



**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP**  
**Minister for Health and Ageing**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**\$22m Boost to Australians fighting cancer**

Cancer treatment and prevention continues to get top priority from the Gillard Government, following two announcements today totalling \$22.6 million for high-priority cancer research projects and to extend clinical trials.

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, explained the Government will invest \$7.8 million, with funding partners contributing more than \$3 million, to fund 27 new cancer research projects. In addition, the Government will also provide \$11.3 for 13 National Cancer Trials Groups and to expand the Regional Trials Networks across 10 regional hospitals.

“We have some of the world’s best cancer researchers and research institutes, and have made big inroads into treating the disease,” Ms Roxon said.

“This funding will support important research to improve the effectiveness of cancer treatment and prevention for the benefit of all Australians.”

The 27 new cancer research projects, underway through Cancer Australia’s Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme, include innovative joint ventures with organisations such as *beyondblue*, the Prostate Council of Australia, National Breast Cancer Foundation, Leukaemia Foundation, CanTeen and more.

Ms Roxon also explained that the Government’s investment in the ten regional cancer centres will make it easier for people who live in regional centres to take part in and benefit from these cancer trials groups—without having to travel to metropolitan centres.

“More than a third of all Australians live outside major cities, so that’s why the Gillard Government has made regional cancer treatment and prevention a focus.”

“These clinical trials offer the chance to test the effectiveness of new cancer treatments, diagnostic tests and preventive interventions.”

Today’s investment backs up the more than \$2 billion the Gillard Government is already investing to build a world-class cancer care system by delivering medicines, screening and research, as well as bricks and mortar and skilled professionals.

Further details of successful grant applications in the 2010 round of Cancer Australia’s Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme can be found on the Cancer Australia website – [www.canceraustralia.gov.au](http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au)

**For more information, contact Ms Roxon’s Office: (02) 6277 7220**

## **Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research: successful grant applications:**

### **Prostate cancer: Associate Professor Jeremy Millar (Alfred Hospital) and co-funded by the Prostate Cancer Foundation**

Tests to be carried out into whether some men with early prostate cancer can be safely watched—with the effect of delaying immediate treatment, or avoiding it altogether. This study, led by Associate Professor Jeremy Millar of the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, is co-funded by the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and Cancer Australia.

The study has the potential to impact internationally on the way treatment is delivered by identifying those men with early prostate cancer who will never need treatment, as well as those that do need treatment—through the use of early warning signs of progression.

### **Breast and ovarian cancer: Dr Stuart McGregor Queensland Institute for Medical Research and co-funded by the National Breast Cancer Foundation**

Development of a new approach to detecting changes in the DNA sequence of breast and ovarian tissue that could lead to cancer—in a project co-funded by the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Cancer Australia and led by Dr Stuart McGregor, of the Queensland Institute for Medical Research in Brisbane. If successful, this approach will lead to a better understanding of the role specific DNA changes play in causing breast and ovarian cancer, as well as their impact on cancer outcomes.

### **Leukaemia: Professor Angel Lopez (SA Pathology) and co-funded by the Leukaemia Foundation**

A study of leukaemic stem cells from myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) and acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) patients—seeking to understand what makes them malignant. The study is co-funded by the Leukaemia Foundation and Cancer Australia, and led by Professor Angel Lopez of SA Pathology in Adelaide. His studies will focus on a molecule called CD123 which is found on the surface of these stem cells. It offers an opportunity to target leukaemic stem cells with new antibody- and cell-based therapies. His long-term aim is to control or eradicate the leukaemic stem cells in MDS and AML for curative purposes.

### **Psychosocial needs of adolescents and young adults with cancer: Professor Susan Sawyer (Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne) and co-funded by *beyondblue* and CanTeen**

A project that will examine how we are meeting the psychosocial needs of adolescents and young adults with cancer. It is co-funded by *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, CanTeen and Cancer Australia, and led by Professor Susan Sawyer of the Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital and Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne. The objective of the project is to establish baseline evidence of the appropriateness of health care services in Australia for meeting the psychosocial and broader support and information needs of young people with cancer and their families.

### **Breast cancer and prostate cancer: Dr Gillian Mitchell (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre) and co-funded by Cancer Council Tasmania**

A study that will examine how mutations in the genes associated with familial breast cancer (BRCA1 and BRCA2) affect the risk of prostate cancer in men within families having these mutations. The study is co-funded by Cancer Council Tasmania and Cancer Australia, and is led by Dr Gillian Mitchell of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne. Another key aim of this study is to provide an evidence base

for research into new markers for screening, and prognostic biomarkers to predict clinical outcome of prostate cancer.

### **Colorectal cancer: Professor Robyn Ward' (UNSW) and co-funded by Cancer Council New South Wales**

Further research by Professor Robyn Ward's group at the University of New South Wales in Sydney after earlier studies showed that dietary saturated fatty acids can cause a novel chemical modification of DNA. In a project funded by Cancer Council New South Wales and supported by Cancer Australia, Professor Ward's group will investigate the importance of this new modification to colorectal cancer by looking for this modification in DNA isolated from patient samples. If successful, this study will lead to a new understanding of how dietary fatty acids may contribute to colorectal cancer..

### **Lung cancer: Dr Jeremy Henson (Children's Medical Research Institute) and co-funded by Cure Cancer Australia Foundation.**

A study to determine if lung cancer patients might benefit from therapies targeted towards a molecule specifically associated with the ends of DNA in cancer cells, and to develop a test to detect this molecule in lung cancer cells. The Cure Cancer Australia Foundation and Cancer Australia will co-fund a young researcher, Dr Jeremy Henson from the Children's Medical Research Institute in Sydney, in this research.

### **Support for clinical trials**

The 13 national cancer trials groups are:

- Australasian Gastro-Intestinal Trials Group
- Australasian Leukaemia and Lymphoma Group
- Australasian Lung Cancer Trials Group
- Australia and New Zealand Melanoma Trials Group
- Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group
- Australian and New Zealand Children's Haematology Oncology Group
- Australian and New Zealand Urogenital and Prostate Cancer Trials Group
- Australian New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group
- Australasian Sarcoma Study Group
- Cooperative Trials Group for Neuro-Oncology
- Primary Care Collaborative Cancer Clinical Trials Group
- Psycho-Oncology Co-operative Research Group
- Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group.

### **Support for regional hospitals and centres to conduct cancer clinical trials**

The ten regional hospitals to be involved are:

- Ballarat Oncology and Haematology Services
- Cairns Cancer Centre
- Royal Darwin Hospital
- Launceston General Hospital
- Tweed Heads Hospital.
- Bendigo Health Care Group (previous participant)
- Border Medical Oncology Research (Wodonga) (previous participant)
- North Coast Cancer Institutes at Coffs Harbour Health Campus and Port (previous participant)
- Macquarie Base Hospital (previous participant)
- Royal Hobart Hospital (previous participant).