

Australia investigates therapeutic potential of native magic mushrooms

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Scientists are working to identify medical benefits



Australia's first legal, living collection of native magic mushrooms is being studied by scientists in a Brisbane laboratory to help identify characteristics that might be useful for medical research into psychedelic treatments.

University of Queensland (UQ) mycologist and evolutionary biologist Dr Alistair McTaggart said Australian magic mushrooms were unique from international species, but scientists had little understanding of them. "In Australia, it is estimated there are up to 20 species of magic mushrooms, some of which are native, while others have been introduced," said Dr McTaggart.

In a new research project underway at UQ's Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation, Dr McTaggart will investigate the diversity of native magic mushrooms in Australia, following State Government approval for UQ to use psilocybin for research, analysis and teaching.

He said there was renewed global interest in the psychoactive properties of magic mushrooms for treating depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Dr McTaggart believes the current global research interest in magic mushrooms is similar to where the medicinal cannabis industry was 15 years ago.

In another project in development, Dr McTaggart plans to use genomic sequencing to determine which species of native mushrooms in Australia (not magic mushrooms) are edible, poisonous or adaptable for medicinal use. This work is funded through UQ's Research Support Program.