



# Media release

**From the Minister for Innovation**

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Friday, February 18, 2005

## **NEW LABS MAKE MELBOURNE A WORLD LEADER IN STEM CELL R&D**

Australia's global biomedical reputation was confirmed today with the launch of two new laboratories that make Melbourne home to one of the world's largest stem cell and regenerative science research hubs.

Minister for Innovation, John Brumby, also used the occasion to announce the acceptance of the Melbourne-developed embryonic stem cell line, MEL-1, into the UK Stem Cell Bank.

The new facilities comprise the Major National Research Facility (MNRF) operated by the Australian Stem Cell Centre and the Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratory (MISCL) operated by Monash University – located at the Monash STRIP

“The Victorian Government understands the potential of stem cell research and has provided \$1.375 million in MNRF funding for today's opening as well as \$10 million to the ASCC, Mr Brumby said.

“The new MNRF and MISCL laboratories will accommodate local and international researchers in stem cell and regenerative science, making Australia a logical choice for collaborative projects and research talent.

“Already there are exciting projects underway at the STRIP including six new human embryonic stem cell lines to be derived and characterised by Stem Cell Sciences Limited, the ASCC and Melbourne IVF.

“MEL-1 is the first of these lines being made available to researchers around the globe without commercial or intellectual property constraints.

“And after I had talks last year with Lord Sainsbury, the Minister responsible for Science and Innovation in the UK, I am delighted to announce MEL-1 is being accepted by the UK Stem Cell Bank.

“The Bank is the first of its kind to provide human stem cell lines for international and clinical research that have met its strict ethical guidelines.

The MNRF will also be the location of an Australian stem cell bank. The Australian bank will store locally developed and characterised embryonic stem cell lines and deposit international lines, under a reciprocal arrangement. The Australian stem cell bank will provide Australian scientists with access to a collection of embryonic stem cell lines and adult stem cells for research purposes.

“The acceptance will give researchers confidence they are working with a stem cell line that has met quality, legal and ethical standards, will widen MEL-1's availability and speed up research.

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Together these announcements show Victoria is a serious biotech player with the infrastructure, talent, industry and projects to back up its claim as a world stem cell R&D leader,” he said.

The announcements are timely given the Commonwealth is conducting reviews of its legislation in this area. The Victorian Government is seeking to participate in the review and is urging a consultative and transparent approach by the Commonwealth.

MEL-1 is also being characterised by the International Stem Cell Initiative which is working to develop criteria and worldwide standards for embryonic stem cell lines. Local stem cell researcher Dr Martin Pera is part of the Initiative.