

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

02 June 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000345

Question subject: Total for vaccine work since the pandemic started

Question Type: Spoken

Hansard Page number: 14

Senator: Rex Patrick

Question

Senator PATRICK: What's the total for vaccine work since the pandemic started?

Ms Edwards: I had a briefing last week. I'm having trouble keeping up, I'm here so often with you. Ms Rishniw talked about \$43 million out of the MRFF for research and it included \$3.35 million in vaccine research for the University of Queensland, \$2 million for a competitive grant opportunity and \$13.65 million for vaccine development not yet allocated. You'll have to forgive me if I haven't quite integrated that with today's announcement, so I'll take on notice the extent to which that has moved on.

Answer:

On 2 June 2020 the Minister for Health announced a further extension of the Government's Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Coronavirus Research Response to total an investment of \$66 million¹ in Coronavirus-related research across four targeted areas:

- Investing in a vaccine for COVID-19;
- Investing in antiviral therapies for COVID-19;
- Clinical trials of potential treatments for COVID-19; and
- Improving the health system's response to COVID-19 and future pandemics

Since the pandemic started, investments from the MRFF specifically for vaccine research have totalled almost \$19 million:

- \$5 million (GST exclusive) to The University of Queensland for its COVID-19 vaccine.

¹ The \$66 million cumulative total is inclusive of all MRFF coronavirus research investment since the pandemic commenced

- \$13.65 million (GST exclusive) in 2020-21 to support further COVID-19 vaccine candidate development projects. A competitive grant opportunity for this funding opened on 15 June 2020 and closes on 15 July 2020.

In addition to the vaccine funding from the MRFF, on 4 April 2020 the Government announced the following investments in the CSIRO to support vaccine development capability:

- \$220 million to upgrade the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, Australia's high containment biosecurity research facility in Geelong.
- Up to \$10 million to support COVID-19 vaccine development work.

Further, at the EU COVID Vaccine Pledging (virtual) Conference on 4 May 2020 an additional \$7.5 million was contributed to vaccine research through Prime Minister's pledge of an additional \$15 million from the overseas development assistance budget to be split equally between:

- The Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). The CEPI is an alliance to finance and coordinate the development of new vaccines to prevent and contain infectious disease epidemics; and
- The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FINN). The FINN is a global non-profit organization driving innovation in the development and delivery of diagnostics to combat major diseases affecting the world's poorest populations.

Taken together, total Australian Government investment in vaccine related activity since the pandemic started is currently over \$256 million, comprising \$19 million from the MRFF, the \$230 million investment in the CSIRO and the \$7.5 million pledge to CEPI. This complements investments by state governments (e.g. Queensland Government) and philanthropic organisations (e.g. Paul Ramsay Foundation) and also those taken before the pandemic commenced (i.e. in CEPI).