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## Academics disturbed by university's deal to limit research

Harriet Alexander Higher Education Reporter  
February 7, 2007

ACADEMICS at the University of Sydney are disturbed by its decision to restrict the research that can be conducted at a new medical institute and will meet today to discuss the decision.

Ian Kerridge, the director of the Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, which would come under the auspices of the institute - said the university had sent a disturbing message to the community.

The university senate approved a deal with St Johns College on Monday night which will see the Catholic residential college hand over land for the Sydney Institute of Health and Medical Research on the condition that no foetal stem cell research be conducted there. It also emerged yesterday that the university had alternative sites for the institute which would not have required a compromise on the type of research that could be conducted.

"It's definitely sending a message to the community about the independence of the university and its desire to pursue education and research according to the community's values and needs," Associate Professor Kerridge said.

"My major concern is not in relation to the church's position on stem cell research and cloning ... it's more whether it's acceptable for the university to adopt those and what that means if it does."

Chris Murphy, an associate dean of medicine, called for the university to expedite a public statement of academic independence. "This illustrates the importance of protecting academic freedom," he said.

David Daintree, the St Johns College rector, said he would not have agreed to release the land if the university had not agreed to his conditions, knowing it had other options.

"If they had found it unpalatable they did have alternative sites. They made that clear to us from the beginning." A spokesman for the university confirmed the Bosch building and medical foundation building on Parramatta Road had been investigated as possible sites for the eight-building complex. "The Johns site allows for much more creativity and a much bigger and better building," he said.

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