

Cancer boost

SCREENING and treatment for those at risk of cancers such as mesothelioma could be improved through a new Nedlands-based research centre.

WA scientists said the National Research Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases could lead to crucial advances in early diagnosis. It will be hosted by the UWA and will be based at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR).

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$6.2 million to fund 11 research projects over three years and the UWA has injected \$900,000 into the centre over three years.

Mesothelioma is a benign or malignant tumour that affects the lining of the chest or abdomen.

Exposure to asbestos particles in the air increases the risk of developing malignant mesothelioma.

UWA Vice-Chancellor Alan Robson said he believed the

establishment of the centre was a big step forward.

"The devastation caused by asbestos-related diseases is already significant, and is on the rise, due to the long delay between asbestos exposure and diagnosis of conditions such as malignant mesothelioma," he said. "So the formation of this centre is critical in helping to fast track research that could lead to breakthroughs to treat these disorders."

Professor Bruce Robinson, who has led the effort to set up the new centre, said it was ideally placed to give new hope to mesothelioma patients.

"The team will build on recent important discoveries, such as new blood tests and treatments for mesothelioma, and will apply the latest technologies to better understand how to attack these diseases," he said.

WAIMR director Professor Peter Klinken said researchers aimed to find out why some mesothelioma patients responded well to therapy while others did not.



Professor Bruce Robinson and mesothelioma patient Ellen Barns.