



# Media release

Minister for Information and Communication Technology

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## **BIONIC EYE AND BEYOND WITH BRACKS GOVERNMENT RESEARCH BOOST**

Ground-breaking research, including investigations into the development of a bionic eye, are set to take place at the new National ICT Australia (NICTA) Victoria Research Laboratory, thanks to a \$20 million Bracks Government funding boost.

“The Bracks Government was instrumental to the establishment of the NICTA Victoria Research Laboratory, in 2004, and with the latest \$20 million in funding, we have more than doubled our commitment to this cutting-edge research facility,” said Minister for Information and Communication Technology Minister Marsha Thomson.

“As a result, the Victorian Research Laboratory (VRL) will double the number of researchers and expand its research program to include world-leading ICT research in life sciences, such as investigations into developing a bionic eye,” she said.

“With its achievements to date, including the wireless sensor water management system, NICTOR, we are confident that this new funding will see the VRL continue to develop world-leading ICT innovations.”

Working with the Bionic Ear Institute as a significant collaborator, NICTA VRL's researchers are investigating the development of a clinically effective bionic eye that would eventually restore vision to the seriously vision impaired.

NICTA's expertise in high speed wireless electronic design is seen as the key enabling technology that is required to meet the challenge of creating a bionic eye.

“Projects of this calibre put Victoria and Australia on the map when it comes to cutting-edge research,” Ms Thomson said.

While the VRL will continue to specialise in world-class ICT research, including telecommunications, software engineering, optical networks, wireless broadband networks and sensor networks, the lab will also expand its research into ICT as enabling technology for life sciences, including vital research to revolutionise the way brain conditions, such as epilepsy, are identified and treated.

“Half of the new research will see the VRL developing world-class technologies that use ICT to enhance research and diagnostics for medicine and health, enhancing the national capability in this field,” Ms Thomson said.

The Victorian Government in partnership with NICTA and the University of Melbourne will invest a combined total of more than \$117 million into the NICTA VRL facility, since it was established in June 2004.

“Investing in innovation is a key part of the *Victorian Government’s ICT Industry Plan 2005-2010*, which I released last year,” said Ms Thomson.

“This funding also complements the Victorian Government’s \$230 million *Healthy Futures* package designed to strengthen Victoria’s world-class medical research facilities, improve the health of Victorians and create new industries and jobs.”

For more information on the NICTA Victoria Research Laboratory go to

<http://nicta.com.au/director/education/melbourne.cfm>