



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Multimillion dollar funding for research into the 'Australian cancer'**

A national team of researchers led by University of Sydney Professor Rick Kefford has been awarded a \$12.065 million National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Program Grant to continue its world-class research into the causes and treatments of melanoma.

"This is the largest single allocation of peer-reviewed funding committed by the Federal Government for research into the "Australian cancer", Professor Rick Kefford said:

"We are immensely proud to have been awarded this confidence vote - it allows us to carry the struggle forward to assist melanoma patients and their families."

The national investigation team which has been working collaboratively since 2006 includes scientists and researchers from the Westmead Millennium Institute, the Mater Hospital at North Sydney, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown, and the Queensland Institute for Medical Research.

The team works closely with the Melanoma Institute of Australia (MIA) the world's largest clinical service dedicated to the treatment of melanoma, treating more than 1,500 new melanoma patients annually. It maintains a repository of clinical data on melanoma and a large melanoma tissue bank.

"We are now seeing the outcome of years of painstaking research" says Professor Kefford.

"We are unlocking the molecular vulnerabilities of melanoma to targeted drug attack, and major advances have been seen using this strategy in the past 12 months, many of them at MIA and its associated hospitals."

In order to study the causes of melanoma the team has recruited large numbers of people from the community, as well as people with a strong family history of melanoma. It aims to develop a scientific basis for improved management of individuals at high risk for development and progression of melanoma.

At the same time the team aims to improve the treatment of patients with early and disseminated melanoma.

"This is an era of rapid change in the prospects of successfully treating this dangerous cancer and we are investigating the individualization of targeted treatments," Professor Kefford says.

Melanoma is the third most common cancer in Australian men and women and has a disproportionately heavy impact on productive years of life because it is the commonest cause of cancer death in younger adults.

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