



MEDIA STATEMENT

Verity Firth

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

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AUSTRALIA'S FIRST MS BRAIN BANK OPENS IN SYDNEY

State Plan Priority S2: Improved quality of life for people with chronic illness through improvements in health care

In an Australian first, a brain bank dedicated to the worldwide effort to find a cure for multiple sclerosis (MS) has opened in Sydney today.

Minister for Science and Medical Research, Verity Firth officially opened Australia's first brain bank, which will collect and store brain tissue for use by scientists around the world researching a cure for MS.

"This is about harnessing the best of our science and medical research resources, to give hope to the thousands of MS sufferers in Australia that we will continue to work hard to find a cure," Ms Firth said.

Ms Firth said the MS Brain Bank, based at the University of Sydney, will provide scientists and medical clinicians with a specialised library of the material they need to carry out MS research work.

"MS is the most common cause of chronic neurological disability in young adults, with more than 18,000 Australians diagnosed with the condition, of which over 70 per cent are women.

"The discovery of a cure would transform the lives of over 2.5 million people afflicted by MS around the world - that's why a dedicated facility for aiding research is vital."

MS occurs when myelin, a fatty substance which insulates nerve fibres, breaks down and is replaced by scar tissue affecting the flow of central nervous system messages and resulting in uncontrolled body functions.

The donated tissue samples taken from the brains or spinal cords of deceased MS sufferers will be stored at the MS Brain Bank to be studied by Australian and overseas researchers.

Ms Firth said Australian researchers already have access to brain banks for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and motor neuron disease. Now Sydney will have an equivalent facility to support MS research.

The NSW Government has provided \$500,000 to help MS Research Australia (MSRA) and the University of Sydney establish the \$1.3 million facility.

"This is an investment in the long term health of our community and hope for those who are suffering."

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