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CSIRO starts work on medicinal psychedelics

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To help people with a variety of mental health issues including depression, addiction, end of life anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder



Under a new license, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), an Australian Government agency responsible for scientific research, will work with local medtech companies to improve existing psychedelic products and develop new ones.

There are many psychedelics known, both natural and synthetic, and CSIRO can now work with local biomedical companies to extract, synthesise, improve and then develop manufacturing processes for up to 15 different psychedelic compounds.

Psychedelics such as methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) or psilocybin (derived from certain species of mushrooms) are currently being tested by researchers in Australia and internationally in strictly controlled clinical settings to see if they could be an effective treatment alongside psychotherapy for mental health related illnesses. Results have been promising.

In Australia, it is estimated that one in every five people will suffer a mental illness each year, with some research suggesting that more than a third of sufferers may not respond to existing treatments.

One of the first companies to work with CSIRO in this space is Melbourne-based Natural MedTech who gained R&D funding through CSIRO's Kick-Start program and are looking to further explore the psychoactive properties of plants and fungi for medical use.