

New pill hope for dementia patients

Adrienne Tam

A once-a-day pill that could completely revolutionise the treatment of Alzheimer's disease has reached a significant milestone after the Australian biotech firm behind the potential wonder drug acquired its 100th patient in its trial.

The trial of the "holy grail" drug is being conducted by Australian company Actinogen Medical, which has spent the last decade developing the pill originally discovered by researchers at the University of Edinburgh.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently granted Actinogen Medical the non-proprietary name 'emesteda-stat' for its new drug Xanamem, and gave it a first-in-class, which Actinogen said was a rare global endorsement that placed Actinogen as one of the most promising players in neuroscience worldwide.

The drug is being trialled across 35 sites in Australia and the US.

"There are more Australians than US patients in the trial at this stage, so Australia is leading the charge," Actinogen CEO Dr Steve Gourlay said. "It's probably fair to say there's roughly equal numbers from New South Wales and Victoria, and a number from other states, including Queensland and West Australia, who have contributed patients as well, because they have smaller populations."

Unlike current Alzheimer's treatments that target amyloid plaques (the sticky protein long blamed for the disease), Actinogen is taking a radical new approach: targeting cortisol, the brain's key stress hormone.

The trial is being led by Austin Hospital's Associate Professor Michael Woodward OAM, one of the nation's most respected dementia experts.

"If cortisol is the real driver of Alzheimer's symptoms, we could have a safer, simpler, and far more effective treatment on our hands – one that's home-grown, no less," he said.

Cairns mayor deletes social media video

Samuel Davis

Cairns councillors are seeking a public apology for a heavily edited video posted on social media by Mayor Amy Eden that may have breached the state government's code of conduct policy.

But Ms Eden says she apologised to councillors behind closed doors and the since-deleted post was intended to educate constituents.

The mayor cast the deciding vote to reject the councillor contact with developers, lobbyists and submitters general policy at an ordinary meeting earlier this month, arguing the document represented "institutionalised mistrust" of community leaders.

Following the meeting, Ms Eden posted abbreviated excerpts of the debate which councillors felt misrepresented their opinions on the issue.

Under the code of conduct for councillors in Queensland's principles and values, councillors must "clearly and accurately explain the local government's decisions" and "accept and value differences of opinion".

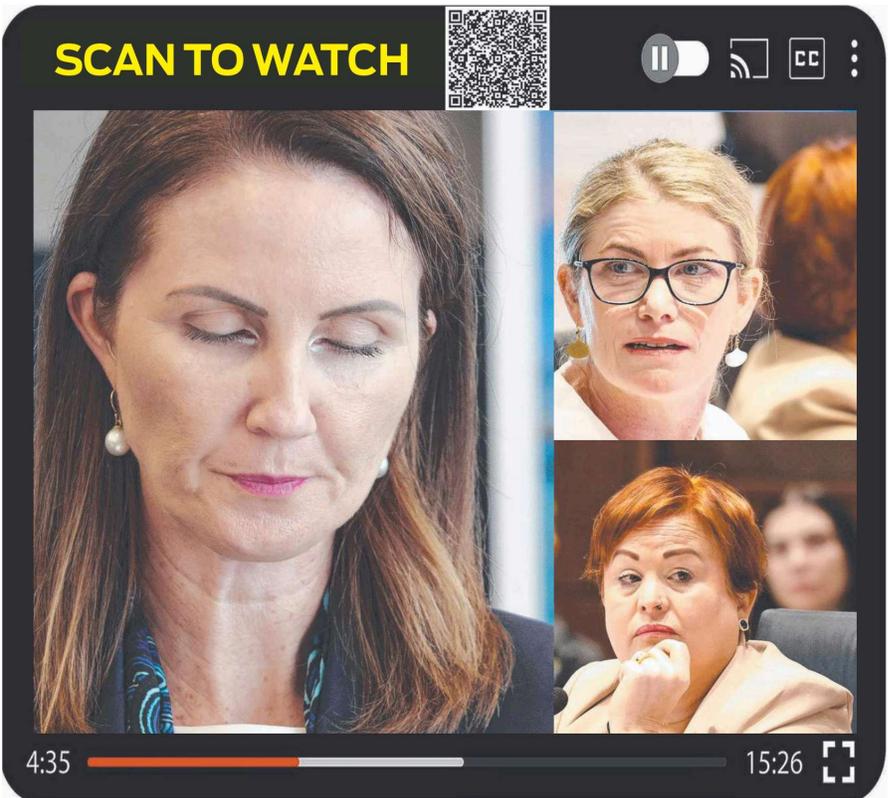
Division six councillor Kristy Valley said the video failed to meet that standard and had created a "false narrative" instead.

