

University and college join hands to work together

The Australian College of Optometry and the University of Melbourne have signed a new affiliation agreement that lays the foundations for a strong future of collaboration in teaching and research.

Chief executive officer of the ACO Maureen O'Keefe said the agreement would remain in place until 31 December 2022.

'This agreement recognises the long-term historical association between the university and the college, particularly in the areas of teaching and research, as well as the valuable interactions between our staff and students and the close proximity of the college and university in the Carlton-Parkville precinct,' she said.

'The university and the college were affiliated from 1961 until 2004 and the new agreement is very much welcomed by both organisations.'

Ms O'Keefe said the agreement was very important to the college.

'The signing of this agreement formalises a shared commitment to collaboration and excellence, which will substantially enrich teaching and research outcomes for students and staff at both organisations,' she said.

'The reaction has been fantastic as the college very much values its relationship with the university. Signing this expresses that and celebrates that long-term relationship.'

Students

Ms O'Keefe said optometry students from the university were taking part in clinics, lectures and research at the college and she hoped the agreement would foster further research collaborations between the two organisations.



(L-R) Professor Janet Hergt and Maureen O'Keefe Photo: ACO

Dean of the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Science, Professor Janet Hergt, said that from the university's perspective, the establishment of the new affiliation agreement represented several benefits.

'It acknowledges the long-standing co-operation and collaboration we have enjoyed with the college but it goes much further than this,' she said.

'The world has changed considerably since our earlier agreement was struck. For example, we would never have envisaged then that we would have replaced our undergraduate optometry program with the Doctor of Optometry we offer now.

'The breadth of research undertaken within this field and the cross-disciplinary research opportunities between researchers are also completely different.

'Melbourne University has always been the col-

lege's primary university partner and this agreement lays the foundations for a strong future of collaboration in both teaching and research,' she said.

The head of the univer-

sity's Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences, Professor Algis Vingrys, said the agreement cemented a very important relationship and they looked forward to building on this in the future.

Medical research receive due recognition

Tanya Plibersek has added Medical Research to her responsibilities as Federal Minister for Health, as part of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's changes to Cabinet.

The rise in status of medical research to a cabinet portfolio makes Ms Plibersek the nation's inaugural Minister for Medical Research.

The new Cabinet and Ministry were sworn in on 1 July, with a record number of female politicians taking senior positions.

Ms Plibersek is no longer Minister for Ageing. That portfolio has shifted to Jacinta Collins, deputy leader in the Senate, who joins the Cabinet as Minister for Mental Health and Ageing.

Warren Snowdon remains Minister for Indigenous Health.

Optometrists Quilty said the move to Ms Plibersek's government's science portfolio, which has produced positive results.

In a statement released in, Ms Plibersek said the move to the field since 2007.

'Since October 2007, the government has committed funding of \$1,309 million for medical research.

NHMRC funding has increased over the past five years by \$814 million in