

## National HIV centre launches new identity as Kirby Institute

- National centre renamed in honour of former High Court judge and health and human rights champion, the Hon. Michael Kirby
- New name reflects the breadth of research undertaken at Australia's premier blood-borne diseases research institute

4 April 2011

*Sydney, Australia* – The national centre for HIV research today launched its new name and identity as **The Kirby Institute for infection and immunity in society**.

Formerly the National Centre for HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR), the Kirby Institute has been named in honour of the Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG, a former Justice of the High Court of Australia, a passionate champion of health and human rights.

Mr Kirby has been a long-time friend and mentor to the University of New South Wales-based centre since its inception 25 years ago. **Michael Kirby will be the guest of honour at a ceremony tonight** to mark the centre's name change and its quarter-century of achievements.

"We are greatly honoured that Michael Kirby agreed to lend his name and his standing to our ongoing work," the Director of the Kirby Institute, Professor David Cooper, said. "The name change is designed to convey the breadth of our work which, these days, is far greater than just HIV."

The national centre was established in 1986 to focus primarily on HIV research and prevention. Today, The Kirby Institute's 160 researchers work on a range of blood-borne diseases including HIV, viral hepatitis and other diseases of behaviour, making it Australia's premier infectious diseases research institute.

"We research a range of infectious diseases, particularly those that occur in social groups that might be considered marginalised, disadvantaged or voiceless. This is where our interests and those of Mr Kirby intersect," Professor Cooper said.

In 2009, the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research received the largest grant (AUD\$18 million) ever given to an organisation outside the United States by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to support a research project with the potential to extend drug therapy to millions of HIV-affected people worldwide by examining the

effectiveness of optimised doses of HIV drug treatment. The Kirby Institute has attracted a range of other national and international funding.

**What:** The Kirby Institute 25 year celebration and name launch

**When:** 6.30 pm, Monday 4 April, 2011

**Where:** Leighton Hall, Kensington campus, The University of New South Wales.

**About the Kirby Institute:**

The Kirby Institute for infection and immunity in society is an external centre of the University of New South Wales. Formerly the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, established in 1986, the Kirby Institute is an infectious diseases research organisation which focuses on those diseases of behaviour which affect marginalised, disempowered and other communities.

**About the Hon. Michael Kirby AC, CMG:**

When he retired from the High Court of Australia on 2 February 2009, Michael Kirby was Australia's longest serving judge. He was first appointed in 1975 to the Australian Conciliation & Arbitration Commission and later seconded as inaugural Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission. He was appointed a judge of the Federal Court of Australia, President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal and, concurrently, the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands. His appointment to the High Court came in 1996 and he served thirteen years. In addition to this distinguished legal track record, Mr Kirby has added service with many national and international bodies, including as a member of the World Health Organisation's Global Commission on AIDS; President of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva; UN Special Representative Human Rights in Cambodia; a member of the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee. He is presently a member of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Judicial Reference Group and a member of the UNAIDS Reference Group on HIV and Human Rights, as well as a member of the Eminent Persons Group which is investigating the future of the Commonwealth of Nations. Mr Kirby has also been appointed to the UNDP Global Commission of HIV and the Law.

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