

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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VICTORIA TO LEAD GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP IN STEM CELL MEDICINE

The Andrews Labor Government is backing breakthrough treatments for Victorians who need them most with home-grown scientists to lead a global stem cell research program in Parkville.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford today launched the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Stem Cell Medicine (reNEW), a new international centre of excellence.

reNEW is a partnership between Murdoch Children's Research Centre (MCRI), the University of Copenhagen, and Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands.

The collaboration will pave the way for future stem cell drugs and therapies for diseases including congenital heart disease, inherited kidney diseases, muscular dystrophies, inflammatory bowel disease and Type 1 Diabetes.

Mia Cowley, 16, knows more than most teenagers the impact advances in stem cell research and treatments can have.

Diagnosed with congenital heart disease as a baby, Mia required multiple surgeries as a child after she was born with a single ventricle in her heart instead of two.

MCRI researchers from the reNEW program are growing complex tissues from stem cells of patients, with the goal to increase understanding of childhood heart disease, find treatments and eventually to develop replacement organs.

The team is currently bioengineering a heart patch – a patch of cardiac muscle made from patient stem cells – that could help improve heart function in children like Mia, preventing their hearts from failing or requiring transplantation.

MCRI is supported by \$1 million in funding from the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* to develop a business case to supercharge research for innovative stem cell therapies for conditions in children and to support its role in reNEW.

The Government has also delivered \$2.3 million to MCRI for a stem cell study involving growing miniature organs so researchers can look into the impacts of coronavirus on the heart, lungs, brain, kidneys and blood vessels.

The Government has invested \$1.3 billion in medical research since 2014, including up to \$400 million for the establishment of the Australian Institute for Infectious Disease.

Government investment in the medical research sector has helped create more than 73,000 direct and indirect full-time equivalent jobs.

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

"Our researchers sit at the cutting edge of medical research and this international partnership shows their hard work is recognised worldwide."

"Stem cell medicine provides new hope for children and families facing some of their toughest health challenges, and we are committed to supporting our researchers through innovative projects so they can change lives."

Quote attributable to reNEW Australia CEO Professor Melissa Little

"I am very excited about the amazing opportunity that reNEW represents. This will enable outcomes across the breadth of stem cell medicine – new drugs based on human stem cell models, cell and tissue therapies and new cell and gene therapies."

Media contact: Stephanie Hobbs 0429 275 437 | stephanie.hobbs@minstaff.vic.gov.au