

Media Release

Mr Danny Pearson MP

Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs

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WORLD-FIRST RNA TRIAL A BREAKTHROUGH FOR LUPUS PATIENTS

Melbourne researchers have developed a new RNA drug designed to prevent the damaging effects of the debilitating autoimmune disease lupus, in a major breakthrough supported by the Allan Labor Government.

Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs Danny Pearson today visited the Hudson Institute of Medical Research in Clayton to learn how this groundbreaking treatment will be potentially life-changing for thousands of people suffering from lupus.

The innovative RNA drug is a topical cream applied to affected skin and is being tested on participants in a world-first clinical trial conducted through Australian biotech company Noxopharm.

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune illness where the body's immune system attacks its normal cells. It can affect different parts of the body, leading to skin problems, joint pain, fatigue and inflammation of major organs.

Although lupus can affect anybody, 90 per cent of patients are women. For women, the condition often develops during their reproductive years, impacting fertility and increasing risks during pregnancy and childbirth.

October is Lupus Awareness Month, an important month to raise awareness and improve early diagnosis of the disease, which impacts about 20,000 Australians.

The Labor Government invested \$100,000 in 2022 towards the development of the RNA-based drug through the mRNA Victoria Research Acceleration Fund.

Through its grant programs, mRNA Victoria has provided \$30.6 million to support 63 research projects since 2021 – unlocking medicines and vaccines and establishing a world-leading RNA industry in Victoria.

The Labor Government's investment of more than \$1 billion in health and medical research over the past decade continues to drive growth, create jobs and support incredible breakthroughs in treatment and care.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs Danny Pearson

"As a world leader in medical research and health technology, Victoria has the largest sector in Australia – supporting more than 30,000 jobs and driving the latest in scientific breakthroughs."

"It's exciting to see this research making the leap from the lab to real-world clinical trials, offering hope for thousands of people suffering from lupus."

Quote attributable to Hudson Institute of Medical Research Director and CEO Professor Elizabeth Hartland

"We're excited to work in partnership with Noxopharm to develop RNA medicines for patients with debilitating inflammation. Our newly NATA-accredited RNAt platform supported by the Victorian Government, is ready for the RNA industry to test the efficacy and safety of new RNA-based therapeutics."

Quote attributable to Noxopharm CEO Dr Gisela Mautner

“We are very proud to be working closely with Hudson Institute to bring Victorian innovation to the wider world. This is ground-breaking technology that we hope will lead to the development of a new treatment for lupus, and beyond that to several other diseases in the future.”