

## Prime Minister visits Medical Science 1

Staff and students at the Menzies Research Institute welcomed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the architecturally-stunning \$58 million Medical Science 1 (MS1) building in March.

Professor Daryl Le Grew, together with Menzies' Director, Professor Simon Foote and Faculty of Health Science Dean, Professor Allan Carmichael personally toured Mr Rudd and a number of Federal Labor politicians around the new building. The tour included the School of Medicine teaching labs and Menzies' research laboratory.

Mr Rudd was shown the preliminary plans for Medical Science 2 and met with a number of Menzies' researchers and students to discuss their latest research work.

Professor Simon Foote informed Mr Rudd that Menzies was strongly committed to building capacity in medical research in Tasmania for the benefit of all.

"There is no doubt that having facilities for researchers such as those offered by the new building will help deliver that commitment and allow research to be undertaken at the highest level," Professor Foote said.



UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Daryl Le Grew and Federal member for Franklin, Julie Collins with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd

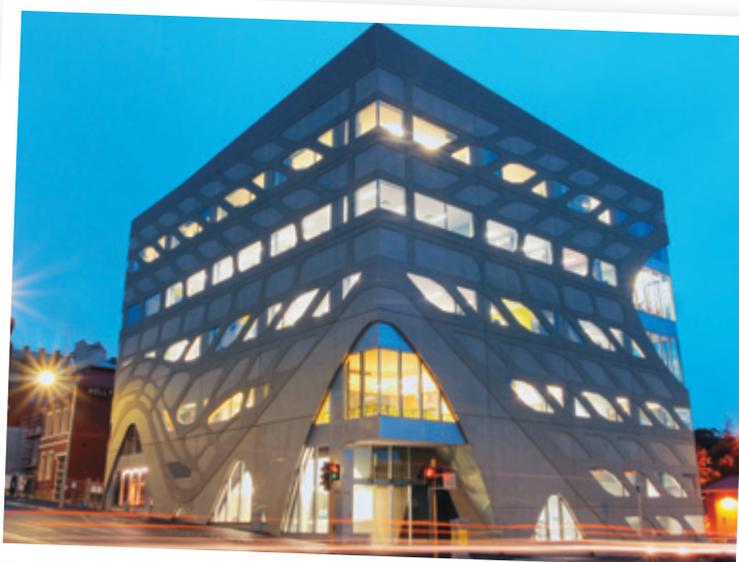
"Over the past two decades Tasmanians have been able to see the benefits of having a world-class institute such as Menzies operating in the state."

MS1 is the first stage of the new UTAS Medical Science Precinct. MS1 will soon be augmented by stage two of the development, which will see the \$90 million Medical Science 2 building erected by the end of 2012.

Along with commitment from UTAS, both developments would not have been possible without the support and financial contribution of the Australian Government, the State Government and the US-based Atlantic Philanthropies.

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Medical Science 1 at night

# Director's message



Professor Simon Foote

Welcome to the winter edition of the Menzies Research Institute's supporter newsletter, *The Bulletin*.

In this edition, we bring you our latest news including our front page story on Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's recent tour of Medical Science 1 and an update on our international work on non-communicable diseases in Vietnam. We also track the progress of our building expansion project.

We are grateful for the efforts of community organisations that have made Menzies the beneficiary of their fundraising efforts. We have highlighted some of these outstanding fundraising efforts in this edition (details page 6).

Finally, don't forget to save the date for our annual fundraising event, the *Art of Christmas*, which will be held at the Long Gallery Salamanca, in October.

I look forward to seeing many of you there.

*Foote*

## Healthy lifestyle linked to educational achievement

Menzies' researchers have shown how a person's education level and that of their parents predicts a healthy lifestyle.

Menzies' Research Fellow, Dr Seana Gall says the important finding they established, in relation to a person's own healthy lifestyle, was that the effect of a parent's education could be overcome by a person's own educational achievements.

"We found it was really about what a person achieved, rather than any long lasting effect of their parents. So we think it's quite a positive story in that it's about where you end up and not where you've come from," Dr Gall said.

People achieving a higher level of education than their parents were more likely to adopt a healthy lifestyle suggesting that population-wide improvements in education may be important for health.

