

Let's stand with the US in the fight on cancer



FRANK MCGUIRE

AUSTRALIA should offer to partner America in the quest to cure cancer. Harking back to president John F. Kennedy's Cold War aspiration for the United States to land the first man on the moon, President Barack Obama has committed to a new kind of moonshot — making America the country to cure cancer.

"Sixty years ago, when the Russians beat us into space, we didn't deny Sputnik was up there," President Obama declared in last week's State of the Union address.

"We didn't argue about the science, or shrink our research-and-development budget. We built a space program almost overnight and 12 years later we were walking on the moon. That spirit of discovery is in our DNA."

The spirit of discovery also runs deep in Australia's DNA. The billion-dollar jewel in our medical research crown, the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, opens mid-year aggregating 10 world-leading cancer organisations and crucially locating leading patient care, clinical trials, research and education in one super site.

The project emphatically underscores Melbourne's standing in the top echelon of lifesaving discovery.

Three cities in the world have two premier universities for biomedical research. Boston boasts the prestige of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and London features the Imperial College and nearby Cambridge University.

Melbourne delivers the clout of the Parkville precinct centred on the University of Melbourne and a cluster of medical research institutions incorporating the expertise of Nobel prize winners near Royal Parade, our "Boulevard of Big Dreams".

And that is aligned with the southern hub connecting Monash University and Australia's national science agency, the CSIRO, via Innovation Walk.

Combining Melbourne's leadership and excellence as the epicentre for an Australian partnership with America on medical research increases the chances of curing cancer and harks back to a successful alliance not forged in war but in the Sea of Tranquility during a giant leap for mankind.

American exceptionalism put Neil Armstrong on the moon in 1969. Of course, Australian ingenuity helped relay the iconic images around the world via the Parkes radio telescope at Honeysuckle Creek tracking station, outside Canberra.

Now is the time to seize the opportunity to further scientific

collaborations between the United States and Australia, especially given our common ambition to lead the world in curing cancer.

The head of giant Silicon Valley company Intel told the world

conference on information and communications technology less than a decade ago that in the future we would not have to go to a store to buy sneakers.

Instead they would be delivered according to our personal choice of size, design and colour to our home via 3D printing.

But forget sneakers — the CSIRO has prevented a Victorian man's leg being amputated because of cancer by creating a 3D printed heel.

RMIT University has produced a 3D printed disc implanted into a woman's back, allowing her to walk without pain. Both of those world firsts are examples of Australian exceptionalism and highlight the acceleration of change in our society.

After the federal election, which is expected to be held this year, Australia's prime minister, whether it is Malcolm Turnbull or Bill Shorten, will champion innovation.

But we need whoever wins the election to deliver enlightened federalism by increasing funding for medical research — and that decision must be based on merit and performance, not on politics.

HOPE versus fear is the eternal battle in politics. In 1945, the director of the US



22 Jan 2016
Herald Sun, Melbourne

Author: FRANK McGUIRE • Section: General News • Article type : News Item
Audience : 344,061 • Page: 31 • Printed Size: 353.00cm² • Market: VIC
Country: Australia • ASR: AUD 19,601 • Words: 731 • Item ID: 529473729



 isentia.mediaportal

Copyright Agency licensed copy (www.copyright.com.au)

Page 2 of 2

Office of Scientific Research and Development wrote to president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He said that scientific progress was one essential key to the United States' security as a nation, to better health, to more jobs, higher standards of living and cultural progress.

That insight is just as valid today for the US and Australia. President Obama's pitch to cure cancer rekindles the audacity of hope and American exceptionalism when the US is mired in partisan rancour fuelled by prejudice.

In a globalised 21st century, a nation's exceptionalism may be better judged by the quality of its international collaborations delivering lifesaving results. Extending our relationship with the United States through science is critical — but perhaps it can begin simply by Prime Minister Turnbull offering President Obama a copy of one of Australia's favourite movies, *The Dish*, the story of Australia's role in the moonshot.

FRANK MCGUIRE, LABOR MP FOR BROADMEADOWS, IS THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S FIRST PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH