

Media Release

The Hon Harriet Shing MP

Minister for Water
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Equality



Friday, 19 August 2022

UNCOVERING THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE IN STAWELL

The much-anticipated Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory (SUPL) is officially complete and preparing to join the global hunt for dark matter thanks to support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Regional Development Harriet Shing today announced that the lab more than 1km underground within the Stawell Gold Mine, will be the new home of dark matter research in Australia.

The project has been jointly backed by the Labor Government with a \$5 million investment through the Regional Infrastructure Fund and a \$5 million contribution from the Commonwealth Government.

The Stawell laboratory will be managed by SUPL Ltd., which is co-owned by the University of Melbourne, Australia's Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), the Australian National University, Swinburne University of Technology, and the University of Adelaide.

With stage 1 now complete, the lab is ready to host the SABRE South dark matter direct detection experiment, which will be installed over the coming months. SABRE South will run alongside the existing SABRE experiment in Laboratori Nazionali del Gran Sasso, Italy.

These experiments are designed to detect a specific particle believed to make up dark matter. By going deep underground researchers hope to block out interference in an ultra-low radiation environment to identify these particles.

Dark matter comprises 85 per cent of universe's mass, but until now scientists have not seen it and the substance remains a mystery. This means laboratories like SUPL will help solve questions that have the potential to change our understanding of the universe.

The Government's investment has been provided through the *Regional Infrastructure Fund* which is part of the flagship *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund*. The Fund is part of the more than \$36 billion investment in rural and regional Victoria since 2015.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Harriet Shing

"The Stawell Underground Physics Lab is putting Stawell at the centre of innovative and cutting-edge research that has the potential to uncover the secrets of our universe."

"SUPL will attract the eyes of the world to this goldfield town and create local jobs while boosting investment opportunities for the region."

Quotes attributable to University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Professor Duncan Maskell

"At the University of Melbourne, we recognise that strong collaboration is needed to address the great unanswered questions – such as 'what is dark matter?'"

Working with our partners and sharing our collective knowledge and expertise, the Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory will facilitate experiments which are critical in the global search for dark matter."

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