

Thursday, 23 April, 2009

VICTORIA IN EYE DEAL PLACE TO DELIVER BIONIC EYE

Innovation Minister Gavin Jennings today welcomed the Rudd Government's \$50.7 million investment to develop an advanced bionic eye and said Victoria was well-placed to deliver the project.

Mr Jennings said the new fund, to be administered by the Australian Research Council, would help to develop a high resolution bionic eye implant capable of restoring reading vision to people suffering from degenerative retinal conditions that account for 48 per cent of all adult blindness in Australia.

"I commend the Rudd Government on its decision to fund the accelerated development of a bionic eye as part of its response to last year's 2020 summit as this funding is the crucial next step in advancing this technology," Mr Jennings said.

"Victoria is well-placed to receive the lion's share of this funding and will be assisting a world-class consortium to bid for the project.

"This funding is exactly the kind of support needed by Bionic Vision Australia's outstanding researchers to help make bionic eye technology a reality for Australians with degenerative or inherited retinal diseases."

Mr Jennings said the Brumby Government recognised the significance of this funding for people suffering from vision impairment in Australia and across the world.

"Australia has a proven track record for world-class research and technology innovation. We know the technology for developing a bionic eye is achievable and that Australian researchers are at the forefront of this research," he said.

Mr Jennings said Bionic Vision Australia, a Victorian-headquartered partnership set up with the help of a \$60,000 grant from the Brumby Government, had the technology skills needed for the bionic eye project.

"This funding announcement is excellent news for Australia and we encourage the support of the Bionic Vision Australia partnership, recognised as the Australian group with the skills and the technology knowledge best placed to advance this research," he said.

Launched in November last year, Bionic Vision Australia is a partnership between the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales, the Victoria Research Laboratory of National ICT Australia (NICTA) and Melbourne's Bionic Ear Institute and Centre for Eye Research Australia.

Since 1999 the Brumby Government has invested more than \$3.39 billion into Victoria's innovation and technology programs, the largest such commitment of any state government.