

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



Tuesday, 9 May 2023

## DELIVERING THE BEST CARE THROUGH MEDICAL RESEARCH

Every child deserves the best start to life and the Andrews Labor Government is backing medical research that will help deliver, just that.

Minister for Medical Research Mary-Anne Thomas yesterday visited the Bionics Institute to announce that their new hearing test for babies – the 'EarGenie' – is one of 23 projects being funded through the Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund (VMRAF).

Launched in 2017 by the Labor Government, the VMRAF has invested more than \$18 million to support more than 100 innovative research projects across Victoria.

Early intervention is critical in the development of babies, and the VMRAF will invest \$500,000 to support the trial of the 'EarGenie', which fits babies with a small headband to monitor their response to different sounds.

Babies found to be deaf or hard of hearing can then be provided with the right hearing aids as early as possible.

Currently, these babies must wait until they are 9 months old before audiologists can determine if their treatment is helping them and if the treatment isn't right in the first months of life, they never catch up with their peers.

Choosing the right treatment at the earliest time will give hearing impaired babies the ability to hear and distinguish between the sounds that teach them to speak.

This round of funding will also support Monash University research the use of inhaled oxytocin to reduce maternal mortality. Delivered as an aerosol and without the need for cold chain storage, this new delivery system will help reduce postpartum haemorrhage, which kills an estimated 70,000 women globally each year.

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute will also undertake three projects, covering research into mental health in schools, alleviating stress in young trans people and delivering culturally tailored vaccine education for Arabic-speaking Victorians.

Other projects also receiving funding include Sleptite's research into non-invasive technology to manage the risk of pressure injuries, Breast Screen Victoria's work on AI analysis of mammogram readings, and the Hudson Institute's project looking into treatments for severe lung infections.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$1.3 billion into medical research since 2014, helping create more than 100,000 jobs in Victoria's biotech sector.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Medical Research Mary-Anne Thomas

*"Every second counts in a baby's development and the EarGenie could lead to early intervention for babies with hearing difficulties – giving them the best chance of hearing clearly and learning to speak."*

*"We're supporting Victorian researchers do what they do best – innovating, researching to deliver the new breakthroughs that will make the lives of all Victorians better."*

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