates the T cells, enabling them to then seek out and destroy solid tumour cells." says Professor Michael Kershaw, Group Leader and Head of the Immune Innovation Laboratory at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Prof Kershaw was involved in the first reported CAR-T clinical trial during his NIH postdoc in the USA, and subsequently brought advances in technology back to Australia.

"Our research findings in animal models indicate that one infusion of the treatment is expected to be effective in the treatment of solid tumours," Kershaw adds. Professor Kershaw has led the BEAT research team along with Dr Clare Slaney, Senior Research Fellow at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

Sam Cobb, founding Chief Executive Officer of Currus Biologics says that there is significant global interest in how CAR-T therapies can be used to target the full spectrum of cancers. "Utilising CAR-T therapies to treat solid tumours with the BEAT technology could have similar impacts in this field, as

¹ <https://www.labiotech.eu/in-depth/car-t-therapy-cancer-review/#:~:text=CAR%2DT%20clinical%20trials%20have,not%20all%20other%20available%20treatments>

we have seen for patients with liquid tumours. The potential of this technology for patients is immense and the commercial deals in this space also reflect the enormous size of this opportunity.”

Chairman of Currus Biologics and Investment Manager at Brandon Capital Partners, Dr Michael Bettess, indicated that “MRCF is delighted to be investing in Currus Biologics as the technology has the potential to treat some of the most prevalent cancers that affect so many people. Breast cancer and prostate cancer alone affected over 3.5 million² people worldwide in 2020, many of whom could benefit from the technology Currus is developing.”

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre Executive Director Business Ventures Associate Professor Dominic Wall says CAR-T therapies are proving remarkably effective in the fight against blood-borne cancers - but could be a real game-changer in solid cancers.

“CAR-T therapies are a focus area for us but in order to offer hope to millions more cancer patients, we need to identify how to effectively apply CAR-T therapies to solid cancers,” Associate Professor Wall said.

Currus Biologics’ BEAT technology was developed based on the seminal study completed at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and published in [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America \(PNAS\)](#).

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About Currus Biologics

Currus Biologics is utilising its proprietary BEAT technology to develop CAR-T cell therapies that treat solid tumour cancers traditionally difficult to treat with current CAR-T cell therapies.

Currus Biologics’ proprietary Bispecific Engagers of Antigen Presenting Cells and T cells (BEAT) technology overcomes many of the challenges presented when treating solid tumours with traditional CAR-T cell therapy, demonstrating CAR-T cell proliferation and persistence, CAR-T cell trafficking to the tumour and immunological memory extending to additional antigens.

Currus Biologics is a privately held biotechnology company based in Melbourne, Australia.

For more information about **Currus Biologics**, visit www.currusbiologics.com

² https://gco.iarc.fr/today/online-analysis-table?v=2020&mode=cancer&mode_population=continents&population=900&populations=900&key=asr&sex=0&cancer=39&type=0&statistic=5&prevalence=0&population_group=0&ages_group%5B%5D=0&ages_group%5B%5D=17&group_cancer=1&include_nmsc=1&include_nmsc_other=1

About the Medical Research Commercialisation Fund (MRCF) and Brandon Capital Partners

Brandon Capital Partners is an early-stage venture capital firm that manages the Medical Research Commercialisation Fund (MRCF); Australia and New Zealand's largest life science investment fund, with more than AU\$700 million under management. The MRCF is a unique collaboration between major Australian superannuation funds, the Australian and New Zealand governments, Australian state governments and more than 50 leading medical research institutes and research hospitals. The MRCF supports the development and commercialisation of early-stage biomedical discoveries associated with member organisations, providing both capital and expertise to guide the successful development of new therapies. The MRCF has supported more than 46 start-up companies to date, many of which were founded by the MRCF.

For more information about **Brandon Capital Partners** and the **MRCF**, visit www.brandoncapital.com.au and www.mrcf.com.au

About Uniseed

Uniseed is Australia's longest running early-stage commercialisation fund that makes investments in research emanating from five of Australia's leading research organisations – The University of Queensland, The University of Sydney, The University of New South Wales, The University of Melbourne and the CSIRO. Uniseed is a mutual fund, owned by research organisations, for research organisations. The fund facilitates the commercialisation of its research partners' most promising intellectual property and secures targeted investment in resulting products and technologies. Uniseed has supported 60 start-up companies to date, being the seed investor in most of these.

For more information about **Uniseed**, visit: www.uniseed.com

About Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is a world-leading cancer research, education and treatment centre and Australia's only public health service solely dedicated to caring for people affected by cancer. Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre has pioneered CAR-T therapy in Australia for more than 10 years, and performed Australia's first CAR-T clinical trial in 2007. In 2019, the Commonwealth Government announced \$80M funding to establish the Centre of Excellence in Cellular Immunotherapy, co-funded by the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Foundation (\$25M).

For more information about **Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre**, visit www.petermac.org