



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ILHAN FOUNDATION COMMITS \$1 MILLION TO FIGHT ALLERGY

The Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation today announced it is committing \$1 million to help improve the quality of life for the thousands of allergy sufferers across Australia. The first target will be peanut anaphylaxis, a life-threatening problem for many Australian children.

The new established Foundation, created by successful Melbourne businessman John Ilhan and his wife Patricia, is dedicated to making a significant contribution to research that one day might find a cure for anaphylaxis, as well as investing in education programs to assist community understanding of the issue.

The first contribution from the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation was given in March to the world renowned Murdoch Children's Research Institute, based at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. The \$100,000 donation will allow new research dedicated to finding a cure for allergic reactions to peanuts, which can cause death if the reaction is extreme.

The Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation is working in partnership with Firkbank Grammar School to develop curriculum materials in a kit which will be made available to other schools around Australia. This is in an endeavour to educate students, teachers and parents on the dangers of the allergic reactions caused by some foods and to promote a healthier lifestyle.

As a practical way to assist allergy sufferers everywhere, the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation in conjunction with Firkbank Grammar aims to release a cookbook in late 2006 which will include recipes which are low risk for those suffering from allergies.

Two of Australia's best-known experts, Professor Bob Williamson and Dr David Hill, have accepted an offer to join the Board of the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation to provide expert advice on research into the causes of allergy.

John Ilhan, founder of the hugely successful Crazy John's mobile phone retail business with over 100 stores Australia-wide, was personally moved to try and make a difference and confront the issues surrounding anaphylaxis.

John and Patricia's youngest daughter Jaida suffers from a severe form of peanut allergy that poses a constant threat to her if she is given the wrong food. Confronted by this personal issue, both John and Patricia decided to look into the root causes of allergy attacks, which meant they came into contact with leading scientists and researchers in this area.

"The decision to create the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation came from the heart. To see Jaida suffering from allergy attacks was heart breaking. Both Patricia and I knew then that we had to do something about the problem," John Ilhan said.

"We are excited about what the Foundation has already been able to achieve working with Firkbank. Now the research work to be undertaken by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, working with other Australian doctors and scientists, could lead to helping find a long-term cure. I think that all allergy sufferers deserve hope that their fate might improve," he said.

In August of this year the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation plans to fund and host a major conference of leading international and Australian scientific experts in the field of anaphylaxis to come to Melbourne to workshop their combined research work in the field. It is expected that to coincide with this eminent gathering there will be a public lecture from the experts on the latest research into anaphylaxis to allow families of allergy sufferers to attend and ask questions about future medical assistance.

The Victorian Minister for Health Bronwyn Pike said: "The Bracks Government is proud to be forming this partnership with the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation, as well as the Royal Children's Hospital, and the Murdoch Children's Research Foundation."

"I commend Mr Ilhan for making a real and positive contribution toward improving the treatment of this potentially deadly condition," Ms Pike said

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### ILHAN FOOD ALLERGY FOUNDATION

The Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation was established in 2006 and is dedicated to promoting research and educating the public about the issues and causes surrounding anaphylaxis. John Ilhan and his wife Patricia created the Foundation, run on a daily basis by Chief Executive Mary Benson. The Board of the Foundation is made up of eminent scientists, including human geneticist Professor Bob Williamson and allergist Dr David Hill. Other leading experts in the field also advise the Foundation on where best to invest its resources, public profile and energy to make a difference to assist allergy sufferers everywhere.

#### **The Problem**

Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening severe allergic reaction caused by eating food, or coming in contact with another product which provokes allergy.

The most common causes in young people are peanuts and other nuts, eggs and cow milk, but a few children are allergic to other things, including insect stings and some drugs such as antibiotics.

How common is anaphylaxis? At least 1 in 20 children suffer from food allergies, and of these about 1 in 10 could suffer a severe reaction causing anaphylaxis. Overall, 1 person in 100 is at risk of anaphylaxis, or about 200,000 Australians, enough to fill the MCG twice over. Children outgrow many allergies when they become adults, but most children with allergies to nuts or fish remain allergic for life.

#### **The Solution**

The Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation believes that far more effective prevention is possible for anaphylaxis. At present, there are few specialists, and children have to wait a long time before they see a doctor to determine if they are at risk. The Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation is working closely with the Victorian Minister of Health, Bronwyn Pike, to solve this problem by making more resources available. Training for GPs is also critical.

In the future, research could provide new developments needed to ensure an anaphylaxis-free life for children allergic to peanuts. The Foundation will help scientists and doctors learn the extent of the problem in Australia.

We will help research, all of which will be assessed by independent scientists, to study new techniques to make the body tolerant of nut proteins, including immunotherapy. These studies, which will first be located at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Alfred Hospital, will operate in collaboration with colleagues in other states of Australia, as well as in Europe and the United States.

#### **Education**

The Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation firmly believes that education should play a key role in improving the lifestyle of allergy sufferers around Australia.

As the broader public better understands the issues, and the dangers of providing allergy sufferers with inappropriate food, the greater the chance anaphylaxis attacks can be avoided. This is especially important when children are given food at school or other public gatherings away from home.

The Foundation is dedicated to promoting education about anaphylaxis in schools and working in other practical ways, such as producing a low-risk cookbook for parents of allergy suffering children.