



New \$12 million Bernie Banton Centre opens to fight asbestos related diseases
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Premier of NSW Nathan Rees today joined the Acting Governor Professor Marie Bashir and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to open the world's first stand-alone research facility dedicated to improving the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of asbestos related disease.

The Centre is named in honour of Australia's foremost campaigner in the fight to raise awareness about dust diseases Bernie Banton AM.

Mr Rees said up to 20,000 Australians are expected to be affected by asbestos related disease over the next 50 years.

"The new \$12 million Centre will be a world leader in the fight to develop better means of earlier diagnosis and treatment tailored to individual patients," Mr Rees said.

"The Centre will be operated by the Asbestos Diseases Research Foundation (ADRF) and is located in the Concord Hospital Research and Education Precinct.

"The research facility will be dedicated to searching for a cure for this terrible disease.

"The new state-of-the-art facility contains eight laboratories as well as education and meeting rooms."

Mr Rees said naming the new facility the Bernie Banton Centre was a fitting tribute to a remarkable man.

"Bernie was a champion," Mr Rees said.

"His courage and conviction continue to be an inspiration to us all.

"He was a determined fighter for justice for asbestos victims and their families despite the fact that he was suffering himself with the terrible asbestos-related disease, mesothelioma.

"The Bernie Banton Centre is a fitting monument and token of national gratitude for his personal sacrifice and contributions to the struggle to bring justice to those affected by asbestos-related disease."

Chair of the Asbestos Diseases Research Foundation and former Premier The Hon Bob Carr said asbestos related diseases were devastating not only for victims but for their families and carers.

"At the moment there is no cure for mesothelioma and the treatment options are very limited," Mr Carr said.

"The new Centre will give hope to sufferers, their families and the community."

Mr Carr also highlighted the Institute's important focus on education and prevention in the Asia Pacific region.

“I am delighted that after a two year global executive academic search we have been able to attract world-renowned thoracic oncologist Professor Nico van Zandwijk from The Netherlands to lead the new centre,” Mr Carr said.

The NSW Government has committed \$8.5 million to this project, including \$7 million from the Dust Diseases Board to help construct the facility in partnership with The University of Sydney and the ANZAC Research Institute.

The ground floor will be occupied by the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI) and the first floor by the ANZAC Research Institute, NSW’s fastest-growing medical research institute.

ANZAC Health & Medical Research Foundation Chair, Ms Felicity Barr welcomed the announcement.

“Having the two Institutes together will not only allow the efficient sharing of resources, but also boost the research capacity of NSW and the Concord Hospital research hub in particular,” Ms Barr said.