

# Aspen Medical invests in wearable sensor technology

**Tom McIlroy** *Political reporter*



Mar 15, 2022 - 5.00am

The government's largest COVID-19 healthcare provider has made a multimillion-dollar investment in the development of a wearable body sensor designed to help track vital signs for military personnel and mining and resources workers.

Aspen Medical, which has won in excess of \$1.5 billion in government contracts in the past two years, will invest in Queensland-based health tech company WearOptimo [<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p57dan>]. The business is developing a tiny wearable sensor that detects dehydration risks.



Mark Kendall, CEO of WearOptimo, which produces wearable sensors that give patients and doctors early warning of heart attacks, heat stroke and other life-threatening medical emergencies. **Janie Barrett**

Smaller than a 50 cent coin, it is applied directly to the skin and is designed to be worn in the field. The product is pitched at employers concerned about safety and optimal performance of their teams and can be applied anywhere on the body.

WearOptimo was incorporated in 2018, as part of the Australian National University's innovation program. The program was established to help entrepreneurial academics around the country to successfully commercialise intellectual property, including with corporate funding assistance.

Founder and chief executive Mark Kendall said the new deal consists of an initial funding round, and an ongoing agreement for Aspen Medical's participation in the development, field trials, refinement, commercialisation and distribution.

---

#### RELATED QUOTES



“We look forward to working closely with Aspen and its clients to assist in the accelerated development and commercialisation of the hydration Microwearable sensor.

“In addition to the capital, this partnership provides WearOptimo with the ability to test and refine our product and ensure appropriate take-up by the markets,” Professor Kendall said.

## Seismic shift

WearOptimo is also speaking to other new investors.

“Because of ANU’s commitment, how we are performing is not only a seismic shift from the past of university commercialisation of research and development, but its model, I also believe, should be of great interest for many parties, including government, to improve how things get done and to improve how others could be doing it.”

Aspen Medical founder and executive chairman Glenn Keys welcomed Tuesday’s announcement and collaboration with ANU.

“We are continually looking for ways that biotech can better serve our customers and the level of service we can provide them.

“The development of WearOptimo’s hydration Microwearable sensor is an exciting prospect as this is an important issue for several of our clients who are focused on ensuring safety and optimal performance of their employees.”

ANU vice-chancellor Brian Schmidt said commercialising intellectual property helped bring innovative products to market around the country.

“At ANU one of our key missions is to deliver innovation that improves the lives of Australians. WearOptimo is a perfect example of this, developing and delivering revolutionary healthcare technology that will potentially save lives.

“Our partnership with WearOptimo is an example of how universities and private companies can deliver the innovation our nation needs; taking ideas from the lab to the wider world and putting new technology in the hands of those who need it most.”



#### RELATED

##### **Aspen Medical, Docta ink \$1.3bn Indonesia healthcare deal**

<https://www.afr.com/companies/healthcare-and-fitness/aspen-medical-docta-ink-1-3bn-indonesia-healthcare-deal-20201111-p56dkv>

---

Aspen Medical has established itself as a go-to company for delivering medical services in some of the world’s most difficult environments, including hospitals in Iraq and Ebola clinics in West Africa. [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/us-criticises-australia-s-ebola-effort-20141110-11jgwx>]

The company was a key player in Australia’s COVID-19 response, including providing outbreak response and other medical services.

In January, the Morrison government announced plans to dedicate \$2 billion to commercialising ideas in priority areas of economic need, helping early stage research teams avoid the so-called “valley of death”.

[<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/pm-promises-2b-to-commercialise-ideas-20220131-p59sil>]

---

**Tom McIlroy** reports from the federal press gallery at Parliament House. *Connect with Tom on [Twitter](#). Email Tom at [thomas.mcilroy@afr.com](mailto:thomas.mcilroy@afr.com)*