



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alliance to bring leading cancer therapy to Australia

Australian cancer patients are a step closer to receiving life-changing proton therapy treatment at home thanks to an alliance announced today between Proton Therapy Australia (PTA) and Mater Health Services, Brisbane - a leader in health, education and research.

Currently Australians - both children and adults - must travel to the United States, Europe and parts of Asia to receive proton therapy - which delivers radiation directly, painlessly and deeply into tumours, with minimal injury to surrounding healthy tissue. This reduces side-effects and keeps healthy tissue safe - which is a key difference between proton and conventional radiation therapy.

Sue Bleasel PTA Director of Planning and the project's driving force said the facility will be co-located with Mater and the first patient treatment is anticipated in 2017 - although this timeline depends on a variety of investor agreements being finalised.

"The PTA/Mater Alliance is just the first step of many - but a major step. I have been working to bring proton therapy to Australia for the past 16 years. Now we have a clinical partner it is time to finalise many years of discussion and negotiation with investors - \$170 million is required," she said.

Mater Health Services CEO Dr John O'Donnell said he was excited about being part of building Australia's first proton therapy facility.

"Proton therapy is needed in Australia and has been a long time coming. We are proud to be the clinical partner to help make this a reality. The project is completely aligned with our values and our aim to provide exceptional care to all our patients," he said.

Working with Bleasel over these past 16 years is a strong team of experts, including clinical advisors, A/Prof Michael Jackson (Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney) and Dr Martin Berry.

Prof Jackson is recognised as one of Australia's foremost authorities on clinical proton therapy who said it was an historic day for Australian cancer therapy.

"Proton beam therapy is an advanced form of radiotherapy that targets tumours with great precision and where the radiation dose can be significantly and safely increased to help eradicate the cancer. This precision dramatically reduces side effects which is so

important for quality of life during and after treatment. I am delighted that we are finally on our way to making this facility a reality,” Prof Jackson said.

Dr Martin Berry leader and educator in the field of radiation oncology said that not only do protons provide exciting opportunities to explore better treatments for people with cancer, the treatment is painless.

“Protons are positively charged particles, found in the nucleus of every atom but made available in this therapy by stripping away electrons from hydrogen atoms. The great advantage protons provide is that when treating tumours near vital organs, they can deliver their radiation without affecting these organs,” he said.

Proton therapy is not for all cancers, but is vitally important in the treatment of certain cancers in children, tumours of the eye and base of skull and is becoming the treatment of choice for cancers such as in head and neck, brain and spinal, prostate, lung, gastrointestinal and breast.

Overall, proton therapy is beneficial to patients with tumours that are solid and with defined borders that have not spread to other parts of the body.

Apart from the clinicians involved in the project there are those directly affected by cancer that have played a major role by sharing their own experience treating a loved one.

Sue Anderson, a patient advocate, understands firsthand the benefits of proton therapy through the treatment of her then five year old daughter Audrey in Jacksonville, Florida. Her experience has proved valuable to other parents researching for connections to international facilities and identifying the relevant funding criteria for the Medical Treatment Overseas Program.

“Increasing the access to protons in Australia for paediatric patients provides great long term benefit to families and the medical and education system by reducing the late effects of conventional treatments, this is an exciting and necessary development to allow treatment options for children to fall in line with the UK and the USA,” Anderson said.

The design team, architects, Johnson, Pilton, Walker; cost assessors, Davis Langdon; and engineers TTW and DSC have been behind the project since 2007, generously working pro bono because of their belief in the project.

For more information on PTA please visit www.protontherapy.com.au and on Mater Brisbane visit www.mater.org.au

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