

# MEDIA RELEASE

**Please do not use until after the Prime Minister's announcement tonight**

## **Australian medicine again recognised in Australian of the Year**

There could be few more deserving winners of Australian of the Year than Professor Ian Frazer, whose breakthrough development of a vaccine for cervical cancer will save the lives of up to 200,000 women every year.

Medicines Australia Chief Executive Officer, Kieran Schneemann, said clinical trials on humans for this world first vaccine are expected to begin in Brisbane and China this year, with earlier trials showing 100 percent effectiveness against human papilloma virus which is responsible for about 70 percent of all cervical cancers.

Vaccination in youth will prevent women from contracting the virus. There are more than 200 deaths a year in Australia from cervical cancer.

"With the awarding of the 2005 Nobel Prize to Australians Barry Marshall and Robin Warren, and last year's Australian of the Year to plastic surgeon Dr Fiona Wood, it has been a great period for Australian medicine," Mr Schneemann said.

"It is refreshing to see these scientists and doctors and the work they do get the recognition they deserve, locally and globally.

"In awarding him this prestigious honour, Professor Frazer is being acknowledged for two decades of work in trying to find this vaccine. That sort of time frame is quite normal in medical research, where it often takes more than 10 years to bring a medicine from molecule to market."

As Professor Frazer said after being named Queensland state finalist in December: *"It's a great honour and we need more science heroes, although I feel almost embarrassed to be selected. It's a role I never envisaged."*

The vaccine Gardasil is being developed by Medicines Australia member company CSL after being researched by the University of Queensland's Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research over the past 20 years.

"Any health sector reforms must also take into account the need to provide a supportive investment environment so that industry can continue to support Australian research."

Research conducted this year for Research Australia shows Australians identify health and medical research as a top national priority and want an all-of-community effort to substantially increase funding and resources. One in two Australians polled said they would prefer surplus Government funds to be directed at health and medical research compared to 23% who would rather receive a tax cut and 18% who want funding for other

areas. Australians also want to see adequate investment in research so that Australian discoveries do not have to be commercialised overseas.

Medicines Australia congratulates the Prime Minister, who announced the winner tonight, and the National Australia Day Council Board for their inspired choice of Dr Frazer from a field of very prominent and worthy state and territory finalists.

**30 January 2006**

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