



Professor Alan Carmichael's address on  
Annual Research Australia Thank-you Day - DATE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2005

Dr Christine Bennett, Chief Executive Officer, Research Australia, Professor Daryl Le Grew, Vice Chancellor, University of Tasmania and University colleagues, Dr Dan Norton, Chair and Members of the Board of the Menzies Research Institute and colleagues from Menzies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen welcome, perhaps most importantly welcome to all our young people who represent those who are the focus of this Thank You Day. The Theme, as you know, is Research today for a better future for our children.

It is a great pleasure for me on behalf of the Faculty of Health Science, to co host this particular Thank You morning tea for Research Australia. Health and Medical Research is of fundamental importance to us all. It results in prevention of illness, promotion of health and wellbeing, and interventions to prevent and treat illness and disease. Health and medical research and evaluation ensures we provide quality and safe health services and it informs our teaching and practice by testing and producing the best evidence available.

For all these general reasons, health and medical research is important in Tasmania. But it is not only for the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians. Because of the unique features of Tasmania and the research environment here, we are able to contribute to health and wellbeing of people elsewhere in Australia and worldwide. Linking with our focus on a better future for children, the Menzies work on safe sleeping position to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is a clear example of world wide implications of Tasmanian research.

There are a number of exciting developments in Tasmania which will enhance our health and medical research effort. The creation of the Menzies Research

Institute from the earlier Menzies Centre for Population Health Research will be enhanced by the incorporation of a number of key strategic research groups from the Faculty of Health Science and other sections of the University. This will increase the critical mass of researchers and infrastructure which are essential for successful research in the current national and international climate which is increasingly competitive, and requiring interdisciplinary collaboration. These collaborations will be immensely strengthened by the coming together of these researchers, the School of Medicine and other Faculty of Health Science groupings in a major new building. This will provide for the expansion which is necessary for the future and for a number of research programs which are currently inhibited by lack of space. Just as importantly physical colocation will enhance the multi disciplinary collaboration which is necessary for future research and for which Tasmania is uniquely suited.

The bringing together of basic biomedical science research with clinical and epidemiological research is the way of the future. There is need to link all these aspects together to gain a complete understanding of factors which influence health and wellbeing in our population. This is particularly well illustrated in considering health, growth and development of children where the old debate of whether nature or nurture is the predominant determinant for health or illness has been replaced by the modern understanding that nature and nurture interact. Genetic and biological characteristics of children interact and are influenced by the physical, emotional and social environment in which they are brought up. The breadth of research which will be possible within our newly configured research structures will enable us to provide important contributions to health and wellbeing not only of children but of older people, because we can bring a number of these aspects together and in addition the characteristics of and knowledge about the Tasmanian population provide a unique base for understanding these interconnections and their outcomes.

This morning is a opportunity to thank our researchers and their supporters. Many of you who represent those supporters, whether through volunteering, making donations or fundraising. Our major fundraising bodies and foundations make this work possible, but as well as thanking you I've to thank another group who provide the fundamental basis for research in

Tasmania and contribute to its local and general effects. These are the people (including children) who participate in our studies. This is always at a minimum with some inconvenience, occasionally involving unpleasant procedures and is often without the expectation of any direct benefit from the research to themselves. It is your contribution to society in this way which provides us with a unique opportunity in Tasmania and for this we thank you and we continue to rely on the generosity of the Tasmanian community for this in future.

I would now like to introduce Professor Anne-Louise Ponsonby from the Menzies Research Institute who will talk about a particular project which focuses on children's health and wellbeing and also illustrates the way collaborations are essential if research is to be undertaken and the outcomes (if successful) translated into practice in this case not only in the health sector but also in the indication section.