

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**  
Acting Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Mental Health



Tuesday, 22 June 2021

## **SUPERBUGS ARRESTED BY VICTORIA'S GENETIC SUPER-SLEUTHS**

The Victorian Government's investment in a world-first genomics sequencing trial is stopping hospital superbugs in their tracks – preventing outbreaks and saving lives.

The \$35 million in funding for the Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance announced last November is already producing better patient care for Victorians and promising continuing advancements in patient diagnosis and treatment.

Melbourne Genomics' expertise has also played a crucial role in tracking the transmission of coronavirus in Victoria.

In hospitals, scientists and doctors are winning the war against potentially fatal outbreaks of superbugs – antibiotic-resistant bacteria – through Melbourne Genomics' *Controlling Superbugs* clinical project.

It is the first project in the world to incorporate multiple sites and multiple organisms and has detected 600 more transmissions than would have been possible using traditional testing, bolstering protection for our most vulnerable hospital patients.

Most superbug surveillance systems only detect outbreaks once a number of patients have been infected but the Melbourne project has allowed superbugs to be tracked in real time. By performing sequencing prospectively, scientists have even got ahead of outbreaks – identifying potential problems before they become a threat.

In 2015, Victoria was the first state to invest in a cutting-edge genomic testing program, which has now been accessed by more than 4,000 Victorians with rare or undiagnosed illnesses.

The Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance is a collaboration of 10 hospitals, research and academic organisations – the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital, the University of Melbourne, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, CSIRO, the Australian Genome Research Facility, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Austin Health and Monash Health.

The Victorian Government has invested more than \$580 million in medical research in the past year, including \$400 million for a new Australian Institute for Infectious Disease. The Government has separately created a \$2 billion *Breakthrough Victoria Fund* to back the next generation of research and innovation and drive jobs growth.

Victoria attracts more than 40 per cent of Australia's medical research funding and Victorian medical technology and pharmaceutical companies spend almost \$1 billion on research every year.

### **Quotes attributable to Acting Premier James Merlino**

*"This project means better care for our most vulnerable hospital patients, faster diagnosis for people who are desperately looking for answers and more precise treatment."*

*"Victoria is leading the world in tracking superbugs and the wider applications of genomic sequencing touch every aspect of our healthcare system."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford**

*"Our medical researchers produce results that change and save lives every day – we've backed them and we'll continue to support their amazing efforts."*

**Media contact:** Jamila Fontana 0409 741 279 | [jamila.fontana@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:jamila.fontana@minstaff.vic.gov.au)

**Quote attributable to Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance executive director Professor Clara Gaff**

*“We’ve seen how genomics can provide answers, change care and save lives. Victorian hospitals and research and academic institutions are working together to make genomic medicine a reality for everyone who needs it.”*