



## Media Release

For immediate release

### **Westfund's new home office open for business**

Westfund Health Insurance last week paid tribute to its rich and proud history while also welcoming a prosperous and innovative future with the opening of the 'King Building' – the fund's new home office administrative headquarters in Read Avenue, Lithgow.

Former Prime Minister and current Member for Warringah Tony Abbott was guest of honour for the event and was welcomed by Westfund CEO Grahame Danaher and members of the Board of Directors, as well as around 70 staff.

Mr Abbott was joined in the list of official guests by Member for Calare Andrew Gee, Lithgow Mayor Stephen Lesslie, a number of local councillors and Council acting general manager Andrew Muir along with other industry dignitaries at the private event on Thursday. Special tribute and welcome was paid to Lithgow's Ross King, son of the late James Wesley King (Wes) to whom the former RSL building is dedicated.

Westfund CEO Grahame Danaher spoke to the fund's commitment to its proud history in Lithgow and investment in its expanding staff and reach across NSW and Queensland while giving the opening address.

He put forward the fund's strong position on regional support and advocacy while also referring to its proud history as a mutual organisation founded on self-help and community. Mr Danaher brought to attention the decline in regional Australia through loss of infrastructure, particularly reflected in educational and health share indicators.

"It is time that regional Australia is supported with substantial infrastructure which can benefit all of Australia, as this country's wealth still rides on agriculture and mining - not paper shuffling," said Mr Danaher at the event.

"It is time to make regional Australia great again."

"Westfund's substantial investment in Lithgow is our contribution toward making a brighter future for the town of our inception," he said.

Mr Danaher welcomed the former Prime Minister, saying he and the fund were honoured to host a former Health Minister with strong connections to community service.

Mr Abbott's response was a compelling and enjoyable address in which he commented on the value of regional Australia, especially related to the foundations of cooperative organisations in the social fabric of communities outside the urban landscape.

Westfund Board Chairman Howard Fisher also addressed the gathering, making particular mention of the enduring and loyal commitment of the organisation's staff.

“Without you, we would not be able to celebrate the successes we are here today”, he said. Mr Fisher also outlined and explained the decision to name the new administrative complex the ‘King Building’ in honour of long-time Lithgow RSL Club Secretary-Manager James Wesley King (Wes).

The late Mr King, represented on the day by his son Ross with wife Olwyn, was Secretary Manager of the Lithgow RSL Club for 25 years throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s and was extremely well respected by RSL members and the community in general.

He also served 25 years as Honorary Secretary of the Lithgow RSL Sub Branch and deserves particular mention for his input as Pensions and Welfare Officer where his sympathetic approach and kindly approach were most valued.

On a busy day for Westfund, a book detailing the organisation’s long and proud history was also launched.

Written by Harry Knowles, Greg Patmore and Mark Westcott, ‘Health Insurance in Regional Australia: The History of Westfund’ chronicles the fund’s establishment as a regional success story based on its foundation forged on the principles of mutualism tied to Lithgow’s rich industrial heritage.

Dr Patmore offered an engaging address, outlining the writing process as well as the book’s central theme of enduring success in the face of changing business conditions and government legislation.

He too outlined the importance of mutualism and cooperative organisation as contributors to a valuable and resilient landscape for regional Australia.

The ceremony was adeptly emceed by Westfund Director Wes Anderson. The building was officially opened with a ribbon cutting carried out by Mr Abbott with Westfund’s CEO and Board Chairman.

Staff then toured visitors throughout the new offices, which boast a state-of-the-art media room to facilitate more economic and time efficient communication between staff in remote locations. Around 80 staff involved in claims, call centre, records, product, finance, communications and development areas of the fund are now housed in the new building, drawing together the entire administrative staff under one roof.

Westfund’s dental, eye care and care centre operations will continue as normal in Main Street, Lithgow.

## ENDS

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**ABOUT WESTFUND HEALTH:** Westfund Health is an Australian owned and operated not-for-profit health fund providing coverage for more than 120,000 members, making it the 8<sup>th</sup> largest open fund in Australia.

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