

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



Saturday, 5 March 2022

BLOOD DONORS SOUGHT FOR NEW COVID-19 RESEARCH BIOBANK

The call is out for Victorians willing to roll up their sleeves and donate blood for a research initiative into COVID-19, backed by the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and Digital Economy Jaala Pulford today met with researchers for the Victorian COVID-19 Vaccinees Collection biobank as they seek volunteers to provide blood samples in between their vaccine doses.

The biobank is a \$5 million project that will provide critical insights into the effectiveness of vaccines, long-term effects of COVID-19 while also helping experts prepare for new strains of coronavirus.

Any Victorian who is due to receive their third dose is eligible and donors to the biobank will provide five blood samples over a two-year period including, shortly before and soon after their third dose, then at regular intervals through to 2024.

Researchers are seeking up to 1500 donors and are after a strong cross section of the population. The elderly, people living with HIV, healthcare workers, people who've been infected with coronavirus and those who are immunocompromised, are strongly encouraged to apply.

The Doherty Institute will house the biobank and lead the project, with seven Victorian health and medical research institutions participating in the rollout. The Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious disease Emergencies (APPRISE) will also assist in the long-term management of the collection.

This project is funded through the Government's \$35.6 million COVID-19 Research Fund created in May 2020 to better understand transmission, immunity and the long-term health impacts of COVID-19.

The Government is making significant investments in medical research to keep the state at the forefront of Australia's defence against future pandemics, including \$400 million for the new Australian Institute for Infectious Disease and \$50 million for mRNA Victoria to fast-track local mRNA vaccine manufacturing.

Interested volunteers can find out more information and register to donate to the biobank via vc2.org.au.

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

"Our extraordinary medical research institutes have produced world-leading results throughout the pandemic and we're backing them to continue that vital work."

"This new biobank will be a key part of managing coronavirus going forward while allowing researchers to monitor the effects of vaccines and prepare for any new strains."

Quotes attributable to Doherty Institute Director Professor Sharon Lewin

"The creation of a vaccine biobank is vital to co-ordinating Victorian coronavirus research resources, and we thank the Victorian Government for supporting this initiative."

"We're now calling on Victorians to play their part in helping us understand how different people respond to vaccines, how long the vaccine provides protection against COVID-19 and the ability of vaccines to protect as new variants emerge."

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