

Boost for children's medical research:

The Children's Medical Research Institute receives a \$10 million funding boost, the first of its kind in its 55-year history.

By Motherpedia

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The Federal Government yesterday committed \$10 million, to match a \$20 million investment from the NSW Government, to the Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) based at Westmead Children's Hospital in Sydney.

The contribution will allow CMRI to complete phase one of its current redevelopment which involves expanding laboratory space that is already at capacity, and increasing the number of research scientists from the current level of 120 to 400, as well as additional support staff.

The CMRI was established 55 years ago and has never previously received Federal Government funding for bricks and mortar, according to the institute's Director, Professor Roger Reddel.

"CMRI is one of Australia's leading medical research institutions and has made a significant contribution to medical research over our 55 year history.

"This has included pioneering work on microsurgical techniques which improved the survival rate of premature babies, the discovery of a gene that can cause cleft lip and palate and discovering and currently development of new class of drugs for children with epilepsy, cancer and kidney disease."

1 in 20 children in Australia is born with a birth defect of a genetic disease and there are more than 6,000 different genetic diseases. 1.5 million Australian children have a long-term health condition. Barring accidents, genetic diseases are the leading cause of death in children aged 0-4 years and cancer is the leading cause of death in children aged 4-14 years.

Professor Reddel said CMRI is also working to identify the molecular components of an enzyme that 85% of cancers depend on for their growth.

“If this work is successful its impact on the treatment of all cancers – not just those that affect children – would be far-reaching.”

The best known activity of the CMRI is the annual Jeans for Genes Day which celebrated its 20th anniversary earlier this month.

Professor Reddel said Jeans for Genes raises around \$3 million each to help fund research and buy equipment.

“The basic need for a building adequate to the modern requirements of science and medical research would not be possible without this \$10 million grant from the government and we warmly welcome the commitment we have received today,” he said