



NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA STATEMENT

**Minister for Women
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)
Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, Environment & Water**

Thursday, 12 July 2007

WORLD LEADING SCIENTISTS RELOCATE TO SYDNEY

STATE PLAN TARGET P1: Continue to increase business through making make NSW a more attractive place to do business

STATE PLAN TARGET S2: Reduce the number of potentially avoidable deaths for people under 75 to 150 per 100,000 population by 2016.

Minister for Science and Medical Research Verity Firth announces that the NSW Government has been successful at attracting three of the world's leading scientists to Sydney to build international research teams – with two of them having already started work.

Ms Firth said the NSW Life Science Research Awards is a new \$5 million 'brain gain' program designed to attract leading international researchers to the State.

"The three scientists relocating to NSW under the first round of these awards will be immune system expert Professor Wolfgang Weninger, cognition and brain sciences expert Professor John Hodges, and genomics expert Dr Ian Paulsen," said Ms Firth.

"These three scientists are recognised leaders in their fields of research, and their relocation to NSW will be a major scientific coup for this State.

"These first recipients of the NSW Life Science Awards will contribute greatly to NSW's international strengths in immunology, microbial genomics and understanding of diseases affecting the brain and long term memory."

Ms Firth said the NSW Government aims to boost the State's knowledge base and research capability by attracting top scientists and researchers from the US, Europe and Asia.

"Having world class life science researchers working in NSW will help attract more research talent to this State, contribute to the establishment and expansion of our research facilities, and add to the intellectual capital of NSW," said Ms Firth.

"The longer term aim is to see breakthrough research translated into economic, health, environmental and social benefits for NSW."

Professor Weninger will start work at the Centenary Institute in Sydney in June; Professor Paulsen will be based at Macquarie University from July; and Professor Hodges will be jointly hosted by the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute and the University of NSW from November.

“The NSW Life Science Research Awards builds on the success of the former BioFirst Awards, which were established by the NSW Government in 2001 and attracted 13 researchers back to NSW, as well as a further 39 people to take part in new research teams,” said Ms Firth.

“Between 2001 and 2006, the research groups resulting from the BioFirst Awards produced 62 published papers and leveraged \$6.7 million in research funding from the Commonwealth Government – a major achievement for NSW.

“We aim to build on the legacy of the BioFirst Awards through the NSW Life Science Research Awards.”

Applications for the 2nd round of Life Science Research Awards will be called later this month.

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BACKGROUND: 2007 LIFE SCIENCE RESEARCH AWARDS RECIPIENTS

- **Professor Wolfgang Weninger** – Professor Weninger researches the cues and messages that control the immune system as it functions to protect our bodies from disease and infection. He is currently with the Wistar Institute in Pennsylvania, a designated National Cancer Centre in the USA. A scientific paper prepared by Professor Weninger was recently published in the Journal of Science and then selected to appear in the 'Faculty of 1000', an online service featuring the top 1,000 research papers, with Professor Weninger's judged in the top one per cent.

Professor Weninger is based at the Centenary Institute in Sydney, and will work on developing improved therapies for cancer through investigation of the seek and destroy role that "killer T" cells can have in targeting cancer cells in tumours. Professor Weninger will aim to build a highly specialised research team to implement new technology known as "2-photon imaging", providing leading capabilities in the real time analysis and tracking of cells within living tissues.

- **Professor John Hodges** – Professor Hodges is from the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at Cambridge University in the UK. Professor Hodges has published over 300 original peer-reviewed papers, including 36 in the top rated neuroscience journal Brain. Overall, 30 of his papers have received more than 100 citations with 75 receiving over 50 citations each.

Professor Hodges is being jointly hosted by the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute and the University of NSW, and will direct his research to better understand the cognitive architecture and neural basis of long-term human memory. In particular, this will assist with the treatment, care and rehabilitation of dementia sufferers.

- **Dr Ian Paulsen** – Dr Paulsen is from the Institute for Genomic Research USA (TIGR), which first deciphered the complete gene sequence of a living organism, the bacterium *Haemophilus influenzae*. During his time at TIGR, Dr Paulsen has lead teams that have completed 10 further microbial genome sequencing projects. Over a period of 15 years Dr Paulsen has published more than 120 peer-reviewed papers and presented more than 100 invited talks or conference presentations. In 2003-04, he was named among the top 10 hottest scientists internationally, with six leading papers recognised for their high number of citations.

From 1 November Dr Paulsen will be based at Macquarie University, where his project goal will be to develop a complete systems biology approach to understanding gene function in microbial physiology and evolution. This has potential use for carbon sequestration and biological energy alternatives to combat global warming, for the rapid development of vaccines and diagnostics to assist in countering bioterrorism, and for the development of bio-monitoring tools for detecting pollutants and pathogens or agricultural pests.