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MEDIA RELEASE

Building local capability for global impact

Health Security Systems Australia (HSSA) has engaged with ZIP Diagnostics, Axxin and Defence scientists to advance a point-of-care (POC) diagnostic capability for the detection of priority pathogens in the Indo-Pacific region.

The COVID-19 pandemic uncovered a gap in sovereign manufacturing of diagnostic tests. Increasing capability for sovereign diagnostic manufacturing will combat supply chain threats, and support Australia's role in providing health and medical leadership across the Indo-Pacific region.

HSSA's Medical Countermeasures program received strategic investment from the Department of Defence, to fund collaborative research and development projects to meet this need for domestic manufacturing of diagnostic test and the associated technologies.

This three-year collaboration will deliver tests that can detect a range of regionally-significant pathogens using a low cost and rapid POC platform, providing a field-deployable test result in 15-30 minutes, thus enabling immediate clinical care. This technology will be produced in partnership by ZIP Diagnostics and Axxin, and will leverage a vertically-integrated domestic manufacturing capability.

Dr Greg Coia, Research Leader CBRN Defence DSTG, said: "This project is critical to enhancing sovereign diagnostic capabilities, which is a priority area for DSTG to support Defence and national security requirements. The technology being created in this project focuses on pathogens relevant to both military and public health, and not just in Australia but across the Indo-Pacific region."

Dr Jack Richards, Scientific Director of ZIP Diagnostics, said the investment in this project illustrates a commitment to support Australian companies to develop innovative technologies and undertaking their manufacturing activities locally. "This is a wonderful example of the capability to solve complex biomedical defence threats when there is cross-organisation collaboration that includes multiple Defence agencies and Australian industry partners. Combining the strategic advice and guidance from Defence partners and our capabilities in manufacturing diagnostic tests, we will deliver an integrated set of tests to detect the leading infectious pathogens in the Indo-Pacific region. We are proud to support sovereign manufacturing for these priority threats and will help to secure Australia's capability to respond against novel threats that may emerge in the future."

Axxin's Technical Director, Mr Bill Hopper, said "Axxin is highly committed to the supply of a next-generation instrument, to support DMTC and the ZIP cartridge and multiplexed assays with integrated sample processing".

"The instruments will be manufactured in Axxin's Melbourne facility accredited for manufacture of regulated IVD medical devices."

Dr Felicia Pradera, General Manager HSSA, said the project was another example of DMTC's strong relationships with DSTG and other agencies within Defence.

“DSTG has always been an integral supporter and partner to DMTC,” Dr Pradera said.

“Since the start of the Medical Countermeasures program in 2015, this collaborative relationship has gone from strength to strength. We’re looking forward to seeing the relationship with DSTG, as well as with ZiP Diagnostics and Axxin, continue to flourish throughout this project.”

About the Partners

ZiP Diagnostics is a Melbourne-based biotech company focused on domestic manufacture of low-cost POC diagnostic solutions for infectious diseases.

Axxin Pty Ltd is also Melbourne-based and is a leading manufacturer of novel, portable point of care molecular diagnostic instruments for worldwide export.

The Department of Defence’s **Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG)** provides science and technology expertise and support to improve Defence capabilities to anticipate, train and equip against threats such as biological pathogens.

Health Security Systems Australia (HSSA) is a division of DMTC Limited that has extended from an initial focus on Medical Countermeasures to lead collaborative programs and projects with a focus on health security.

