



PRINCE OF WALES
MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MEDIA RELEASE



SOUTH EASTERN SYDNEY
ILLAWARRA
NSW HEALTH



UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



BLACK DOG INSTITUTE



Brain Sciences
UNSW

Tuesday, 8 May 2007

\$30 MILLION BOOST TO DEMENTIA RESEARCH

The Federal Government has announced a \$30 million investment to establish a **Neuroscience Research Precinct** on the Prince of Wales Campus in Sydney.

The funding will ensure the establishment of a world-class facility that will accommodate significant growth in the area of dementia research. With this financial support realised, and the initial project design completed, work on this vital development can now move ahead immediately.

The Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute (POWMRI) spearheaded the initiative and will lead the new strategic direction and development of the Precinct. Other stakeholders include the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Prince of Wales Hospital and the Black Dog Institute.

POWMRI's Executive Director, Professor Peter Schofield said, "Neurological and psychiatric disorders of the brain and nervous system pose the largest health, economic and social burden to Australia."

"Our future plans require a significant new investment into a purpose-built, world-class, research facility. Quality laboratory space and clinical research facilities are critical to attracting and supporting research excellence."

Crucial to the future success of the nation's dementia research program is the recruitment of international leaders in the field – leaders such as world renowned Clinical Neuroscientist, Professor John Hodges, currently MRC Professor of Behavioural Neurology at Cambridge University.

The appointment of Professor Hodges is a joint initiative between UNSW and POWMRI. Professor Hodges, who will take up his UNSW professorial appointment based at POWMRI later this year, has proposed an innovative dementia research program that will substantially advance fundamental knowledge of cognitive processes. Importantly, his research program has a strong translational component through the development of improved methods for rehabilitation and health outcomes in patients.

Vice Chancellor of UNSW, Professor Fred Hilmer said, "We welcome the government's significant investment in what will be a world-class centre for research in this very important field. UNSW is a leader in brain sciences. The new Precinct will significantly enhance our research efforts through the combined activities of our Faculty of Medicine, POWMRI, the Prince of Wales Hospital and the Black Dog Institute. I believe it will provide opportunities for major steps forward in the area of neuroscience."

The Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute, Professor Gordon Parker, said this an exciting opportunity for POWMRI and the Black Dog Institute to also advance their collaborative research studies into mood disorders and the dementing conditions, particularly in pursuing genetic and other biological causes.

“The planned integration of the research facilities of POWMRI, Black Dog Institute, UNSW and the Area Health Service forms part of the Area’s Masterplan for the development of all facets of the Randwick Hospitals Campus,” said Chief Executive of the South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Health Service, Professor Debora Picone. “SESIAHS fully endorses the proposed development and remains committed to working closely with the POW Medical Research Institute to bring this world-class project to fruition.”

“Working with Cox-Richardson Architects and Planners and the South East Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service, we have developed plans for a new \$69.1 million building,” said Professor Schofield. “The Neuroscience Research Precinct will provide 11,000 m² of research capacity and double the space of the existing research facility projecting it into international prominence in the research arena.”

Projections in Treasurer Peter Costello's Intergenerational Report issued last month show that over the next 40 years:

- the population will continue to increase in size but with a higher proportion of older people;
- economic growth per person will slow as the proportion of the population of traditional working age falls; and
- substantial fiscal pressures will emerge due to projected increases in spending, particularly in the areas of health, age pensions and aged care.

The projections also show that by 2047, Australia's total population will be 28.5 million, 38 per cent larger than June 2006. At the same time, the proportion of people aged 65 and over is projected to nearly double to 25 per cent of the population. The proportion aged 85 or over is projected to triple to 5.6 per cent of the population. The pace of ageing of the population is projected to quicken after 2010, as the baby boomer generation starts to reach age 65.

“It is clear there is no time to lose if we are to tackle the dementia epidemic. As baby boomers enter the age of greatest risk, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias will become the public health crisis of the 21st century,” Professor Schofield concluded.

...Ends

Further information:

Professor Peter Schofield, Executive Director & CEO, Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute
Tel: 02 9399 1004; Mobile: 0411 552 823; Email: p.schofield@unsw.edu.au

Anne Graham, PR, Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute
Tel: 02 9399 1077; Mob: 0411 783 027; Email: a.graham@unsw.edu.au

Susi Hamilton, Office of Communications, UNSW
Tel: 02 9385 1583; Mob: 0422 934 024; Email: susi.hamilton@unsw.edu.au