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New Australian facility to translate research into products

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Singapore: Australian life sciences researchers will now be able to translate their discoveries into commercial products faster with the newly established Queensland Node of the Therapeutic Innovation Australia (TIA - Qld Node).

TIA - QLD Node, a state-based model, is being developed under the auspices of Therapeutic Innovation Australia (TIA), the lead agent for the $35 million Translating Health Discovery Project funded under the Australian government's Super Science Initiative.

The Therapeutic Innovation Australia (TIA) Queensland Node has been launched with $6.9 million from the federal government and co-investment funding of $2 million from the Queensland government. The Node will provide a testing model to accelerate the movement of inventions by Australian researchers from the laboratory, through preclinical trials, clinical

development and produce 'reduced risked technologies' that will be highly attractive for investors to commercialize into therapeutic products.

The TIA-QLD Node will initially undertake four translational projects to deliver tangible commercial returns within five years.

Mr Stewart Hay, CEO of Therapeutic Innovation Australia, said, "The major strategy embodied in this plan involves aggregating and leveraging existing infrastructure across the nation, improving researcher access and addressing gaps in infrastructure rather than establishing a large number of new facilities." He added that this will allow the expansion of facilities at The University of Queensland and Griffith University and link them in a coordinated way.

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"This is the first time this coordinated approach has been implemented in Australia and represents a move to a more systematic approach to therapeutic innovation," he said.

Comprising five leading Translational Research Centers in South East Queensland, members include the Centre for Integrated Preclinical Drug Development; Queensland Clinical Trials and Biostatistics Centre; Centre for Clinical Research and the Diamantina Institute which are based at The University of Queensland's Herston campus and the Griffith Health Institute based at Griffith University's Gold Coast campus.

UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Terry said the node's first focus would be projects that have a high probability of yielding tangible results for human health and the economy within five years.

"The node will initially target: a test aimed at protecting unborn babies who are at risk of premature birth; a migraine prevention product; a 'glucose alarm' software package to help people with conditions including diabetes to control their blood sugar levels; and an imaging technique to aid the development of treatments for bone disorders such as osteoporosis," Professor Terry said.

Commenting on this unique opportunity to translate health discoveries on home soil, Professor Ian O'Connor, Griffith University's vice chancellor, said, "Some of the hardest work of developing any new medical therapy is moving from the trial stage to the product stage and this is often where Australian research is forced to go off-shore."

"However, the TIA Qld node provides an important link in keeping the development of therapies in Australia," he said. "With Griffith Health Institute's migraine research now entering phase 3 clinical trials, the consortium offers an ideal platform for more personalized diagnostics and more targeted migraine therapies."