

**REES APPOINTS NSW'S FIRST CHIEF SCIENTIST AND SCIENTIFIC ENGINEER**

23 October 2008

Premier Nathan Rees today announced the appointment of Professor Mary O'Kane as NSW's first Chief Scientist and Scientific Engineer to help stimulate innovation in the State.

Mr Rees said Professor O'Kane will work across all scientific disciplines and provide the NSW Government with important advice and analysis on important issues like public health, climate change and education," Mr Rees said.

"I have asked the NSW Chief Scientist to focus on the following priorities:

- Lift the NSW research effort – especially our existing areas of strength in smart technologies, energy and clinical research;
- Lead a discussion about how to get more maths and science (particularly physics) teachers in our schools;
- Develop a stronger relationship between government, universities, and business; and
- Advise the government on major public policy issues such as climate change, genetically modified foods and nanotechnology.

"In NSW, we want good science and we want it to link strongly to business.

"Professor O'Kane will consult widely with academia, industry and government to ensure scientific knowledge and research can be adapted and used to benefit NSW.

"I congratulate Professor O'Kane on her appointment to this challenging and important position which will play a key role in shaping NSW's innovative future.

"Professor O'Kane has had a distinguished career spanning science, academia, engineering, policy development and business and brings well-rounded and high-level skills and experience to this important position."

Minister for Science and Medical Research Tony Stewart said Professor O'Kane was an excellent choice for NSW's first Chief Scientist and Scientific Engineer.

"She has served on a range of high level committees including the Australian Research Council and the CSIRO Board and was a member of the panel for the Federal Government's recent Review of the National Innovation System," Mr Stewart said.

Mary O'Kane said she was honoured and delighted by the appointment.

"Science has a key role in turning our problems, including climate change, ageing, and the worldwide financial crisis, into opportunities," Professor O'Kane said.

"NSW has a great research base and great science and engineering centres. We must nurture and extend these. We must also make sure government and business work efficiently with scientists and engineers together to meet our challenges."

Through appointment of the Chief Scientist and Scientific Engineer, the Rees Government is finding new ways to ensure our home grown research effort translates into strong economic, health and environmental outcomes for the people of NSW.