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**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
ADDRESS AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE GARVAN INSTITUTE OF
MEDICAL RESEARCH'S NEW BUILDING
GARVAN INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH, SYDNEY**

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Well thank you very much Professor Shine, to the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Bob Carr, your Eminence, to Peter Wills, the Chairman, to Sister Cunliffe, to the other very distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

That was a very warm and touching introduction. I could perhaps complete the historical record to say that that particular branch of the Howard family to which the Duke of Norfolk belongs stoically defied through the centuries the English reparation presided over or inaugurated by Henry VIII. So there's a very, very strong and very, very interesting link.

But ladies and gentlemen it's a particular delight for me to be here today. My first contact with the Garvan Institute was when I was Federal Treasurer - I can't imagine why. But I was visited by, I think it was a trio - a pretty formidable trio - of Jim de Minks, Charles Curran and the late Keith Cousins who was a very active member of the Garvan Institute. And they sat in my then Martin Place office in the old Commonwealth Bank building and explained the work of the Institute and spoke of the need for ongoing government support at both a State and a Federal level. And over the years the role of the Garvan Institute has grown enormously and it has taken its place alongside a number of other very eminent research institutes all around Australia.

When you think of medical research, I don't think it's an Australian exaggeration to say that given the size of our population our country has done remarkably well. Because names like the John Curtin School, the Walter and Eliza, the Howard Florey Institute, the Garvan Institute here in Sydney, all of them have won, over the years, worldwide fame and worldwide respect. And on a per capita basis, this country has done remarkably well. We do have world class medical research. We have world class medical practitioners. And the cutting edge of medical research here in Australia is something of which all Australians can be inordinately proud.

The Garvan is part of, what I might call, an enclave of compassion and medical research in the city of Sydney. It's part of the St Vincent's campus which is an area of

Sydney over the years which has brought unparalleled support and compassion and care to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people irrespective of their background, irrespective of their views on life. The obligation of all of those that have worked in that campus have been the relief of suffering and the care of fellow human beings. And the medical research element of it, of which the Garvan Institute represents, is of course a very crucial component. And even if you are a mere laymen in matters relating to medical research and medical technology, which I certainly am, you can't be other than quite excited at the research, the gene research, which is occurring at the present time and the almost limitless opportunities that it provides for rolling back some of the great challenges of disease which have afflicted mankind through the century.

Can I echo the thanks that have been expressed by Mr Wills and by Professor Shine in recognising the corporate contributions of so many people. And as I look around this room I can see people who individually and through the corporate organisations that they direct that have been in the forefront of philanthropic effort in Australia, not only in medical research, but today we are thanking them for their contribution to medical research. It's fashionable for some to criticise the apparent obsession of the corporate sector with the bottom line and with modern theories of economic rationalism and hard-hearted, bean-counting approaches to economic management. When I look around this room I can certainly see one or two people who are believers in appropriate philosophies of economic restraint and economic commonsense. But they are simultaneously very generous Australians who've put their hands deeply in their own pockets and have seen to it that the companies they run have also supported great organisations such as the Garvan.

I'm delighted to say that in the last budget, despite cutbacks in other areas, the Federal Government increased expenditure on medical research. And I can assure you, without pre-empting the particularities of what might be contained in the May budget, we certainly won't be reversing that decision in the coming budget.

Medical research is something that should always receive the enthusiastic support of governments. And I acknowledge the contribution of predecessor Labor governments in this area. This is a bipartisan effort. The Commonwealth Government has been very pleased to join the New South Wales Government in making a significant contribution to the \$46 million cost of establishing this institute in its current form. And national health and medical research council funding in the current financial year is something in the order of \$160 million.

It is something that's very precious to all of us. It touches the quality of our lives. It will touch the quality of the lives of our families. It will touch the quality of the lives of our children of generations to come. It's an important national treasure, medical research. It's something of which all Australians should be proud. And the Garvan Institute is the finest example of it here in the city of Sydney. I congratulate all of those that are associated with it. I particularly acknowledge the dedicated commitment of the Sisters of Charity and of the enormous support that their inspirational work has drawn from people of all faiths and, indeed, of no faiths in the city of Sydney over long years of dedication to the relief of human suffering. And I'm delighted to join the Premier of New South Wales at the opening of this fine new building. Thank you.