

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



Friday, 8 December 2023

BIONTECH PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER NEXT GENERATION CANCER CARE

Victoria's standing as a leading producer of life-saving vaccines and medicines will grow with global giant BioNTech creating a research and manufacturing facility in Melbourne, in partnership with the Labor Government.

Building on an in-principle agreement reached with BioNTech last year, Premier Jacinta Allan announced today that the German biotechnology company's mRNA facility will be established at La Trobe University's Bundoora campus, creating around 1,200 local jobs over 10 years.

In addition to the company's drugs and vaccines, the new facility will produce next generation mRNA vaccines and treatments for clinical trials as well as research-grade RNA materials, enabling local researchers and biotechnology companies to tap into BioNTech's world-leading expertise in developing immunotherapies.

Included in the agreement is BioNTech's clinical cancer program to deliver precision oncology therapies for hard-to-treat cancers for up to 4,000 Australians over the next 10 years.

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will be the co-ordinating delivery partner for the program together with other Victorian hospitals Austin Health, Alfred Health and Monash Health. New treatments will target pancreatic, neck, cervical, oesophageal and colorectal cancers, with more hard-to-treat cancers to be included.

BioNTech will also establish an innovation centre in Parkville to support the commercialisation of local research, helping fast-track new therapies from the lab to patients.

The agreement will see BioNTech's artificial intelligence (AI) subsidiary InstaDeep, which is leading the development of an AI-driven early warning system for potential pandemics, set up its Australian head office in Victoria.

This AI capability will complement La Trobe University's Centre for AI in Medical Innovation, which will be established with support from the Labor Government under the agreement.

With Moderna already building a major hub in Victoria, the state will become the only place in the world where both mRNA leaders host R&D and manufacturing operations. Victoria will be the only place in the Southern Hemisphere making mRNA vaccines.

BioNTech gained wide public recognition during the pandemic for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, developed using its pioneering mRNA technology, which has been administered 3.5 billion times in 175 countries.

Quote attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"This partnership means more mRNA expertise in our state, more treatments for people with hard-to-treat cancers – and 1,200 more local jobs."

Quote attributable to Minister for Economic Growth Tim Pallas

"This is a coup that cements our standing as a global destination for biotechnology investment, research and talent, and ensures we remain at the forefront of mRNA innovation."

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Quote attributable to BioNTech CEO and co-founder Prof. Ugur Sahin, M.D.

“BioNTech’s vision is to translate science into survival. Victoria is one of the leading life sciences hubs in the Asia Pacific region, and we are looking forward to strengthening its cutting-edge research and development.”

Quote attributable to La Trobe University Chancellor the Hon John Brumby AO

“Establishing the mRNA facility and Victorian Centre for AI in Medical Innovation within La Trobe’s University City of the Future locates them in an area surrounded by high-tech industry, manufacturing and healthcare.”