



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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PREMIER BACKS MEDICAL RESEARCH IN NSW

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell today called on the Federal Government to rule out cutting a single dollar for medical research in next month's budget.

Mr O'Farrell and Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research, Jillian Skinner, today met with researchers at the Garvan Institute, just one of the many medical research institutes in NSW where rumoured federal cuts would seriously curtail existing research projects.

"The NSW Government stands side by side with medical researchers in this State and will fight any moves by the Federal Government to slash the funding for their life-saving and life-changing work," Mr O'Farrell said.

"NSW medical research institutes are at the forefront of medical breakthroughs in areas like cancer, diabetes, burns and stem cell research.

"The work that occurs in NSW laboratories is ground breaking - NSW researchers are world-renowned and have changed the lives of people in all corners of the globe," he said.

Twelve of the nation's leading medical research institutes are based in New South Wales, on top of the world class research that also occurs at NSW universities. An estimated 5,000 researchers are directly employed in the sector in NSW, while there are about 2,000 PhD students.

"The career paths of medical students will be put at risk if research grants are reduced - we'll lose these talented students overseas and their expertise will be lost to Australian institutes and hospitals.

"We want to continue to develop and keep some of the world's best researchers in NSW.

"Any lessening of the Federal Government's commitment means jobs will be lost and laboratories closed.

"Supporting medical research in Australia should be a bipartisan issue - I call on the Prime Minister to provide an unequivocal guarantee that not a single dollar will be cut for medical research in the budget, or in the future," he said.

Mrs Skinner said the NSW Government had committed to developing a 10 year Health and Medical Research Strategic Plan, as part of a review headed by Peter Wills, AC.

“Medical research affects every one of us. We all have family members who are still with us because they benefitted from scientific breakthroughs and new technology.

“Peter Wills is highly experienced and will help me develop a strategy to ensure scientists are given the funding and support they deserve,” Mrs Skinner said.

Mr Wills said every dollar invested in medical research funding meant thousands saved by keeping people out of hospitals and GP surgeries.

“Rather than making funding cuts, we should be looking at increasing the medical research budget. It’s critically important and in everyone’s best interests,” he said.

In the past 12 months alone, NSW researchers have:

- Developed a solution to store hearts used in transplantation for 12 to 13 hours rather than the previous four hours, meaning they will be able to be flown all over the country and save thousand more lives. About to start human trials. (Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute)
- Discovered how the tails on bacteria move, something scientists have been trying to find an answer to since 1970. It will help researchers design a new class of more effective anti-bacterial drugs. (Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute)
- Shown for the first time in mice that nasal stem cells injected into the inner ear have the potential to reverse or restore hearing during early onset sensorineural hearing loss. (Garvan Institute)

The Garvan covers a number of broad areas of research – in diabetes, cancer, immunology, neuroscience and bone. During the visit Mr O’Farrell and Mrs Skinner were shown some of the Garvan’s current research projects in cancer and diabetes, including a project which is finding ways of targeting specific abnormalities in specific breast cancer tumours and a study into insulin resistance in the Diabetes and Obesity Program.

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