

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business

Minister for Resources



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RENOWNED SCIENTISTS ADDED TO SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP

Victoria's mRNA research and manufacturing capabilities are being boosted, with two of the brightest minds in the field being added to mRNA Victoria's Scientific Advisory Group (SAG).

Professor Ricky Johnstone, an international leader in oncology and cancer research, and Dr Minna-Liisa Änkö, a leading Australian RNA researcher, are joining the world-class team.

Their additions come hot on the heels of a fellow SAG member Dr Barney Graham being named by Time Magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential people.

Dr Graham was recognised for his work as the Deputy Director of the Vaccine Research Center at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), where he worked with American company Moderna to create their mRNA vaccine.

The award-winning immunologist and virologist has also worked closely with Dr Anthony Fauci – the leader of the United States' coronavirus response – and has hosted President Joe Biden at his laboratory.

Professor Johnstone is the Head of the Gene Regulation Laboratory at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Head of the Sir Peter MacCallum Department of Oncology, The University of Melbourne.

Dr Änkö is the Head of the Functional RNAomics laboratory, holding a joint appointment at the Centre of Reproductive Health and Centre for Cancer Research at the Hudson Institute of Medical Research.

Professor Johnstone and Dr Änkö join an esteemed panel of leading global vaccine experts chaired by Victoria's Lead Scientist, Dr Amanda Caples, which also feature Doherty Institute Director, Professor Sharon Lewin, and Director of the Burnet Institute, Professor Brendan Crabb.

The Scientific Advisory Group is harnessing the expertise of its members and, in consultation with mRNA Victoria, supporting the development of mRNA vaccine manufacturing and research.

The Victorian Government is investing \$50 million to build mRNA capability, which will equip Australia with vaccine support for protection against coronavirus and future pandemics, and capabilities for new research breakthroughs.

The creation of the new body solidifies the Government's commitment to driving innovation and research, building on the establishment of the \$2 billion *Breakthrough Victoria Fund*.

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

"These are two fantastic additions to the brilliant panel of experts already doing great work as part of the Scientific Advisory Group."

"Victoria is proud to be the home of Australia's biotech community, drawing from an unmatched pool of experts and researchers that are best placed to advise us on how to accelerate onshore mRNA manufacturing."

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