

UQ researchers help lead the way in bird flu research

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[University of Queensland](#) researchers will lead two projects announced today as part of the Commonwealth Government's \$6.5 million bird flu research program.

Professor Anton Middelberg, from the [Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology](#) (AIBN), and Vivienne Tippett from the [School of Population Health](#), will share in more than \$455,000 to look at two very different areas of avian influenza.

The funding, from the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#) (NHMRC), will go to 33 projects around the country and is expected to help prepare Australia for any potential outbreak of bird flu in the event of a global pandemic. The research will also investigate new treatments, preventative measures and test public health systems and interventions.

Ms Tippett's project will explore the important public health role of pre-hospital emergency medical services in containing and managing an influenza outbreak in Australia.

The project will look at ways of managing and supporting the responses of frontline health workers to an infectious disease outbreak.

The research will expand current public health disease surveillance and triage strategies so emergency personnel can manage increased workloads within a highly infectious environment, while maintaining usual emergency medical services.

Professor Middelberg's project will look at simplified ways of producing mass vaccines quickly and safely.

The ideal way to protect against pandemic bird flu is to vaccinate all Australians as soon as possible after a dangerous strain starts to spread.

Current technology is unable to quickly deliver a mass vaccine to the entire Australian population but recent advances in manufacturing processes may change that.

If successful, health authorities will be able to immunize the Australian population using existing national biomanufacturing capability, within weeks of new strain identification, and without the requirement for high-level containment during manufacture.

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