Media Release

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First UNSW Medicine Graduates Reminisce - Randwick Hospitals 50th Anniversary

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the clinical, teaching and research partnership between the Randwick Hospitals Campus (Prince of Wales, Royal Hospital for Women, Sydney Children's Hospital) and University of New South Wales' (UNSW) Faculty of Medicine, one of the largest medical teaching facilities in Australia.

Alumni including Professor James Isbister, Chair of the Human Research and Ethics Committee for the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District at Prince of Wales Hospital, and Conjoint Professor of Medicine at UNSW, have been busy poring through campus archives, as well as their own, stirring memories of the formative medical education years.

"The 50 year celebrations mark a revolution in medical training in Australia, but the idea of student doctors wasn't readily supported back in the 1960s," Professor Isbister said.

"There was considerable opposition to a new medical school and the thought that using a technical university to train doctors was really over the top."

Today, the Randwick site is one of the largest Teaching Hospital complexes in Australia, with three public hospitals (Prince of Wales, Royal Hospital for Women, Sydney Children's Hospital), a private hospital, three Medical Research Institutes, Chairs of Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Psychiatry, Paediatrics, Feto-Maternal Medicine, and others, plus three Chairs of Nursing.

All sit alongside a major research-intensive medical school at the University of New South Wales.

"The evolution of the Randwick campus has a complex and intertwining history that is relevant to all who work in our health system," Professor Isbister said.

"The closure of four maternity hospitals, the transformation of an infectious diseases hospital into a general hospital with its subsequent closure, and the 'sprouting' of a new children's hospital is a unique story."

Since those times, the Randwick Teaching Hospitals and UNSW medicine have come a long way, culminating in the establishment in December 2010 of the Health-Science Alliance as the first Academic Health Sciences Centre in Australia.

"This cemented and formalised the long tradition of cooperation in the triple mission of the entities involved, namely healthcare, research and teaching and brought together the hospitals, Medical research Institutes and Universities involved in that mission in a new partnership," Professor Isbister said.

Celebrations of the 50th anniversary will be held as part of the 2nd Annual Health-Science Alliance Symposium, and a celebratory gala dinner, to be held on Thursday 24 October.