

MEDIA RELEASE

16 March 2010

UNIQUE IN AUSTRALIA, NEW CANCER GENOMICS CENTRE OPENS IN MELBOURNE

This morning the Cabinet Secretary of the Parliament of Victoria, Mr Tony Lupton, opened the *ACRF Victorian Centre for Functional Genomics (VCFG) in Cancer* at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Support for this cutting-edge resource is centred on \$2.5 million in funding from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF).

The ACRF is dedicated to helping find a cure for cancer through the continued support of world-class research in Australia. Fundamental to their vision is the leveraging of funding and resources for the benefit of the wider Australian research community. In supporting the *VCFG in Cancer*, the ACRF is building on initial funding from the Victorian Department for Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, the Australasian Microarray Associated Technologies Association and the Victorian Cancer Agency, and the support ensures Australia remains at the forefront of global cancer research.

The *VCFG in Cancer* is located at Peter Mac, but this twenty-first century technology is distinguished by the fact that it can be accessed by biomedical researchers from all over Australia. This openness makes the *VCFG in Cancer* unique; emblematic of Victoria's proudly interdependent and collaborative research environment.

'The *VCFG in Cancer* enables all Australian researchers to access cutting-edge resources to assess the role of any human gene in a wide variety of diseases, particularly cancer' said Dr Kaylene Simpson, Manager of the Centre. 'This offers enormous potential for advancing the discovery of novel factors in cancer development or identification of new therapeutic targets'.

The *VCFG in Cancer* focuses on the technology of RNA interference (RNAi) for which the Nobel Prize was awarded in 2006 for a fundamental discovery in the late 1990s. RNAi allows researchers to analyse the function of each gene in the human or mouse genome by knocking down their expression levels and then developing ways to look at the outcomes. 'With this generous ACRF funding, Australian researchers have the opportunity to be at the forefront of discovering new mechanisms underpinning cancer and its treatment' Dr Simpson said.

Speaking from a very personal viewpoint, former Peter Mac patient Charles Day, 38, described the benefits the *VCFG in Cancer* will provide for patients. As the leader of Melbourne Ventures, the technology commercialisation company of the University of Melbourne, Charles knows the long process needed to take new cancer therapies from concept to production and medicinal use.

Australian Cancer Research Foundation
ABN 27 076 461 360 ACN 002 774 727 CFN 13585

GPO Box 9989, Sydney NSW 2001
Suite 409, The Strand Arcade, 412 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: 61 2 9223 7833 Facsimile: 61 2 9223 1800 Email: info@acrff.com.au Web: www.acrff.com.au

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Having spent much of his working life in medical science, working with researchers to ensure their discoveries are commercialised and clinically applied, the last thing Charles expected was to be told that he had cancer. Suddenly, his very survival depended on applying the outcomes of cancer research.

'As a cancer patient who has a working knowledge of science, I fully appreciated the expertise and knowledge that went into the safe delivery of all my therapies' Charles said. 'The establishment of new centres such the *ACRF VCFG in Cancer*, reassures me that teams of people are working together to further unravel the complexities of cancer.'

For more information contact:
Lucas Knight (ACRF)
0425 232 342 or 02 9223 7833
lknight@acrif.com.au

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