



**JACKPOT:** Professor Jonathan Carapetis, director of the Menzies School of Health Research

# Healthy little dose of funds

By **ALYSSA BETTS**

**T**HE Darwin-based Menzies School of Health Research has hit the federal funding jackpot, scoring almost \$1.2 million in scholarships and fellowships.

The institute has announced seven researchers netted the cash as part of \$124 million in Australian Government funding for medical research.

Menzies research officer Kate Mounsey scored \$274,000 to continue research into an itchy little mite that causes a mighty lot of havoc.

"My research involves scabies, which is a major problem in Aboriginal communities,

especially affecting children," Dr Mounsey said.

"It also has outbreaks in nursing homes occasionally and also in prisons."

Dr Mounsey is looking at the mite to study its drug resistance to many treatments, and aims to develop ways of testing to identify resistance earlier.

She said developing a diagnostic test to identify resistance emerging early on would increase the power to control its spread.

Dr Mounsey said the intense itching caused by the mite burrowing in the skin could lead to skin sores and result in serious skin infections.

"(Those infections) — streptococcal infections in particular — have been linked to renal and heart disease in

communities, and scabies does underlie quite a bit of this skin infection."

Other Menzies projects to receive funding include researching pneumonia prevention in Aboriginal kids and improving housing and health in indigenous communities.

Menzies director Jonathan Carapetis said the money would help keep the institute at the forefront of Aboriginal and tropical health research.

"The work of Menzies — answering questions to improve people's health — relies on having excellent people," Prof Carapetis said yesterday.

"These grants help us to develop the careers of superb researchers, some in the early stages of their careers and others at a more advanced level."