

Defence COVID-19 Rapid Response Group

16 April 2020

Joint media release with the Minister for Defence Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC

A new Defence-led Rapid Response Group has been established to help increase domestic stocks of invasive ventilators, as part of Australia's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Response Group will do further work investigating how to upgrade non-invasive ventilators to work as invasive ventilators, as well as how to re-purpose other suitable medical machines to be used as invasive ventilators.

Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC said the Morrison Government is using all the tools at its disposal to respond to COVID-19 and the need for critical medical equipment.

"Increasing invasive ventilator capacity in Australian medical facilities is a priority, given the potential for access to internationally sourced ventilators to be constrained," Minister Reynolds said.

"Defence is able to coordinate the activities between public and private stakeholders, by harnessing Defence Science and Technology's capabilities and facilities, and utilising existing expertise in specialist research engineering and technology development."

The Response Group, led by Professor Tanya Monro, Chief Defence Scientist, consists of Commonwealth, State and Territory representatives, as well as key industry and university experts.

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews said the Response Group would feed into the work already being done by the Federal Government to increase Australia's available stock of ventilators.

"We are bringing together the best and brightest minds across a range of areas to ensure we can meet the challenge of this unprecedented pandemic," Minister Andrews said.

"This group led by Professor Monro will support the extensive work that's already been done to secure and produce more ventilators in Australia, including agreements with local manufacturers ResMed and Grey Innovation.

"We have already witnessed the power of bringing together local manufacturers and clinicians, with an agreement reached for Grey Innovation to lead a group of Aussie companies in making 2,000 invasive ventilators."

Using a fast-fail experimental approach, the Rapid Response Group is seeking to identify a prototype that provides a non-invasive to invasive conversion solution that may be able to be applied to all non-invasive ventilators used within Australian hospitals.

If a prototype is successfully identified and once testing is complete, Defence would engage with industry, where possible, to produce components and consumables for the conversion kits.

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