

# MEDIA RELEASE

## KIRBY INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECTOR

**(Sydney, 31 January 2019)** Leading international HIV researcher and clinician, Professor Anthony Kelleher, has been appointed Director of the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney. The Kirby Institute has been at the forefront of infectious disease research, in Australia and globally, for more than 30 years.

The announcement was made on Tuesday to Kirby Institute staff by UNSW Medicine Dean, Professor Rodney Phillips. The Kirby Institute's inaugural Director, Professor David Cooper, passed away last year.

"Professor Kelleher was appointed through a rigorous international recruitment process," said Professor Phillips. "He is an accomplished and highly respected academic and clinician in the field of immunology and HIV research, with a long career in various leadership roles across the Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney and St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney.

"He will provide powerful leadership to carry forward the impactful and live-saving health research of the Kirby Institute."

Professor Kelleher has worked at the Kirby Institute since 2001 and been a member of its Executive team since 2005. He is Head of the Immunovirology and Pathogenesis Program, which operates out of the Kirby Institute's Glendonbrook Laboratories.

"It is a true honour to be named Director of the Kirby institute and I am excited by the challenge of growing the impact of the Institute's research even further by working closely with its strong academic and research support teams" says Professor Kelleher.

"The Kirby Institute, its staff, collaborators, and the people and communities we serve, have been the inspirational core of my career. David Cooper was an incomparable mentor and dear friend. I could not be prouder than to carry forward the Institute's innovative and life-saving research."

The Hon Michael Kirby, Patron of the Kirby Institute, congratulated Professor Kelleher on his appointment. "He is the perfect person to continue the vision for the Kirby Institute pioneered by its first Director, Professor David Cooper: Pushing the boundaries of science. Engaging with the communities and patients most affected. Cooperating with other nations. Exploring the links between targeting infections and upholding human rights. But Tony Kelleher is his own person. He will have new scientific worlds to conquer. He will dream new dreams. And he will take us all with him on the journey. That is the way of world class medical research today," he said.

President and Vice-Chancellor of UNSW, Professor Ian Jacobs, also welcomed the news of Professor Kelleher's permanent appointment to the role. "Professor Kelleher

shared Professor Cooper's passion for the work of the Kirby Institute and the great service it provides communities, here at home and around the world," Professor Jacobs said.

"David's wonderful legacy is in exceptionally good hands."

## **ENDS**

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### **Professor Anthony Kelleher Biography**

Professor Anthony Kelleher is a clinician scientist. He graduated from Medicine at UNSW in 1986. He trained in internal medicine and pathology at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney at the height of the HIV epidemic, qualifying as a Clinical Immunologist and Immunopathologist in 1995.

Professor Kelleher completed his PhD in 1997, describing the modulation of the HIV infected immune system by a range of interventions including therapeutic vaccines and IL-2. He made the first observations explaining how antiretroviral treatment restores the immune system in those with late stage HIV infection.

He completed a post-doctoral fellowship in Oxford at the Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine and Nuffield Department of Medicine, where he studied the coevolution of HIV and the viral immune response. He was the first to explain why people with a particular genetically determined immune response were protected from HIV disease progression.

Professor Kelleher returned to Sydney in 2001 to join an Australian consortium developing a HIV prevention vaccine, which successfully completed clinical trials in Australia and Thailand.

He has been involved with every HIV vaccine trial conducted in Australia, and multiple phase I-IV clinical trials, particularly those involving patients with primary infection. He has developed a range of immunological assays that are now widely used and is currently working on mapping the HIV reservoir and developing a novel "block and lock" approach towards clinical application.

Professor Kelleher is currently Head of the Immunovirology and Pathogenesis Program at the Kirby Institute, Principal of the Infection, Immunology and Inflammation theme and Senior Vice Dean Research of UNSW Medicine. He is a clinical academic at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, responsible for clinical care of patients with HIV infection and autoimmune diseases as well as oversight of the NSW State HIV Reference laboratory.