

Frank Sartor MP

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)



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NSW Government Helps Fund International Genome Breakthrough

Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer), Frank Sartor, today welcomed a breakthrough into the human genome co-led by NSW researcher Dr Vanessa Hayes, following the most comprehensive genetic analysis ever done.

“The NSW Government’s commitment to cancer research has ensured that scientists have the resources they need to make further advances towards a cure,” Mr Sartor said.

“Dr Vanessa Hayes, the recipient of the 2007 Premier’s Award for Outstanding Cancer Research Fellow, received a \$20,000 grant from the Cancer Institute to support her research.”

Dr Hayes led an international team of scientists to sequence the genomes of indigenous southern Africans, found to be among the world’s most genetically diverse people.

More than 1.3 million new genetic variants have been added to databases of Human Genome Variation which until now have been largely Eurocentric.

Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu was one of five indigenous southern Africans to participate, in addition to four Kalahari Desert Bushmen and an ethnic Bantu who are believed to be the first sequenced from an indigenous population.

Dr Hayes research was reported in science journal *Nature*, and has today made news in *The New York Times*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian*.

Mr Sartor said the discovery has important implications for medical research, providing vital information on possible origins, treatments and cures for disease such as cancer.

“This project has international significance for medical research and it’s a great example of the contribution NSW researchers are making to the fight against cancer,” Mr Sartor said.

“This is why the Government has invested \$144 million to support 423 cancer research projects over the last 5 years.

“This has resulted in a 122% increase in research supporting a 50% increase in jobs in this sector.

“This Government has supported Dr Hayes with \$1.2 million in grants in the last 5 years,” Mr Sartor said.

Key Facts:

- 69% of total cancer research funding in NSW is from government.
- Australia contributes more than 2% of the world’s cancer research literature but has around 0.3 per cent of the world’s population.
- This award fits into the NSW State Plan to reduce the number of potentially avoidable deaths for people under 75 to 150 per 100,000 people by 2016.