This research was novel because it provides some of the only data from Australia on these types of inequalities and it focused on younger people, while most other studies have included older people.

"Social and economic circumstances change greatly over time and between countries, so we need to keep examining whether these types of inequalities exist," Dr Gall said.

Although the study included people from all around Australia, the results might be particularly important for Tasmania.

"The recent National Health Survey showed Tasmanians have more unhealthy behaviours than people in other states, particularly in terms of smoking and being overweight" Dr Gall said.



Dr Seana Gall

"We also know that Tasmania has one of the lowest school retention rates in Australia. Our results suggest that if we improve school retention we might also see improvements in the health of Tasmanians in years to come."

The investigation, which is part of the Childhood Determinants of Adult Health (CDAH) study, included over 2000 young Australians aged 26 to 36 years from around Australia. The study examined key health behaviours including smoking, diet, physical activity, alcohol consumption and weight.

Funding bodies supporting this study include: the National Health and Medical Research Council, the National Heart Foundation of Australia, Tasmanian Community Fund and Veolia Environmental Services.

## the Art of Christmas

**Art of Christmas 2010**

**Thursday 28 October  
6pm – 8pm**

**The Long Gallery, Salamanca**

Each year a selection of talented Tasmanian artists donate their unique artwork to Menzies to raise funds for medical research. The artwork is auctioned and sold at the *Art of Christmas* cocktail event held in October/November each year. Please mark the date in your diary.

# Menzies helps out in Vietnam

Menzies' researchers have been working for a number of years in Vietnam, in collaboration with Vietnamese locals to improve health outcomes in non-communicable diseases.

A non-communicable disease (NCD) is a disease which is not infectious.

Associate Professor Leigh Blizzard leads a team of researchers developing a national system for the collation of data on the incidence and prevalence of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer in Vietnam.

The project titled *National NCD Surveillance System* began in 2006 and will conclude at the end of this year. In addition to the collation of data, researchers hope to develop national strategies to prevent and manage NCD by implementing healthy lifestyle interventions and monitoring clinical outcomes of NCD management.

A fully equipped office has been established in Hanoi and qualified staff appointed. Considerable training has taken place to develop and strengthen staff skills in project management, survey methodology, information systems, health promotion, and the planning and

evaluation of health-related interventions. Using World Health Organization (WHO) protocols, eight provinces from Hanoi to Can Tho have been included and 12,335 individuals surveyed to date.

The project has been instrumental in establishing a national NCD prevention and control plan by developing: national targets for hypertension and diabetes; an implementation plan for early detection and management; policy on the financial obligations of government and private

insurance; treatment guidelines for hypertension and diabetes; a system of maintaining health records for individuals; and guidelines for the duties of local health collaborators. Protocols have also been developed for an action plan for hospital staff training, and evaluating hospital-based reporting.

Currently underway are demonstration projects to modify knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to NCD risk

factors, and an investigation into clinical pathways in the community-based care of individuals with chronic disease.

In the next phase, Menzies' researchers plan to improve hospital-based information systems by developing guidelines on the structure and specialised staffing of hospital record departments, and upgrading computer equipment and software systems.

Left: Associate Professor Leigh Blizzard with local health professionals



Above: A community-based healthcare program in Vietnam

## Thank you to our valued supporters

Thank you to all our donors for your ongoing financial support and commitment to Menzies.

Listed below are *new* individual and community supporters of Menzies for February – April 2010:

### Individual donors

Anonymous (6)  
Mr & Mrs Howard Bye  
Mrs Freddie Crook  
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Mrs Dorothy Hibbard  
Ms Di Hodel  
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Miss Dorothy Price  
Mr Geoff Rodman  
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Dr J Tudehope  
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### Community supporters

Gregory Patrick & Marie Dolores Farrell Foundation  
Lions Club of West Tamar Inc.  
Roches Beach CWA  
U3A Clarence Inc.

