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Research into genes

THE genes of two iconic Australian animals, the kangaroo and the platypus, have been used to uncover the mysterious origins of two debilitating human diseases.

Research by Australian National University scientists is the first to prove two rare genetic conditions — Prader-Willi syndrome and Angelman syndrome — evolved in humans much more recently than first thought.

The animals, examined together, offer important clues because they both have very different reproduction systems: kangaroos bear tiny, live young and the platypus lays eggs.