

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister for Women
Member for Newcastle



Friday 19th March 2010

HMRI GETS APPROVAL TO BUILD NEW HOME

The Hunter Medical Research Institute's (HMRI) plans for a state-of-the-art building have been approved by the NSW Government.

Minister for Science and Medical Research and Minister for the Hunter, Jodi McKay, joined Federal Member for Charlton, Greg Combet, Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, and Member for Wallsend, Sonia Hornery, to announce the approval.

Ms McKay said the new \$90 million building will provide HMRI with a modern facility to house 400 of the Hunter's 770 medical researchers.

"The HMRI is one of the State's leading medical research Institutes and this approval realises a 10 year vision that will help increase collaboration between researchers," Ms McKay said.

"The new building will also enable the Institute to attract leading researchers and health specialists to the Hunter, resulting in the best health care for the Hunter.

"This approval is exciting news for the HMRI and the Hunter and I am pleased the NSW Government is supporting the project with \$31 million.

"The NSW Government has committed \$23 million towards the new building as well as providing land at Rankin Park's health campus worth \$8 million."

In addition to this the Rudd Labor Government has invested more than \$48 million.

Member for Charlton, Greg Combet said the provision of quality research facilities not only attracts the best researchers to an institute but also attracts the best clinicians to the health service. This will help to ensure that the people of the Hunter have access to the best possible health care.

"The Federal Government is proud to invest in this world-class medical research centre. The facility also has the potential to expand the local biotechnology industry for the commercialisation of research, further adding to the economy of the region."

Hunter Medical Research Institute Director Professor Maree Gleeson said the approval was good news for the Institute and would benefit the whole community.

"Hunter researchers are substantial contributors to the global research effort into illnesses such as cancer, swine flu, asthma and premature birth," Professor Gleeson said.

"The Building will foster more collaboration between medical and clinical researchers from the University of Newcastle and Hunter New England Health, and as a result, more discoveries."

Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson MP, said with the Rudd Government having contributed \$48.5 million in funding towards the HMRI, it was pleasing to see that the contribution and cooperation of all key stakeholders has seen this vision become a reality.

Ms McKay said construction of the new building had the potential to create around 280 construction jobs, which was great news for the region.

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“The new building will deliver 16,000 square metres of floor space including new laboratory and office spaces, staff facilities, lecture theatres and car parking,” Ms McKay said.

“The approval will deliver important new facilities to the HMRI as well as support jobs in the region.

“The Hunter Medical Research Institute is identified in the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy as a specialist centre with a vital economic and employment role for the region.”

Notes:

As a result of public exhibition and assessment by the Department of Planning, a number of amendments were made to the proposal.

In order to mitigate any impacts on native vegetation, the proponent is required to offset impacts on the vulnerable plant species on site, and also to undertake a translocation program for these plants in consultation with the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

Whilst providing 422 parking spaces as part of the proposal, the proponent will also have to implement a sustainable travel plan to promote public transport options, consider measures to improve transport services and allocate parking equitably.

Minor modifications to the façade of the building, including additional colours and articulation of building components, also sought an improved design outcome and one that better blends the building into its bushland setting.

In total the Department of Planning has imposed 41 conditions of approval to ensure the proposal will achieve acceptable environmental and amenity outcomes, whilst delivering valuable employment and economic gains within this regional health and research precinct.