

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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IMPROVING CHILDRENS HEALTH WITH GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH

An entire generation of young Victorians will be invited to join the GenV health study, which will provide answers to complex medical issues and drive better health outcomes for Victorian families.

GenV will track the wellbeing of more than 100,000 Victorians throughout their lives, with support from the Andrews Labor Government's \$14 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22*.

The investment will support the next phase of the project, which will invite every baby born in Victoria over the two years from 1 July to join the study.

In addition to providing invaluable data for researchers, the study will make it easier to detect avoidable health issues in children by catching early warning signs of health issues.

Participating families will receive regular communication to ensure they are fully aware of the project's progression and how data will be used. Families can opt out of the study at any time.

The pilot program began at the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital last year and has since expanded to 65 hospitals across Victoria, with the extra investment opening the door for every Victorian hospital to take part.

So far 677 newborn babies have been involved, including 11 sets of twins. Data from the trial showed 93 per cent of parents feel positive about taking part in the voluntary initiative.

GenV will also be a world-first investigation into the long-term effects of coronavirus on babies and children, shedding light on both the physical and economic impacts of the pandemic. The program will provide invaluable evidence which will shape strategies across health, early childhood development, education and human services.

GenV has already established a state-of-the-art biobank that enables the safe storage of biological samples from participants, which is the first of its kind in Australia and the largest -80°C biobank in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute is leading the project and working with the Royal Children's Hospital, the University of Melbourne and the Paul Ramsay Foundation. The new investment builds on previous funding of \$16 million, bringing the total Government support for GenV to \$30 million.

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

"This study will not only improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young Victorians, it will also pinpoint critical links between environment, genetics, physical characteristics and developmental milestones."

"As one of the largest studies ever done on pregnancies and children, GenV reinforces Victoria's position as a world leader in medical research."

"This ground-breaking work will be incredibly beneficial for health experts, researchers and policy makers – and it will be recognised internationally for decades to come."

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