The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is a world-class centre for the treatment of children who have a wide range of medical conditions and disorders. A high priority is placed on research to improve the lives of present and future patients.

The Hon. Carmel Tebutt, Deputy Premier and Minister for Health, launched a new identity for the Hospital’s research unit - Kids Research Institute - at The Mint on November 17. The evening event was also a celebration of the achievements in research achieved through the generous support of donors.

“Our research covers basic, clinical and population health and is driven by the needs of sick children who come to the Hospital every day,” said Clinical Associate Professor Chris Cowell, Acting Director of Kids Research Institute. “The ultimate measure of our success is improved health for children and families.

“Research underpins everything we do as clinicians. We look forward to the growth and development of Kids Research Unit in better understanding and treating childhood diseases.”

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead has had a long and distinguished history of world-class medical research commencing with the discovery of the impact of Rubella on the developing foetus by Dr Norman Grigg in 1942. Our achievements include leading the way in establishing gene therapy in Australia; establishing Tumour Bank - the first childhood cancer bank in Australia, which provides tissue samples for researchers both nationally and internationally; as well as unravelling several new causes of muscle disease.

Research has grown rapidly, from 40 scientists 12 years ago to more than 250 staff currently working in modern facilities that were opened in 2005. Researchers work alongside more than 300 clinicians to solve the most complex medical problems. Research is one of the key ways that enables The Children’s Hospital at Westmead to provide the highest possible standards in care and treatment to our patients and their families.

Building on this strong foundation, the vision for Kids Research Institute is to develop it as a beacon of paediatric research excellence by facilitating research across the state, establishing a formal state-wide network, joint collaborations, multi-site research and providing facilities to enhance the work of other clinicians. Kids Research Institute also aims to build up its clinical trials capacity. Investment in new facilities and additional staff will increase the capacity for clinical translational research.

The Kids Research Institute focuses on developing cures for and prevention of childhood disease across seven research themes: Neurosciences and Mental Health; Cancer Biology; Tissue repair; Genetics, Gene Therapy and Genomics; Obesity and Metabolism; Infectious Disease, Immunology and Renal Medicine; and Clinical Sciences and Health Services Delivery.

“Our research is broad ranging and we look at the impact of illness on the whole child,” said A/Prof Cowell. “The majority of research conducted at the Kids Research Institute involves clinical researchers interacting one-on-one with children. Focusing on the links between illness, symptoms, treatments, side effects and individual experiences, our researchers share their knowledge in a multidisciplinary approach to improve child health.

“As a direct result of our research, significant advances in the development of treatments, cures and prevention of diseases have benefited many children with conditions including cancer, obesity, kidney, muscle, heart and respiratory problems.”