



**MAURICE WILKINS CENTRE**  
FOR MOLECULAR BIODISCOVERY

### **Drug discovery centre honours pioneer**

The Maurice Wilkins Centre for Molecular Biodiscovery, a research organisation aimed at developing new drugs for serious disease, is being launched today by the Hon Trevor Mallard, Minister for Economic Development.

The Maurice Wilkins Centre brings together over 200 researchers from multidisciplinary teams to create a world-leading infrastructure for drug discovery and development. The Centre brings together scientific excellence in all aspects required for successful drug discovery, such as biological modelling, structural biology, molecular biology and medicinal chemistry.

The Maurice Wilkins Centre has developed from the Centre for Molecular Biodiscovery, one of the seven Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) established by the government in 2002/3 to underpin world-class research efforts in New Zealand. The Centre has eight principal investigators, lead by Director Professor Ted Baker, and is based at The University of Auckland. It has established important research collaborations with institutions across New Zealand, including the Malaghan Institute, IRL and the Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre.

The Centre has developed strong working relationships with biopharmaceutical companies Neuren, Proacta and Protelix, playing a pivotal role in the development of their product pipelines. All of these companies now have products in human clinical trials. The Wilkins Centre has also played a key role stimulating the new biotechnology tools company Symansis to move its base of operations from the UK to New Zealand, and is now working with the company to develop new products which go on sale worldwide in September.

The Centre is named after pioneering New Zealand physicist Maurice Wilkins. Maurice Wilkins was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine with Francis Crick and James Watson in 1962 for work confirming the double helix structure of DNA proposed by Watson and Crick in 1952.

"The launch of the new Centre encompasses our vision for the future, to build on the work done over the past 3 years to become a world-leading institution in research into understanding the cause of diseases and developing drugs to treat them," says Professor Baker. "Our research is world-class; our teams have a number of drugs in clinical trials, many of which are licensed and being developed by large global companies, and we have a number of companies that have been started based on our discoveries."

"Maurice Wilkins was a scientific visionary, and we are proud to be able to honour his contribution to science and his New Zealand heritage. Without the work done by Wilkins, Watson and Crick, modern day drug discovery wouldn't exist, and we strive to build on this legacy."

**[www.mauricewilkinscentre.org](http://www.mauricewilkinscentre.org)**