

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



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BACKING VICTORIA'S NEXT BIG MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS

Medical research into the use of existing drugs to combat coronavirus and surgical methods aided by artificial intelligence are among projects newly backed by the Victorian Government.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford today announced that 12 projects would share in grants totalling \$3 million from the *Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund*.

One program recipient, a team at RMIT, will explore a new way to manage viral infections, which could allow the repurposing of existing drugs to fight coronavirus.

In another project, researchers at the Bionics Institute will work on a new deep-brain stimulation therapy to improve the management of Parkinson's disease, a debilitating condition affecting more than 75,000 Australians.

Other projects include tech company Atidia developing a machine learning tool that supports doctors' decision-making capabilities to improve outcomes for surgery patients, and a Hudson Institute program to develop low-cost regenerative medicine for extremely premature babies at high risk of severe and chronic respiratory disease.

In its fourth year, the *Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund* supports early-stage research including discovery research, clinical research and health practice.

Since 2017, some 69 health and medical research projects have benefitted from \$11.9 million invested through the fund, with matched contributions of \$18 million by the applicants, proving the Government's commitment to supporting Victoria's burgeoning medical research sector.

Victoria is home to 12 independent medical research institutes that employ more than 4,800 people. The state's wider medical research sector supports more than 30,000 jobs across institutes, universities and industry.

The current Victorian Budget is delivering a total of \$116.5 million for our top researchers, clinicians and scientists to do what they do best.

This includes \$60 million for Australia's first research and education centre for biomedical engineering – the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery at St Vincent's Hospital – and \$18 million to establish the Australian Drug Discovery Centre at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research.

For more details on grant recipients, visit djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/backing-victorias-next-medical-breakthroughs.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"We're backing our world-class medical researchers to help fight coronavirus and develop other cutting-edge treatments."

"These projects will build on Victoria's reputation as a world leader in medical research and deliver better everyday care for patients."

"We're giving our researchers the support they need to translate their discoveries into life-saving treatments."

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