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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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NHMRC DIRECTS \$106M TO NSW MEDICAL RESEARCH

NSW health and medical researchers have received more than \$106 million in funding from the latest round of National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) project grants.

I am pleased to announce these 196 grants, which are a substantial part of \$357 million funded nationally.

I commend the researchers who have been awarded grants. The high calibre of medical research in this country means that successful applicants are of an outstanding level, carrying out research that will benefit the health of Australians in both the long and short term.

Funded research in NSW investigates novel ways of preventing and improving health conditions including asthma, whooping cough, Golden Staph and smoking-related problems.

The NSW projects include:

- **Antibiotics and asthma:** Prof Peter Gibson, University of Newcastle, receives \$2.9 million to test the efficacy and safety of the addition of a low-dose antibiotic to maintenance-asthma therapy in a large-scale multicentre study.
- **Early vaccination for whooping cough:** Prof Peter McIntyre, University of Sydney, receives \$1.4 million to study the safety and effectiveness of vaccinating for whooping cough at birth and at six weeks, in comparison to the current practice of waiting until two months.
- **New hope for premature babies:** Prof William Tarnow-Mordi, University of Sydney, receives \$1.3 million to determine if giving premature babies under 30 weeks more placental blood at birth reduces death and disability. These premature babies are currently 100 times more likely than full-term babies to die or have a major disability.
- **Using DNA to stop bacteria:** Neville Firth, University of Sydney, has been awarded \$294,500 to segregate DNA in Golden Staph, to find ways to interfere with the growth of the treatment-resistant bacteria.
- **QUIT in general practice:** Prof Nicholas Zwar, University of NSW, has been awarded \$1.1 million to develop a project involving practice nurses, GPs and Quitline working in partnership to provide a flexible support program for people seeking to stop smoking. Smoking is still the most common cause of preventable death and illness in Australia.

- **Are you too tired to drive?** Prof Ann Williamson, University of NSW, receives \$427,000 to conduct research into a driver's ability to assess their fatigue level and what then motivates them to stop driving.
- **Playgrounds – a simple intervention for childhood obesity:** Prof Anita Bundy, University of Sydney, receives \$486,250 to investigate whether the increasing rates of childhood obesity are related to a decrease in outdoor play because parents think it is too risky. A trial will put play high on the priority list of teachers and parents and modify the playground environment to increase activity.
- **Strengthening primary health to reduce sexually transmitted infection in remote Aboriginal communities:** Prof John Kaldor, University of NSW, receives \$1.74 million for a clinical trial testing best practice aimed at reducing the high rates of sexually transmitted infection in remote Aboriginal communities. The trial will take place in 21 communities.

More than 28 per cent of applications from NSW researchers were funded, slightly above the national average.

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