

NSW govt serious about biotech

Tuesday, 24 May 2011
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THE newly-elected New South Wales government has not wasted time in moving to revitalise its biotechnology and medical technology industries with the appointment of the highly respected Peter Wills as the leader of an industry review and action plan.

The appointment of Wills, who was the architect of the Howard government's successful "virtuous cycle" approach to medical reform and innovation, was welcomed by AusBiotech chief executive officer Dr Anna Lavelle at the [AusMedtech](#) conference in Sydney yesterday.

"This is a sound appointment of someone who has the confidence of the industry," Dr Lavelle said.

"It would seem the NSW government is off to a cracking start."

Dr Lavelle told *BTN* AusBiotech would be holding meetings with Wills when he returned from overseas.

"I'm so impressed that they actioned things so rapidly," she told *BTN*.

"Putting someone like Peter Wills in is a good move because they are getting straight off the mark. Peter's virtuous cycle really did set the tone for federal policy for many years.

"Peter is also connected to the research industry and industry generally so he has the credibility."

NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Stoner, who opened the [AusMedtech](#) conference, said the state government had secured the 2012 [AusMedtech](#) hosting rights by which time the government would have a "robust industry action plan with heavy industry involvement and objectives".

More than 230 people from 130 companies will attend the two day [AusMedtech](#) conference organised by AusBiotech.

Last year, before his government was elected, Stoner visited the AusBiotech conference in Melbourne to learn about the NSW biotech and medtech industries.

"Biomedical R&D and the medical devices industry are critical to improving the quality of lives of all Australians," Stoner said.

"Research and innovation by the sector right here in NSW helps to develop world-first medical technologies such as the ResMed sleep apnoea devices.

"In addition to the numerous multinationals who have their Australian or Asia Pacific headquarters in NSW, our state boasts a wealth of home grown companies taking groundbreaking products to international markets."

Delegates told *BTN* Stoner's comments were welcomed and signalled biotechnology and medtech sectors were being taken more seriously by the new government after years of neglect by previous governments.

One such company is Sydney-based AIMEDICS, who have developed a breakthrough non-invasive sleep monitor and alarm for hypoglycaemia in people with insulin-dependent diabetes that is set to revolutionise care for young people with diabetes.

During his opening address Stoner recognised the significant role the medical device industry played in the state's economy.

"NSW is an international leader for the medical device industry, so it is fitting that Sydney is hosting Australia's premier medical technologies conference," he said.

"In addition to the obvious health care benefits, the contribution made by the sector to the NSW economy is considerable.

"In 2009-10 \$2.5 billion of medical devices, pharmaceuticals and medicinal products were exported from NSW.

"The conference will explore some of the opportunities and challenges currently facing the industry, including doing business in China, new models for commercialisation and clinical trials in emerging markets.

"With an ageing population and increasing demands for health products and services worldwide, the medical devices industry will only continue to grow in size and importance."

A KPMG report ranks Australia second after Mexico as the most cost-effective location for biomedical R&D ahead of the UK, US and Germany in terms of labour, salaries, utilities and income tax.

"We are determined to further improve the competitiveness of the NSW sector," Stoner said.

NSW is home to 45% of Australia's medical devices industry, more than three quarters of multinational pharmaceutical companies and 27% of core biotech companies.



Deputy Premier of New South Wales, Andrew Stoner