



# \$26M KIDS BONUS

## **REGINA TITELIUS**

PRIME Minister Malcolm Turnbull last night pledged at Telethon to fund a landmark \$26 million health study that will follow the early lives of 10,000 WA children.

The Paul Ramsay Foundation has committed \$13 million to the Origins project, which the Federal Government will match dollar for dollar through Telethon over 10 years.

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On song:  
Singer Samantha Jade  
with Little Telethon  
Star Maddox Ball.  
Picture: Daniel Wilkins

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

telethon



# SUPER PLEDGE FOR OUR KIDS

**REGINA TITELIUS**  
 Health Reporter

PERTH will host one of the nation's most comprehensive studies into chronic child health problems thanks to a combined \$26 million pledge last night to the Telethon Kids Institute and Joondalup Health Campus.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull flew into Perth yesterday to announce live on Telethon that the Federal Government would commit

\$13 million over 10 years to the Origins project.

The Paul Ramsay Foundation will also contribute \$13 million to the ground-breaking study, which will follow a cohort of 10,000 WA children for five years, from birth.

"This is a decade-long investment in our children's future. It will improve and possibly save lives," Mr Turnbull said.

The Federal Government's contribution is the longest funding commitment ever made to Telethon, which has raised almost \$232 million over its proud 50-year history.

Mr Turnbull said the money was in addition to the annual Commonwealth contribution to Telethon, which this year would be \$2 million.

The Origins project will focus on how a child's early environment, including the period before birth, influences the dramatically rising risk of a broad range of chronic health problems such as allergies, asthma, autism, diabetes and

obesity. Researchers will then identify and implement ways to reduce risks for children.

"There is increasing evidence that events and experi-

ences occurring very early in a child's life can have significant long-term effects on health and wellbeing," the Prime Minister said.

"The Origins project will collect a comprehensive set of data in a way never done before. It will provide health checks to participating children, identify risk factors and

seek to identify ways to prevent or lessen future health problems."

The PM said Origins was an "outstanding example" of how private philanthropy and the Federal Government could work together to help Australia's children and ensure they had the healthiest possible start to their lives.

The Paul Ramsay Foundation is one of Australia's largest philanthropic organisations. The Federal Government will — through Telethon — match

the Foundation's contribution over the 10 years.

"Telethon is all about ensuring a better life for our children now and in the future," Mr Turnbull added.

Telethon Kids Institute director Professor Jonathan Carapetis said Origins represented the "future of research" and ensured WA would remain at the forefront of international long-term child health research.

"Origins allows us to bring the learnings from previous research into the early origins of health and disease, apply them in a range of new studies and follow these children and families into the future using cutting-edge research technologies to unravel what

works and what doesn't," he said.

Joondalup Health Campus

paediatrics head Professor Desiree Silva said funding for the project would "let us explore the causality of Australia's growing and debilitating chronic illnesses and

identify and implement interventions".

Paul Ramsay Foundation chief executive Simon Freeman said the project's aim was to allow children to have a "healthy start in life".

Professor Carapetis said other projects by the Telethon Kids Institute in coming years would focus on mental health and personalised medicine tailored to genetic profiles.

"We've started a major focus on youth suicide and anxiety and depression in young peo-

ple," he said. "We have a particular focus on bullying, especially cyber bullying. We probably have the best program in Australia for how to protect kids from the dangers of the internet.

"Mental health and understanding the online environment is a critical part of our future."

Prof Carapetis said the institute had launched a major centre for personalised medicine which he described as the "future of health care".

"We have incredible technology that allows us to unravel the genetic code of every individual and to look at all the chemicals their bodies make," he said.

"It allows us to profile the health situation of an individual and tailor treatments as well as prevention for the individual.

"For many cancers, the treatment will be tailored to the genetic profile of someone's cancer. This is the new frontier of high-tech medicine."