*Listed below are our Everyday Angels – our monthly supporters who make regular gifts to Menzies.*

### Everyday angels

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Mr Tim Albion  
Mr Bill Avery  
Mrs Pamela Blunt  
Dr David Boadle  
Dr Catherine Bulman  
Ms June Butler  
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Mr & Mrs Walter and Robin Verth  
Mrs Anne Warren  
Mr & Mrs John and Kathlyn Wheatley  
Mrs Margaret Williams  
Ms Barbara Zimmerman and Prof John Dickey

# Site excavation begins for Medical Science 2

As we settle in to our brand new building, Medical Science 1 (MS1), excavation has begun onsite for Medical Science 2 (MS2). This \$90 million project, funded by the State and Federal Governments, University of Tasmania and Atlantic Philanthropies, is due for completion in 2012.

Forming part of the Medical Science precinct in the heart of Hobart, the new building will house the expanding Menzies Research Institute and the clinical research facilities of the Royal Hobart Hospital.

The MS2 project is being undertaken by managing contractors John Holland Fairbrother Joint Venture, who managed the MS1 development. They will again work collaboratively with Melbourne-based architectural firm, Lyons Architects. This will allow for a smooth integration with

the existing building and amenities.

Archaeological investigations on site have so far uncovered the remnants of six workers' cottages dating back as far as 1860. Basements, stairs and sandstone footings can clearly be seen, in addition to some brick paving in one of the backyards. Many artefacts are currently being recovered including smoking pipes, china, glass bottles, a button from a military tunic dating pre-federation and an intricate art deco belt. These items will eventually be displayed in a similar fashion to the current MS1 archaeological displays.



Left: Making way for MS2 – demolition of buildings on Bathurst Street



Below: Site excavation – archaeologists uncover the remains of an 1860s worker's cottage

## Researcher profile: Dr David Gell

**What is the current focus of your research?**

I study the three dimensional structure of proteins to discover how they work. This area of research is called structural biology.

Structural biology can reveal why disease treatments are effective, and lead to new and improved treatments. Proteins make up the molecular machinery of the cell, so understanding protein function in detail is essential for a firm understanding of normal biology and disease.

For example, defining the shape and chemical properties of a protein allows us to understand how it interacts with other biological molecules. These interactions are crucial to the cell's ability to sense its environment and produce appropriate responses.

I am particularly interested in how protein-to-protein interactions give rise to the complex architecture found inside cells. Our bodies are estimated to contain over 30,000 different types of proteins so you can imagine how many different interactions are involved.

**What are some of the recent findings from your work?**

Recently we made an interesting discovery about haemoglobin. Haemoglobin is the protein that

colours your blood red and its job is to carry oxygen around the body to help liberate energy from food.

A number of hereditary conditions exist, called thalassaemias, in which haemoglobin cannot be produced in sufficient quantities. The result is a life-threatening anaemia.

Our work has uncovered one way that normal blood cells ensure efficient haemoglobin assembly. In the long term, this knowledge might lead to improved treatments for thalassaemia patients.

**What is the biggest challenge in your area of research?**

Since the sequencing of the human genome was completed (human genome is the entirety of an individual's hereditary information that is encoded in their DNA), it has become evident this information is insufficient to comprehend how a human works, or even how a single cell works. Instead we need to understand the millions of interactions that take place between the gene products – the majority of which are proteins.

The ultimate challenge for structural biology is to define the molecular structures of all the proteins in a cell – as well as the structures of the lipids, carbohydrates and everything else – and determine how all these fit together.



Dr David Gell

**What is the most interesting aspect about your work?**

Science is naturally a collaborative process. It thrives on the sharing of ideas, good communication and camaraderie, making it not only a search for facts, but also a very social affair.

I enjoy the teaching and mentoring aspects of becoming a good scientist – helping others to think and work in a scientific way. On top of all this, there is the possibility you might discover something totally new, important and exciting.

**What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

I enjoy being with my family. We have just moved to Tasmania this year and we love Hobart and the mountain. I'm looking forward to planting something in the garden, bushwalking and maybe brewing some beer.

# Supporting our young scholars

A special morning tea event was held in April to thank the 2010 Menzies Research Institute Scholarship Program sponsors, and to congratulate this year's scholars.

The scholarship program provides outstanding Honours students with significant financial and academic support to study at Menzies. Scholarships are offered in a wide range of research areas and selection is based on academic merit.

Now in its second year, the scholarship program has received outstanding support from a number of businesses, individuals and philanthropic groups.

