MEDIA RELEASE

MTPConnect
MedTech and Pharma Growth Centre

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$20m Committed to Launch Leading National Research Centres for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease

Two major new Research Centres will be established in Australia, with $20 million committed through the Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) initiative, delivered by MTPConnect.

The new Research Centres are:

- The Australian Centre for Accelerating Diabetes Innovations (ACADI)
- The Australian Stroke & Heart Research Accelerator (ASHRA)

Each Research Centre has been awarded $10 million over four years with thanks to the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund, following an independent, competitive application round. Together, these centres have attracted substantial co-contributions from academic and industry partners totalling $34.3 million.

MTPConnect Managing Director and CEO, **Dr Dan Grant**, says the new Research Centres focus on building a culture of collaboration and signal a new approach to boosting the translation and commercialisation of Australian research to do more to help people with cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

"We're delighted to support the establishment of these new Research Centres which are designed to accelerate therapies towards clinical practice for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of prioritised cardiovascular disease and diabetes complications," Dr Grant said.

"The Research Centres are truly patient-focused and will deliver better health outcomes and reduce the burden of disease and health inequities in Australia, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, rural and remote communities and other under-served populations.

"We're also ensuring each Research Centre's work is targeted for maximum patient impact, with their research priorities aligning with the outcomes of a national, sector-wide needs assessment process," Dr Grant said.

Collectively the two new Research Centres will initially progress 31 research projects addressing diabetic kidney disease, peripheral neuropathy and diabetic foot syndrome, and short-term complications of hypoglycaemia, hyperglycaemic hyperosmolar syndrome (HHS) and ketoacidosis, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy and heart failure, and transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or stroke.

Dr Grant says skills and workforce development is another key element built-in to the design of the new Research Centres.

"The future of our medical products sector depends on our skilled workforce and so, in addition to their research activities, each Research Centre will implement a training program to support students and

early-to-mid career researchers and clinicians to strengthen partnerships across research, clinical and industry groups and drive better translation outcomes," Dr Grant said.

TTRA Expert Advisory Board Chair, **Professor Ian Frazer AC** agrees that the new Research Centres represent a significant advance for diabetes and cardiovascular disease research in Australia.

"The Research Centres are multi-sector collaborations uniquely placed to break down translation barriers and ensure practical outcomes in tackling conditions which are leading causes of death and disability in Australia," Professor Frazer said.

With this TTRA investment, MTPConnect is looking forward to the sustainable impact of these Research Centres well beyond the 4-year funding term.

Research Centres Information:

About ACADI - Australian Centre for Accelerating Diabetes Innovations: Led out of the University of Melbourne, ACADI will build a national multi-sector collaboration of 70 partners from clinical, research, industry and community organisations across all Australian States and Territories.

Over its four-year term, ACADI will deliver at least 18 projects which progress a series of therapeutic, device, *in vitro* diagnostic, digital health products and behavioural interventions towards practical use. ACADI's initial portfolio will progress prevention, treatment and management solutions for the priority areas of diabetic kidney disease (6 projects), peripheral neuropathy/diabetic foot syndrome (4 projects) and short-term complications of hypoglycaemia/HHS and ketoacidosis (8 projects).

ACADI will be led by Centre Director **A/Prof Elif Ekinci** from the University of Melbourne, who explained that as a clinician researcher, she sees first-hand the impact that diabetes related kidney disease, diabetes foot ulcers, neuropathy and amputations, as well as life-threatening diabetes emergencies have on people living with diabetes and their families.

"Ultimately, this will result in reduced disease burden and improved quality of life for people living with diabetes in urban, rural and remote settings as well as in Indigenous communities and have a significant impact on the Australian economy over time."

"Furthermore, ACADI will train future leaders, providing critical skills in clinical evaluation, translation and commercialisation and will be a place of new ideas intersecting with innovation in diabetes," A/Prof Ekinci said.

Deputy Vice Chancellor Research at The University of Melbourne, **Professor James McCluskey** noted that this remarkable investment by the Australian Government will allow the University and ACADI partners including clinicians, researchers, industry and the community to jointly build a brilliant research hub aimed at improving the lives of people with diabetes.

"The funding will support Australia in being a global leader addressing many of the serious complications of diabetes. The centre will be established for the long term, to bring continuing benefit to people with diabetes, the diabetes professional community and the national economy.

"Led by the University of Melbourne, ACADI, is a collaboration of clinicians, researchers, industry and advocacy groups for people with diabetes who will deliver novel interventions for timely diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diabetes and its complications," Professor McCluskey said.

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About ASHRA - Australian Stroke & Heart Research Accelerator: Bringing together a team of internationally renowned Australian researchers and institutions, ASHRA is a partnership between Monash University, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, The George Institute for Global Health (Australia), University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, Menzies School of Health Research, University of Melbourne and Australian National University. In addition to these core academic partners, ASHRA has support from 27 additional partner organisations, including universities, hospitals, medical research institutes, research organisations, industry and investment groups, State government and peak bodies.

ASHRA has identified an initial portfolio of 13 high potential research projects with significant commercialisation and impact opportunities for initial funding. These projects span pre-clinical, clinical and policy pathways in the three target areas of coronary artery disease (5 projects), cardiomyopathy and heart failure (5 projects) and TIA/stroke (3 projects) and cover digital health, medical devices, therapeutics and behavioural interventions.

Professor Clara Chow, Centre Director Year 1 and University of Sydney Node Director, advised that ASHRA will bring together experts from all key areas to tackle heart disease and stroke effectively.

“We as sector leaders feel both a responsibility and excitement that ASHRA can bring together the collective skills of clinicians, academics, industry, government and the community to effectively solve the problem of heart disease and stroke,” said Professor Chow.

ASHRA spokesperson **Professor Steve Nicholls**, Deputy Centre Director Year 1 and Monash University Node Director, explained that ASHRA creates a new national approach bringing researchers from across the country to develop new solutions for all Australians.

“This TTRA Centre is about moving research forward so we take our discoveries and make a difference for the way we treat people with heart disease and stroke. The Centre will focus on the key areas of diseases of blood vessels, heart failure and stroke - these all have a major health impact for Australia and we need new solutions. These solutions need to help all Australians and the TTRA initiative has a specific focus on equity in addition to developing new technologies.”

“We want to rapidly move these discoveries to the clinic. We will also embed a culture in entrepreneurship as we train the next generation of researchers to see translation of their discoveries to practice, being the major reason to do what we do,” Professor Nicholls said.

About TTRA - Targeted Translation Research Accelerator: the TTRA initiative is a $47 million program supported by the Australian Government’s Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and delivered by MTPConnect.

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About MTPConnect:
Established in 2015 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, MTPConnect is Australia’s Medical Technologies and Pharmaceuticals Industry Innovation Growth Centre, championing the growth of Australia’s vibrant MTP ecosystem.