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Westmead's CMRI tower brings new cures

By Vanessa Watson
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Professor Roger Reddel and Dr Hilda Pickett. Picture: Anna Warr.

The capacity of Westmead's Children's Medical Research Institute to tackle some of the worst diseases has been almost doubled with a new extension officially opened by Mike Baird on Friday.

Brand new laboratories inside the new seven-storey tower extension will accommodate up to 120 extra scientists and researchers, with four new research groups formed at the Hawkesbury Road facility.

Inside the sparkling new labs sits brand new equipment ready for life-saving research, including microscopes and mass spectrometry machines for the study of proteins inside cells.

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CMRI director Roger Reddel said the extension would attract more of the “best and brightest” medical minds from around the world to western Sydney and cement Westmead as a leading site of health, medical research and education.



CMRI director Professor Roger Reddel and scientist Dr Hilda Pickett. Picture: Vanessa Watson.

“It will be more hands on deck, so we can turn discoveries into treatments much faster,” Professor Reddel said.

“The discoveries that are made here won’t stop at national borders, they will help children all over the world. At the local level, the fact that we are located here means that we are providing jobs and a higher degree of research training opportunities for people who live here.”

More than 300 new jobs and 100 research training positions have been created through the development.

CMRI scientists focus on four areas of research: cancer; embryo development and birth defects; nerve cell signalling and diseases like epilepsy; and gene therapy.

Scientist Dr Hilda Pickett, a leader of the CMRI's recently established telomere length regulation research group, which studies potential advances in cancer treatments, said the focus was on "the most aggressive types of cancer", including bone and brain cancer.

"It's really exciting at the moment, we've got a lot of people working on telomere biology," Dr Pickett said.

Communications manager Lorel Colgin said the extension was the biggest boost to the CMRI in 20 years, since it relocated from Camperdown.

"We've got some really exciting stuff in the pre-clinical stage," Ms Colgin said. "We've probably got the biggest concentration of people studying telomeres in the world."

The extension was funded with \$20 million from the state government, \$1.1 million from philanthropic donations and about \$2 million worth of equipment from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation.

GALLERY: [CMRI brings new cures](#), pictures by Anna Warr