



Media Release

From the Victorian Minister for Innovation and
the NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research

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STATES JOIN FORCES ON \$1 MILLION STEM CELL PROGRAM

Research into new treatments for diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease, spinal cord injury and diabetes is to receive a \$1 million boost from the New South Wales and Victorian Governments.

NSW Premier Morris Iemma announced that NSW would provide \$500,000 in grants for stem cell research following the passage of the *Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Act* last year. The NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research, Verity Firth, and the Victorian Minister for Innovation, Gavin Jennings, today announced that Victoria will partner in the grant program, bringing the total of research funding available to \$1m.

"Stem cell research has the very real potential to unlock cures for many causes of human suffering," the Ministers said.

"It has already been shown that stem cells can restore function to damaged tissues in models of Parkinson's disease and immuno-deficiency.

"Recent US research has turned embryonic stem cells into insulin producing cells in mice, representing a possible cure for type 1 diabetes."

Announcing the new stem cell research grants program, both Ministers stressed that funding applications would require research collaboration between the two states and must comply with Australia's rigorous regulatory regime for research involving human embryonic stem cells.

"Recent changes to legislation in both NSW and Victoria have opened up new opportunities for stem cell research in Australia, including somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT).

"Amended laws in both states have provided a clear regulatory framework for this important work."

SCNT uses a patient's own cells to create a source of individually tailored embryonic stem cells. For patients with a specific disease these stem cells will have unique characteristics that may be used to understand and treat the disease process.

Significant advances have also been made in reprogramming adult cells to exhibit traits similar to embryonic stem cells and more research is needed to see if these can replace embryonic stem cells.

“The combination of legislative certainty and new funding will drive research into finding tailored human stem cell lines appropriate for therapeutic use – something which hasn’t yet been achieved anywhere in the world,” Ms Firth said.

“Australia is already a global leader in overall stem cell research and now Victoria and NSW are coming together to extend our leadership into new stem cell technologies which have the potential to transform how we treat major and growing diseases like diabetes, heart disease, cancer and Parkinson’s,” Mr Jennings said.

Guidelines and application forms for stem cell research grants program are available at: www.osmr.nsw.gov.au and www.biotechnology.vic.gov.au

An estimated 140,000 Australians have type 1 diabetes; 100,000 Australians are living with Parkinson’s; and dementia impacts on the lives of nearly one million Australians with more than 1,000 new cases diagnosed each week.

Media contact: (Firth) David Boyd 0404 944 550 / (Jennings) Nick Talbot 0408 473 278