



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

28 September 2005

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NHMRC funding for research into pandemic influenza

Funding for research into pandemic influenza is being fast-tracked by Australia's premier health and medical research body, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, announced today that the NHMRC's Research Committee had decided to set aside up to \$7.5 million to finance urgent research, including into pandemic influenza.

The NHMRC will make recommendations to Mr Abbott on specific research projects to be undertaken.

The NHMRC's recently-expanded Urgent Research Working Party will meet on 11 October 2005 to consider pandemic influenza research areas that were identified as priorities in the recent report of the National Influenza Pandemic Action Committee (NIPAC).

The Urgent Research Working Party will consider recent developments in Australian and international responses to bird flu and assess the best ways to tackle the emergence of the disease. The options will include short-term research projects, which could vary in length from several months up to one year.

"I applaud the NHMRC, already well-recognised for research to prepare for the threat of SARS, for this effort to boost urgent research into pandemic influenza, through the expanded membership of its Urgent Research Working Party," Mr Abbott said.

"The Working Party's activities are an important part of the whole-of-government planning and preparation for pandemic influenza now being undertaken by the Australian Government."

**Media contact: For more information call Mr Abbott's office on ph 02 6277 7220.
John Rogers (NHMRC) (02) 6289 9199**

Membership of NHMRC Urgent Research Working Party

CHAIR: Professor Tania Sorrell

Department of Infectious Diseases, Westmead Hospital, NSW

Professor Aileen Plant
Professor of International Health
Curtin University of Technology, WA

Professor Terry Nolan
School of Population Health
University of Melbourne, Victoria

Dr Moira Clay
Policy Advisor
Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Victoria

Professor John Horvath
Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Ageing

Dr Moira McKinnon
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