



St Vincents
& Mater Health
Sydney



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MEDIA RELEASE

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON LARGEST RESEARCH PRECINCT

At a ground breaking ceremony today, Premier Morris Iemma together with Malcolm Turnbull, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, commenced construction of a new building for the St Vincent's Research & Biotechnology Precinct - New South Wales' largest biomedical research hub.

The Precinct is a partnership between the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, the St Vincent's Hospital Research Groups and the Garvan Institute of Medical Research.

Housing approximately 750 researchers, the Precinct will accommodate the creation of new research projects that have international significance within a facility that is well-equipped for the training and development of Australia's future medical researchers.

The Precinct will be developed in a series of phases in a location adjacent to the Garvan Building, on the St Vincent's Darlinghurst Campus.

The first phase, which was today blessed by His Eminence, Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, will see the construction of the Victor Chang Building which will house close to 250 Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and St Vincent's researchers.

"Today we commence a project that will create a new home for the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, which together with the Garvan Building and St Vincent's will be home to 750 scientists.

"The researchers who work here are toiling at the frontiers of discovery, searching for new therapies for cancer, heart disease, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, asthma and diabetes. We are proud to be able to support them in their work," Mr Iemma said.

Mr Turnbull said some of the biggest health challenges facing Australia today included cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

"These are just some of the diseases that the researchers here at St Vincent's will be working to cure and I am pleased the Commonwealth has been able to provide the infrastructure you need to continue your important work," Mr Turnbull said.

All three Precinct partners recognise the importance of sharing scientific and infrastructure facilities. The development of the new building, named in honour of St. Vincent's pioneering heart surgeon, the late Dr. Victor Chang, AC, will strengthen this relationship, as together with the existing Garvan Building, it will allow expansion of a critical mass of researchers with increased opportunities for knowledge, cost and infrastructure sharing.

The new \$71.5 million building is being funded in large part through State and Federal Government partnerships (\$35 million from the NSW Government and \$24 million from the Commonwealth Government), as well as the generosity of private and corporate supporters of the VCCR and St Vincent's.

"St Vincent's is one of Australia's leading research institutes and I am pleased that the Commonwealth Government has contributed \$24 million to this expansion which will help key researchers continue their important work.

"Australia is a world leader in health and medical research. On a per capita basis, our research output is twice the OECD average. Providing our researchers with world class facilities in a precinct where they are able to share their knowledge can only further strengthen our research capabilities," said Federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott.

The Research being undertaken by this research hub will canvas:

- Excellence in health research – *societal and economic benefits*

Recognised both nationally and internationally as a centre-of-excellence, the Precinct's work addresses the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of many major illnesses, which contribute to hospitalisation, death and disability in Australia today. These advances will directly affect not only the lives of thousands of Australians, but will have far-reaching economic benefits for the country,

- Excellence in research training – *leveraging education dollars*

The Precinct plays a vital role in the education and training of Australia's future scientific and medical leaders. Although these trainees receive their degrees from affiliated universities, their training is performed at and supported by the partners. For every dollar the federal Government spends on their education, the Precinct contributes an additional dollar.

- Employment and career opportunities – *reversing Australia's brain drain*

Biomedical researchers represent a very highly educated, hard-working sector of the community. Their work is innovative, creative and is of direct benefit to the improvement of our society and our economy. Current opportunities for such highly trained and specialised individuals are limited and many opt to seek employment overseas. The Precinct provides such opportunities in Australia, which not only serves to retain some of the country's highest calibre people, but has already attracted many ex-pats to return.

- Biomedical research commercialisation – *attracting foreign capital for R&D*

Expanded facilities will provide a great opportunity for the country to realise its strategic commitment to the virtuous cycle of research, innovation and commercialisation. In addition, they will provide accessible, cost-effective infrastructure to support and enable commercialisation of research findings, and contribute to the development and expansion of the biotechnology industry, with enhanced interactions and increased funding from international biomedical organisations.

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