

**THE HON NICOLA ROXON
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

MEDIA RELEASE

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RUDD GOVERNMENT MOUNTS MAJOR ATTACK ON CANCER

Australia will play a role in the biggest ever international effort to unlock the genetic secrets of cancer.

This enormous research project, spanning 24 countries, is expected to deliver significant benefits in detecting, preventing and treating cancer. Understanding what causes cancer will bring us one step closer to effectively treating more cancers.

This is part of a Rudd Government investment of almost \$50 million in improving cancer research.

The Government will invest:

- \$27.5 million over five years in the International Cancer Genomics Consortium, aimed at understanding the genetic changes that cause cancer
- Over \$10 million to support new and existing national cancer clinical trials groups, improving access for people across Australia to enrol in future clinical trials, thus improving access to innovative treatments
- Over \$10.5 million in grants for 24 cancer-related research projects

These initiatives coincide with a new report showing cancer survival rates are improving, but remain lower for people undergoing socioeconomic disadvantage and for males living in regional and remote areas.

The report, *Cancer survival and prevalence in Australia*, released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Cancer Australia and the Australasian Association of Cancer Registries, highlights the need to continue the fight against cancer.

International Cancer Genomics Consortium

The alliance of 24 countries will work together to generate new discoveries on the genomics of up to 50 types of cancer over the next decade.

Australian researchers will analyse the full range of gene changes resulting from one or more types of cancer. Researchers will analyse up to 5000 samples of each tumour type.

Countries will share information, allowing the comparison of different cancers. Australia will also support research in other countries by providing tissue samples and data. Other countries involved include Canada, China, India, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States and some European nations.

Professor Warwick Anderson, CEO of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), has been appointed to the interim ICGC Executive group, recognising Australia's strong track record in cancer genomics.

Cancer clinical trials

The Rudd Government, through Cancer Australia, will support a number of new and existing national cancer clinical trials groups. This funding of \$15 million will help increase the number of clinical trials available to people affected by cancer.

Cancer clinical trials are an essential part of determining the effectiveness of new treatments for cancer patients, as well as diagnostic tests, and prevention and supportive care efforts.

Two new national clinical trials groups, for neuro-oncology and sarcoma, have been established through seed funding of \$200,000 each over 12 months.

More than 1,000 cases of neurological tumours are diagnosed each year in Australia, with a high mortality rate. Sarcomas – malignant tumours affecting connective tissue such as muscle and bone – are diagnosed in more than 800 Australians each year, with a high proportion of cases occurring in adolescents and young adults.

New grants for cancer research through the NHMRC

Over \$10.5 million will go to grants for 24 cancer-related research projects.

Most of these projects will focus on improving early detection and treatment of the most common cancers affecting Australians, including prostate, bowel and breast cancer. Other projects will focus on improving service delivery and care and support of people affected by cancer.

These projects have been awarded funding through the Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme, created by Cancer Australia.

Cancer Australia's funding partners in the first round of the Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme were:

- National Breast Cancer Foundation
- Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia
- Diagnostics and Technology Branch of the Department of Health and Ageing.

The NHMRC evaluated research applications to ensure the highest scientific merit. A list of grant recipients and their research projects is on Cancer Australia's web site: www.canceraustralia.gov.au

The fight against cancer continues to be a national challenge.

Today's announcements build on recent measures to fight cancer, and to better care for and support people living with cancer, including:

- \$87.4 million over three years for a national bowel cancer screening program
- \$50 million over three years to establish a Comprehensive Cancer Centre in Sydney

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