



NEWS RELEASE
The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Friday 02 October, 2009

PLANNING APPROVAL FOR \$99 MILLION IMPROVED MEDICAL RESEARCH FACILITY

The NSW Government has approved a \$99 million redevelopment of the Children's Medical Research Institute at Westmead Hospital.

Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, said the redevelopment will deliver a state-of-the-art medical research facility in a new building at the Westmead Hospital Precinct.

"This will be a valuable addition to the Westmead Health Campus. The redevelopment will enhance the profile of this valuable facility, and allow the Institute to continue its good work," Ms Keneally said.

"Over the last 51 years the Children's Medical Research Institute has made significant breakthroughs in research that have led, and will continue to lead, to the prevention and treatment of childhood diseases.

"The Institute has decided to stage the redevelopment over a period of 10 to 15 years, to minimise disruption to research activities.

"125 full time jobs will be created during construction, in addition to up to 500 full time positions during operation."

Ms Keneally said the proposal involves the staged demolition of the existing research building and construction of:

- A five story building containing new laboratories, library, staff canteen, bio-services area, conference hall, gymnasium, medical rooms and boardroom;
- Basement parking; and
- Associated infrastructure.

Minister Assisting on Health (Mental Health and Cancer), Barbara Perry, said an increasing demand for high quality research facilities has led to the need for Westmead to expand.

"This facility will deliver important paediatric medical research facilities to support the ongoing growth and improvement of the entire Westmead Health Campus," Ms Perry said.

"This facility will greatly assist the Institute to continue and expand on its world-leading research programs for, cancer, gene therapy, embryology and nerve cell signalling.

"It will also help to meet the growing demands for medical research facilities in NSW which is an important step in taking the pressure of the current Westmead facilities."

Sir Lorimer Dods Professor and Director of the Children's Medical Research Institute, Roger Reddel, said the approval provided the opportunity for another 28 world class research groups to be developed at the institute.



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“This approval will expand Australia's research capacity and international reputation in cancer biology, embryology, nerve cell signalling and gene transfer, retaining research leaders in NSW,” Professor Reddel said.

“Having the proposal assessed in such an efficient manner has also allowed the institute to concentrate on ensuring research can continue un-interrupted before, during and after construction.

“The assessment process has been easy to use and has delivered a great outcome that allows the Institute to move from strength to strength.”

Ms Keneally said that the approval demonstrates the work which the NSW Government is doing to create Australia's Best Planning System.

“In October 2008 I announced 85% of major project approvals would be finalised within three months, 95% within five months, and no project assessment to exceed eight months,” Ms Keneally said.

“I am pleased that the assessment of the CMRI proposal has taken only three months to move through the State's planning system – that's a great outcome for both the Institute and the community.”

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Children's Medical Research Institute Achievements

- 1960s – Established Australia's first research unit for newborns, dramatically improving the survival rate for premature babies;
- 1970s – Helped test and develop rubella vaccination programs in NSW;
- 1970s – Pioneered microsurgery techniques which led to, among other things, improved survival of infants following organ transplantation;
- 1980s – CMRI's pioneering work into foetal alcohol syndrome led it to lobby the government on the dangers of drinking when pregnant and to improve drug and alcohol support programs for pregnant women;
- 1995 – Discovered Alternative Lengthening of Telomeres (ALT), a fundamental mechanism by which cells become cancerous;
- 2005 – Discovered that a single genetic defect can cause cleft lip and palate;
- 2007 – Discovered the molecular components of an enzyme (telomerase) that 85% of cancers depend on for their growth; and

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- 2009 – Developed two groups of drugs that in preclinical testing block epileptic seizures in a completely new way.

More than 95% of all cancers (in children and in adults) depend on telomerase and or Alternative Lengthening Telomeres (ALT) for their continual growth. The Children's Medical Research Institute is working towards the development of drugs that block ALT and drugs that block telomerase. If successful, this drug combination may treat most cancers.

IMPORTANT STATEMENT ABOUT POLITICAL DONATIONS

New political donation disclosure laws came into effect in 2008 imposing obligations on applicants making applications for project approval to the Minister for Planning from 1 October 2008 to disclose all reportable political donations (if any) made by anyone with a financial interest in the application within the period commencing two years before the application is made and ending when the application is determined. .

More information on these obligations is available at
www.planning.nsw.gov.au/DevelopmentAssessments/Donationandgiftdisclosure/tabid/209/Default.aspx

No reportable political donation statement was made to the Department of Planning for this project.