

Ryan Park

Minister for Health
Minister for Regional Health
Minister for the Illawarra and South Coast

**David Harris**

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing,
Minister for Veterans Affairs, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for Central Coast

Media Release**First Health Innovation Living Lab opens in the Hunter**

Monday, 17 July 2023

The Hunter's first purpose-built Health Innovation Living Lab, located at John Hunter Hospital, has been officially unveiled to the community, supporting greater health research and innovation in the region.

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park said the lab has been delivered in partnership between Hunter New England Local Health District and the University of Newcastle.

"This \$2.3 million lab is in addition to the NSW Government's \$835 million John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct. The Precinct will enhance facilities and provide additional capacity to meet the demands of the Greater Hunter, New England, and northern NSW regions," Mr Park said.

"The lab will offer opportunities for researchers, students, and industry to embed their work inside one of the busiest teaching hospitals in Australia and partner with clinicians to have a real impact for our rural and regional communities.

"The lab will focus on areas that have the greatest impact on equity of care for rural and regional communities, including digital health, sustainability in healthcare, medical technology, as well as operations and logistics,"

Minister for Medical Research David Harris said the lab would facilitate and develop innovative health programs, products, and services in co-creation with clinicians, academia, students, start-ups, industry, and public partners.

"This is a great opportunity for public and private partners to join forces and co-create, integrate research, and innovate within a real-life context," Mr Harris said.

"Leveraging the scale and expertise of the Hunter New England Health network with some of the brightest minds at the University of Newcastle, will ensure we can build healthier communities."

Minister Harris said the Hunter has a proud history of healthcare innovation having led the state on various innovations, including the state-wide Telestroke service.

Work in the lab has already begun on several key projects, including a biofabrication service that involves the construction of advanced biological models using 3D-printing technology to plan

complex surgeries. As well as the University of Newcastle's Centre for Advanced Training Systems, that uses virtual reality to support clinician and student training.

Chief Executive, Hunter New England Local Health District, Tracey McCosker PSM said the lab provides an opportunity for clinicians to be entrepreneurial about their clinical problem solving, and researchers the chance to innovate where they intend to implement.

"We wanted to build something that addresses real-world healthcare challenges and ultimately improves the health and wellbeing of people in our rural and regional communities," Ms McCosker said.

"The addition of the Health Innovation Living Lab makes us stand out as a truly research and innovation-driven institution that is working hard to deliver new and purposeful solutions for our patients from Newcastle and right across northern NSW."

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said the partnership was an extension of the University's commitment to collaboration, innovation and workplace-based learning.

"The University of Newcastle is committed to our region and our strong industry partnerships mean we can combine our resources and world-class knowledge to directly benefit people living in our community.

"The partnership will also give students a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience, solving real life problems as part of their degree. It is opportunities like that that mean our graduates can start their careers as innovative, work-ready graduates," Prof Zelinsky said.

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