Menzies would like to thank the following sponsors for their exceptional commitment and support: The Matternson Family Trust, Veolia Environmental Services, Mansfield Builders, Corporate Express, Mr & Mrs Leon and Sue Morrell, Heart Foundation Tasmania and Diabetes Tasmania.

This year over \$40,000 was awarded to Menzies' honours students to assist them in their studies.

Honours student Hamish Scott said "My scholarship provided by Diabetes

Tasmania is invaluable, as it allows me to concentrate solely on my hectic honours year without having to hold down a part-time job."

The areas of study reflect each student's interests and include neuroscience, malaria, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer.

Menzies' Director, Professor Simon Foote says the scholarship program is important to the growth of medical research in Tasmania.

"Honours scholars are essential to Menzies' success and they are the very future of our research," Professor Foote said.

Having sponsorship support enables Menzies to help more students and further advances Menzies along its path of research discoveries. Many thanks to all our sponsors.



Honours student Hamish Scott with Diabetes Tasmania's CEO, Caroline Wells at the Scholarship morning tea

## Eating out the healthy way

Menzies' Honorary Research Fellow, Dr Trevor Beard, has set a new challenge for the staff and students at Drysdale House. The challenge that Drysdale House (a school of hospitality) has accepted is to reconcile gastronomy with health.

Over half the adult population has a health problem that the international scientific consensus attributes to unsuitable food. Fatty, sugary and salty foods can cause serious health problems that are preventable (and often reversible) by choosing healthier foods.

In the industrial societies the food in supermarkets, restaurants and institutional catering (including the standard meals in most hospitals) fails to comply with the national dietary guidelines of any developed nation, and so many millions of people make their health problem worse if they eat out.

Part of the students' training is to serve meals to the public at the Drysdale Restaurant. Once a month the Drysdale students will offer a flavoursome and healthy lunch to the public – low in total fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.

Dr Beard says The Australian Dietary Guidelines (2003) are too vague for a clear decision on whether a particular restaurant meal does or does not follow the guidelines – for example "limit saturated fat" is too vague because "limitation" is not defined.

"The UK has introduced accuracy," he says, "it uses traffic light food labels for the fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt content". The UK defines three levels precisely and identifies them with colours (green, amber and red).

"Green traffic lights indicate the healthiest choice, and Drysdale Restaurant lunches would get four green traffic lights!" Dr Beard said.

Dr Beard sees the UK's traffic light food labelling as a better alternative to the current Australian guidelines, and he hopes to see the UK's traffic light labelling introduced into Australia. The Australian government is actively considering this and The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) may be announcing a decision in early 2011.

The next lunch will be held on June 24th at Drysdale Restaurant, 59 Collins Street, Hobart. Guests will savour a two-course meal, a choice of three main courses (one vegetarian) and two desserts, cooked and served by hospitality students at a cost of \$21 per person. Come and judge for yourself how well Drysdale House is reconciling gastronomy with health.

For further information please email Trevor Beard at [trevor.beard@utas.edu.au](mailto:trevor.beard@utas.edu.au) or call 6226 7708.

# Benefitting our community

Menzies would like to thank the Derwent Tavern social club for their wonderful support in raising money for Menzies' vital research.

The social club began in 2006 and was an initiative of the Derwent Tavern Manager, Mr Mel Arnold. The club now boasts over 80 members and since 2008 has donated over \$3,500 to Menzies.

The Derwent Tavern, situated off the Midlands Highway in Bridgewater, was established in the late nineteenth century and has developed strong community ties.

Mr Arnold believes giving back to the community is important and says the Derwent Tavern is proud to support Menzies as a Tasmanian medical research institute.

"Menzies truly benefits our community and that is so important," Mr Arnold said.

Over his five years as Manager of the Derwent Tavern, Mel has heard a lot of stories, but says when people talk about themselves

or their family suffering from illness it really hits home.

"I hear a lot of sad stories," Mr Arnold said.

"Patrons have had various illnesses, such as strokes and prostate cancer, and we have lost people. We need research into these things. No one likes to lose people who are part of their community."

The Derwent Tavern's support helps Menzies make a difference in the lives of people who are living with disease. Menzies is truly grateful to Mr Arnold and the Derwent Tavern Social Club.

If you would like more information about community fundraising please contact Development Officer, Phoebe Sargent on (03) 6226 7707.



