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## **Sod turned for \$46m research facility for leading Indigenous health institute**

Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Warren Snowdon and Northern Territory Minister for Health Kon Vatskalis have turned the 'first sod' in celebration of the Menzies School of Health Research new multi-million dollar building project.

The \$45.7 million project includes a new building and an upgrade to Menzies' existing facility at Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) and a new building on Charles Darwin University's (CDU) Casuarina campus in Darwin.

Architecture firm Hames Sharley has designed two impressive, modern and ecologically sound buildings that will deliver across both campuses 5,295m<sup>2</sup> of new space and refurbishment of its existing headquarters.

The new buildings will be constructed by Lahey Constructions and will create capacity for an additional 244 staff (a total of 446 staff); and a 200-person auditorium on the RDH campus to support Menzies' teaching and learning activities.

Menzies' Acting Director, Associate Professor Ross Andrews said new infrastructure will enable the institute to continue its vital medical research in world class facilities.

"By mid 2013, two modern and ecologically sound buildings will be completed that are truly iconic, flexible and functional. This project will secure Menzies' long-term, productive future, and pave the way for our researchers to continue to improve the health of Australians and those in our region."

Associate Professor Andrews said Menzies is expanding rapidly in response to the increased demand for rigorous, evidence-based input that helps shape policy and services in the areas of Indigenous and tropical health.

"This project will increase Menzies' capacity to be responsive to the needs and shared priorities, particularly of Indigenous Australians, disadvantaged populations and others living in Central and Northern Australia and the Asia-Pacific region" he said.

Clinical research capacity will be expanded, including a proposed new Clinical Research Unit, along with expansion of Menzies' major clinically-focused research divisions – child health, global and tropical health, wellbeing and preventable chronic diseases.

Associate Professor Andrews thanked the Australian Government, the Northern Territory Government and CDU, "We are indebted to the Australian Government, the Northern Territory Government and Charles Darwin University for sharing our vision and funding this project."

Staff are anticipated to move into the new buildings in late 2013.

### **Background**

Menzies School of Health Research is the national leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. It is the only medical research institute in the Northern Territory and the only one in Australia with a major focus on Indigenous health. Menzies has more than 300 staff working in over 60 communities in Central and Northern Australia, as well as developing countries in the region. Menzies is also a significant contributor to health education and research training. Menzies is largely funded through competitive research grants provided by the Australian Government's National Health and Medical Research Council, in addition to funding from the Northern Territory Government.

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