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CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

The Premier of NSW, Mr Bob Carr and the Minister for Health, Mr Morris Iemma today laid a foundation stone to mark the beginning of the construction of the **Black Dog Institute** – Australia's only stand alone research and treatment centre for depression.

'Black Dog' was the phrase Winston Churchill used to describe his severe bouts of depression. Sufferers also frequently associate the colour black with the disorder.

The Institute was established in 2002 and currently operates from temporary premises near Prince of Wales Hospital.

In 2002, Mr Carr announced \$3.2 million to construct the stand alone Black Dog Institute on the grounds of Prince of Wales Hospital and committed \$5 million to support programs associated with depression and related disorders.

"The Black Dog Institute will help lead the fight against depression in Australia – a problem that effects one in five Australians", Mr Carr said.

"The Institute will advance the understanding, diagnosis and management of mood disorders and ultimately that means better care."

The World Health Organisation had recognised depression as one of the world's biggest health problems – exceeding concerns of alcohol abuse and heart disease – with up to up 25 per cent of the population developing clinical depression over their lifetime.

"The figures show that one in four women and one in six men will experience depression during their lifetime," Mr Carr said.

"The Black Dog Institute will provide practical solutions to ensure more people receive the help they need."

Priorities of the Black Dog Institute include:

- The education and training of GPs and other health professionals to help raise clinical standards for diagnosing and managing mood disorders;
- Support and advance research into mood disorders;
- Provide a resource for consumers, the general public, health professionals and the NSW Department of Health;
- Setting up a Consumer Resource Centre, which will enable community members to easily access information about mood disorders;
- Providing services to address "hot spot" issues such as youth suicide; and
- Post-natal depression programs.

The Black Dog Institute has already established a tele-psychiatry service to some rural areas to avoid people having to commute long distances for help.

Mr Carr said the Black Dog Institute is building on the work of the internationally recognised UNSW Mood Disorders Unit (MDU), which was established in 1985.

Mr lemma said the Government's support of the Black Dog Institute was just one part of its commitment to increasing awareness of depression and improving prevention, early intervention and management of the condition.

"Mental health is a priority for this Government. We have doubled mental health funding since coming to office in 1995, with the budget now standing at \$715 million," Mr lemma said.

Construction of the stand alone facility is expected to be completed by the end of the 2004.