Left: Mel Arnold from the Derwent Tavern social club

# Boosting your brain – it's not too late

In the 2009 Spring edition of *The Bulletin* we invited readers to participate in the Healthy Brain Study. This unique study is a collaborative effort between Menzies' Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre and the University of Tasmania. The researchers hope to show that tertiary education in later life can protect against ageing-related cognitive decline and dementia.

Have you been considering returning to study in 2010? Are you retired or find yourself with a bit more time on your hands these days? Perhaps a university course is just the thing for you. You are never too old and it is never too late.

Previous studies have shown that tertiary education early in life protects the brain from dementia at later ages. It may be that further education strengthens the brain by enhancing the 'cognitive reserve' needed to withstand the effects of ageing related pathology in the brain.

The study seeks participants who are willing to undertake a UTAS course at one of our statewide campuses. Study can be part-time or full-time, at undergraduate or postgraduate levels.

To be a participant you will need to be between 50 and 70 years of age; in good health; and have no history of neurological disease or prior brain injury.

Your admission to particular courses will follow the same admission procedures and requirements as for any new students to UTAS. Semester 2 starts on July 12th. HECS scholarships, covering an initial unit of study, are available to eligible participants.

Retirees and others on low incomes may not need to repay a HECS debt if their income is below the minimum repayment threshold.

You can register your interest by calling toll-free on 1800 982 600, emailing [healthy.brain@utas.edu.au](mailto:healthy.brain@utas.edu.au) or completing the registration form online at:

[www.healthybrain.utas.edu.au/](http://www.healthybrain.utas.edu.au/)

# Tasmanian Scleroderma Friendship Group

In the early 1990's a group of Tasmanians came together to form the Tasmanian Scleroderma Friendship group. The group was established to support those suffering from the complex and debilitating disease, scleroderma.

In addition to valuable emotional support, the group raised funds to support scleroderma research through social get togethers, trade tables and personal donations. When the group ceased operating this year, the coordinator, Ms Dianne Hodel, donated the remaining funds to the Menzies Research Institute. We are extremely fortunate to have been presented with a cheque for \$3108.67.

Scleroderma is a chronic disease characterised by excess collagen in the body's connective tissue. Symptoms range from thickening of the skin, to reflux, difficulties with swallowing, bowel problems, breathlessness, kidney problems or high blood pressure. Serious complications can occur, such as pulmonary hypertension. Individuals

may have few or many of the symptoms, each affected differently.

Ms Hodel presented Menzies' Dick Buttfield Research Fellow, Dr Jane Zochling, with the results of their fundraising. These funds will assist in the purchase of valuable equipment to support ongoing research into scleroderma in Tasmania.

Dr Zochling's study is collecting information to identify characteristics about this disease and provide a source of monitoring to initiate early intervention if needed. Benefits of this have already been apparent in the early treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension.

We are very grateful for the Tasmanian Scleroderma Friendship group's generous support and donation. Thank you.



From left: Di Hodel presenting Dr Jane Zochling with the fundraising cheque

# More than flowers



## In Memoriam February – April 2010

We gratefully acknowledge gifts made  
in honour of:

Anonymous (6)  
Mr Maxwell Charles Stewart  
Mr Terry Chopping  
Mr David Coatman  
Mr Ronald Gillie  
Mr David Griggs  
Mr Noel Hingston  
Mr Ron Mee  
Mrs Nita O'Grady  
Mr John Sluce  
Mr Wilfred Stellmaker  
Mrs Edna Yaxley

We also gratefully acknowledge  
the gift in lieu donation for:

The Wedding of Kanwal Kang  
and Stephen Refshauge

## Society for the Future



**"Bequests – Creating a Healthier  
Community for Future Generations"**

If you would like more information please  
contact Barbara Zimmerman on  
03 6226 7782 or email  
Barbara.Zimmerman@menzies.utas.edu.au  
Bequests save lives by funding research.

**Thank you!**



## Yes, I would like to help the Menzies Research Institute Tasmania

- I would like to make a one-off donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
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All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

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- Please do not publish my name in the 'Valued  
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- Please send me information on remembering Menzies  
in my Will.

### Thank you for your support.

Please post to:  
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