The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

Minister for Aged Care
Minister for Indigenous Health
Member for Hasluck

MEDIA RELEASE

22 May 2017

**Australia provides financial support to global efforts to fight infectious diseases**

Australia will be providing $2 million to support international efforts to develop vaccines to fight emerging infectious diseases, the Federal Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health, Ken Wyatt, announced at a G20 meeting of Health Ministers in Germany.

Speaking at the conclusion of a Health Simulation Exercise at the meeting over the weekend, Minister Wyatt said the money will be provided to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).

“This new international initiative will address critical research and development gaps for pandemic preparedness and global health security,” he said.

“Australia’s contribution to CEPI will help stimulate the development of vaccines to fight against emerging infectious diseases with epidemic potential.

“It is better to be prepared, rather than react to epidemics. Australia’s support for CEPI will work to fuel an ‘end-to-end’ approach to vaccine development, with vaccine development platforms ready for deployment before the epidemic begins,” Minister Wyatt said.

“This investment complements Australia’s commitment to global health and will build global innovative partnerships and create opportunities for global research collaboration.”

Minister Wyatt said one of the main themes of the G20 Health Ministers’ Meeting was the emergence, early identification and containment of novel infectious diseases that could lead to a pandemic.

“Over the past two days in Berlin I have participated in a Health Emergency Exercise in which the Director General of the World Health Organisation, Dr Margaret Chan, was involved, designed to emphasise the importance of complying with the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR).
“The IHR focuses on sharing outbreak information early and encouraging collaboration and communication throughout the global community to support effective and rapid responses to public health events.

“The Exercise simulated the emergence and spread of a novel virus in a fictitious, low income country, called Anycountry, whose health system becomes rapidly overwhelmed by an unknown pathogen,” Minister Wyatt said.

“In the Exercise Anycountry’s health system was rapidly being overwhelmed as the epidemic unfolds. There are rising case numbers and an increase in international media interest and political pressure to take action. Imported cases to G20 countries are being confirmed and the World Health Organization (WHO) declares a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

“This Exercise was extremely valuable as the world is continually faced with the need to prevent the spread of new diseases, Ebola being one of the most recent,” Minister Wyatt said.

“The $2 million investment in the CEPI comes from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and will be provided over two years.

“This is in addition to Australia providing $6 million in 2015-16 for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.

“Australia is a strong advocate of the International Health Regulations and we will undergo an external assessment of our compliance with the IHR in November 2017,” he said.

Minister Wyatt said the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations is expected to provide Australian consortia with new opportunities to participate in international research projects focusing on major global health threats.

“Development of new vaccines against diseases of epidemic potential will be galvanized through the creation of an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic and civic organisations led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.”

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