



THE VICTOR CHANG  
CARDIAC RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **More funding needed to fight Australia's biggest killer**

**The need to increase support for health and medical Research in Australia has been highlighted this week by the lack of funds for a major new initiative to address the causes of heart disease - Australia's biggest killer.**

The Australasian Cardiac Bio-specimen Network (ACBN), is a unique trans-Tasman initiative to bank heart tissue and DNA samples for research use – a first of its kind to unite major heart research groups in Australia and New Zealand to attack the problem of both adult and child-onset heart disease.

Professor Robert Graham, Director of the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute (VCCRI), which spearheaded the initiative, says that diseases of the heart and blood vessels kill more people each year than cancer and motor accidents combined, so there is a real need for heart research groups to unite in fighting this deadly disease.

“The ACBN would have brought together major medical research groups including the VCCRI and St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, the Baker Heart Research Institute and St. Vincent's Institute in Melbourne, The Prince Charles Hospital, Brisbane and the University of Queensland, the Trans-Tasman Sudden Death Task Force and the Children's Hospital, Westmead. Each institute would have collected and stored heart tissue and DNA samples obtained at the time of heart transplants and other procedures, which would then be catalogued and stored in a database for national distribution,” Professor Graham said.

“Given not only the critical importance of heart disease in our community, but also the unique benefits provided by this National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) Enabling Grant application, including its potential for reducing the need for animal experimentation, it certainly is richly deserving of funding,” Professor Garry Jennings, Director, Baker Heart Research Institute added. “So the news that NH&MRC is unable to support the ACBN initiative because of lack of funds is a major setback for the people of Australia.”

“This lack of funds for such an important initiative highlights the urgent need for increased support of health and medical research (HMR) in Australia”, Professor Graham said.

This conclusion was also reached by an independent review (the Grant Report) of Australia's HMR published in December 2004, which indicated that to maintain the momentum and growth of HMR, to better capture benefits for Australia's health and economic future, and to strengthen our international position over the long term, increased Federal Government funding (averaging \$166 million a year over the next 5 years), is urgently required.

As noted by an Access Economics report, every \$1 invested in cardiovascular research and development returns not only a staggering \$8, but saves lives, increases wellness and extends life-expectancy.

“Given these considerations, the \$2.5 million over 5 years required for this ACBN initiative would seem to be money very well spent, and it's a tragedy that such funding is not available,” Professor Graham concluded.

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