



# MEDIA STATEMENT

THE HON VERITY FIRTH MP

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

5 May 2008

## NSW TO RAMP UP FIGHT AGAINST AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST KILLER

*State Plan Priority S2: Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness through improvements in health care.*

The Lemna Government will partner with the Heart Foundation to strengthen research into cardiovascular disease – Australia's number one killer.

Minister for Science and Medical Research Verity Firth has announced that the NSW Government will invest \$1.5m to create a 'Cardiovascular Research Network' – a dedicated office that will link, co-ordinate and grow research activity in this field.

"The NSW Cardiovascular Research Network will bring together our best researchers," Ms Firth said.

"It will assist them to develop joint research projects and generate more research funding for their work.

"Over 20 universities and research institutions and 39 individual members are involved."

Today marks the beginning of National Heart Week. Cardiovascular disease kills one Australian every 10 minutes and claimed the lives of almost 46,000 Australians in 2006.

Of particular concern, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' deaths from cardiovascular disease are 2.6 times the rate of other Australians.

Cardiovascular disease also generates the largest health system costs of all diseases, accounting for \$7.6 billion per year, or 10.9% of total direct health expenditure.

An Access Economic study found that for every \$1 spent on cardiovascular research, the community reaps returns of up to \$8 in health savings.

The Heart Foundation has welcomed the NSW contribution, which will be matched with its own commitment of \$1.8 million and a further \$300,000 from network members to fund the initiative.

"We are delighted that our initial funding commitment to this project has been met by such a generous and positive response from the NSW Government," Heart Foundation CEO Tony Thirlwell said.

Ms Firth said the Lemna Government was pleased to support the dynamic and life-saving research effort in NSW.

"The Research Network will play an important role in guiding policy and improving treatment of heart disease for NSW patients," Ms Firth said.

"This investment is about promoting cutting edge research and, hopefully, saving lives."

**Media Contact: David Boyd 0404 944 550**

**QUICK FACTS ON CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE –**  
**AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST KILLER**

- Cardiovascular disease (stroke, heart and blood vessel disease) is the leading cause of death killing more Australians than any other disease group.
- Cardiovascular disease in Australia generates the largest health system costs of all diseases, accounting for \$7.6 billion, or 10.9 per cent of total direct health system costs.
- Cardiovascular disease kills one Australian every 10 minutes and in 2006 claimed the lives of almost 46,000 Australians (34 per cent of all deaths)
- The prevalence of cardiovascular disease in the Australian population has increased by 18.2 per cent over the past decade.
- In 2004-05, 18 per cent (approximately 3.5 million) of Australians reported having a long-term cardiovascular condition.
- 1.4 million Australians have long-term disabilities caused by cardiovascular disease. Stroke is the major cause of serious long-term disability in adults.
- Cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and plays a major role in contributing to the very significant disparity between the health status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Indigenous people aged 25 - 45 years are 15 times more likely to suffer from a fatal heart event than other Australians.
- Across all age groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are known to die from cardiovascular disease at 2.6 times the rate of other Australians.
- Cardiovascular disease can be largely prevented by not smoking, eating healthily, being physically active, having regular blood pressure and cholesterol checks, and maintaining a healthy weight.