

Media Release

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Minister for Employment

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MAJOR BOOST FOR VICTORIAN RESEARCHERS IN COVID FIGHT

The Andrews Labor Government is increasing funding for a study into the effects of coronavirus, and backing ground-breaking research into new and emerging strains, long-term coronavirus symptoms and potential links between the disease and unborn children.

The work will build on the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's (MCRI's) research into the effects of the virus on every major human organ, which has already deepened our understanding of coronavirus' impacts on the heart.

The dedicated group of scientists will investigate cellular mechanisms leading to lingering "long COVID" issues such as fatigue, cognitive difficulties and ongoing breathing problems.

The funding will also allow researchers to get greater insight into the effects of coronavirus on the placenta and potential transfer of the virus to the fetus.

Additionally, scientists will analyse variants from the UK, India and Brazil to understand the impact of more infectious strains.

This is the first time research of this kind has been done in Australia, with the MCRI one of only a few facilities worldwide able to study the effect of the virus on every major human organ.

The work is possible thanks to the Labor Government's \$31 million *COVID-19 Research Fund*, which includes \$2.3 million allocated to the MCRI for the *Impact of COVID-19 on Organs* research project.

Scientists in Melbourne have already made significant discoveries, including identifying issues with the heart muscle as a result of the virus disrupting oxygen supply.

In addition to coronavirus research at the MCRI, the Government has funded projects at the Doherty Institute, the Burnet Institute and other leading institutes. The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* also included an investment of \$155 million towards a new Australian Institute for Infectious Diseases in the heart of the Parkville biomedical precinct.

Victoria is home to 14 independent medical research institutes, which employ more than 5,800 people. The state's wider medical research sector supports more than 30,000 jobs across institutes, universities and industry.

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

"Our extraordinary medical research institutes produce world-leading results that change and save lives every day, and we're backing them to continue this vital work."

"Victoria is one of the few places in the world where research has been able to continue over the past 12 months, thanks to the work everyone has done to get on top of this wildly infectious virus."

"The knowledge we're building will help people now and for generations to come."