

Think tank to lift level of health debate

The new Menzies Centre for health policy research will consider whether the Commonwealth should take over the health system from the states as its first project.

Director Robert Wells says the policy think tank will be launched today in Canberra.

The centre is one of three independent groups funded by the Menzies Foundation.

He says other issues likely to be considered by the group include whether people get the best treatment for major diseases and if the Government's investment in private health insurance is effective.

Mr Wells says the aim is to lift the level of debate about health issues in Australia.

"This is a joint venture between the ANU and the University of Sydney so we've got a lot of other expert academics we can draw on to help us formulate our questions [and] undertake the research," he said.

"We'll have a small research team ourselves but what we really want to do is work across with other people already working on health questions and try and get them to look at some of the major issues of the day."

Mr Wells says Public Service Commissioner Andrew Podger will kick off the centre's first major project in a speech at today's launch.

"He's going to look specifically at the split between the Commonwealth and the states and how might a health system operate if as many people argue the Commonwealth should take it over, so that will be our first thing really a question of Commonwealth state relations and funding streams," Mr Wells said.