

# 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



Monday, 22 November 2021

## BACKING VICTORIAN WOMEN IN mRNA AND MEDICAL RESEARCH

Women-led medical research will be prioritised by the Andrews Labor Government in its investment in a new RNA research acceleration fund and the next phase of a successful medical research fund.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford today unveiled the new *mRNA Victoria Research Acceleration Fund* and the 2021 round of the *Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund*, with combined funding of \$5 million.

The *mRNA Victoria Research Acceleration Fund* will provide \$2 million to fast-track RNA-based therapeutics research. RNA technology has created a new frontier for vaccine development and the fund will support Victoria's researchers who lead the nation in mRNA capability.

Both funds will provide extra weighting for grant applications received by women-led projects and those in which women make up at least half of the research team.

Around one-third of Australian medical research funding is awarded to projects led by women and while women make up 75 per cent of early-stage researchers in Australia, only 25 per cent of professors are women.

Professor Angela Morgan, the recipient of a grant through the *Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund*, is one of many women leading the way, producing a world-first treatment tool for speech disorders in children and adolescents.

Based at the Speech and Language group at Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI), Professor Morgan and her team are revolutionising how speech therapy is diagnosed with the ADAAPT tool.

The digital assessment and treatment planning tool diagnoses and treats all subtypes of speech disorders and is already helping children like six-year-old Oliver Howell who suffers from a rare condition known as childhood apraxia of speech. Following his successful diagnosis, Ollie is receiving targeted therapy to help treat his condition.

Now in its fifth year, the *Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund* has supported some 69 health and medical research projects to a total value of \$11.9 million, with matched contributions of \$18 million by the applicants.

In the past year, the Labor Government has invested more than \$590 million in medical research – including up to \$400 million for a new Australian Institute of Infectious Disease to lead the fight against future pandemics.

Applications are now open and for more details on both funds, visit [djpr.vic.gov.au/acceleration-fund](https://djpr.vic.gov.au/acceleration-fund).

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

*"Women are playing a leading role in advancing medical technology and these grants can make a critical difference in increasing the number of women able to do outstanding work."*

*"More funding for mRNA research will allow us to build on our nation-leading capability, enabling Victorian researchers to lead the development of new applications and drive breakthroughs that change and save lives."*

### Quote attributable to Women in Science Parkville Precinct Executive Committee Member Professor Sarah Russell

*"Prioritising women in research leadership is an important step to address imbalances in medical research and ensure we have more diversity leading Victoria's next wave of medical breakthroughs."*

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