"She's edited every part to make us sound stupid or deliver half the story," Ms Valley said.

"Yet, she left a large excerpt of her speech in. If you watch, it looks like she's right and we're all wrong."

"I would like an apology because of the way the videos were edited. She could have provided a link to the debate instead."

Superimposed over the footage of councillors who voted against Ms Eden were red graphics reading "VOTES for Red TAPE" which councillors described as akin to political campaigning.



Mayor Amy Eden has come under fire from councillors Anna Middleton (top right) and Kristy Valley (above right) for a recent video post

"It's like some of us got a green tick, so to speak, and we got a red cross and it just wasn't that simple," Ms Valley said.

"That's something you'd see in a state or federal election campaign."

Division seven councillor Anna Middleton requested that Ms Eden remove the content from her Facebook page soon after it was published.

"Mayor, I respectfully ask you to remove this post," Ms Middleton said on Facebook.

"The edited video and labelling are an unfair representation of what I said."

"I believe it is intended to damage my standing among my constituents and I don't understand as a leader why you would try to diminish your colleagues publicly."

In a turbulent pre-budget meeting last Monday, attended by eight of the city's nine councillors, Ms Eden agreed to remove the video from social media.

During the meeting, the

Mayor said she had apologised.

"I did speak directly with my colleagues, which is the appropriate thing to do, and... I did apologise and acknowledge their concerns," Ms Eden explained.

"The intent of the video was to educate, not to upset or divide."

"That was our first casting call vote, if you will, and it was a contentious policy."

Ms Valley disputed Ms Eden's recollection, and a

number of councillors confirmed that they still felt a public apology was warranted.

"I don't know what you'd call it," she said of the Mayor's attempt to apologise.

"There was no understanding of what she did."

The Mayor did not respond to questions related to the potential conduct breach sent via email prior to deadline last week.

Cairns Regional Council's next ordinary meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 23.

Questions over fee-free TAFE

Samuel Davis

Aspiring nurses, builders and disability support workers are set to miss out on fee-free TAFE places after 30,000 positions weren't funded by the Crisafulli government in last week's budget, deputy opposition leader Cameron Dick says.

But Premier David Crisafulli has dismissed Labor's claims as part of a "scare campaign" dating back to the state election in October.

Future trades along with health and hospitality workers furthering their studies through TAFE would now be slugged with course fees during

a skills and cost-of-living crisis across the state, Mr Dick said.

"For the last four years, the Labor government topped up free TAFE places, up to 30,000 free TAFE places each year," he said.

"The LNP's first budget offers no additional places. This is another roadblock for Queensland's progress."

"It's another roadblock when it comes to young people, particularly in the Far North, getting those skilled jobs that they deserve."

Concerns had already emerged within the education sector and among prospective students, Member for Cairns, Michael Healy said.

"My office has had phone calls, and the offices of other members of parliament across this state have received calls from students saying that they cannot get into fee-free TAFE," Mr Healy said.

"This is so vitally important, not only for their own development... and secure jobs and a better future, but it's so vitally important for industry."

The LNP remained committed to creating job opportunities for Queensland through TAFE, Mr Crisafulli said with three new facilities to be built across the state.

"That should give you an indication of how much we value and respect TAFE," he said.

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