

## AAMRI CALLS FOR A STREAMLINED NHMRC GRANT SYSTEM

In its submission to the Structural Review of NHMRC's Grant Program, the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI), calls for major changes in the way the nation's \$800 million investment in health and medical research is managed.

AAMRI's submission builds on the proposals in the consultation paper and calls for:

- a move towards seven-year Enhanced Fellowship Awards
- ideas grants where assessment is weighted toward the significance of the research proposal
- strict limits on the number of grant applications researchers can make
- new ways to better support researchers who have needed to take a career break, and
- special grant streams targeted at mid-career researchers to help them transition to research leadership positions.

"Currently, we expect our brightest and best medical researchers to stop what they're doing for months each year to write lengthy grant applications. Instead, AAMRI is proposing that the NHMRC provides seven-year funding blocks so our talented researchers have some security and can get on with the job of delivering results," said AAMRI President-elect, Professor Tony Cunningham AO.

In recent years grant application numbers have surged and last year a record low of 13.7% of applications received funding. Past research has estimated that over 550 working years of Australian researchers' time is spent each year in preparing NHMRC grant applications, at an annual salary cost of \$66 million.

The blow-out in application numbers is creating a mountain of paperwork as each application has to be carefully reviewed by a panel of experts.

"In the last five years there have been over 15,000 unsuccessful project grant applications with each one of these taking months to put together. AAMRI's submission calls for strict limits to be introduced to limit the number of grant applications that can be made. The time and money spent on applications can be better spent on health and medical research."

"The NHMRC has put forward some innovative proposals in its consultation paper. AAMRI has built on these proposals to put forward an innovative package that offers both greater flexibility while reducing the grant application and review burden."

AAMRI's submission also calls for a new special funding stream to be introduced for researchers that have taken time out from their work to start a family or to care for loved ones, and for a funding stream to help mid-career researchers transition into research leadership positions.

"For too long starting a family has meant giving up a career in science. Along with other initiatives underway in the sector, we are calling for a pool of funding for researchers seeking to return to the workforce after a break."

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## About AAMRI

AAMRI is the peak body representing medical research institutes across Australia. Our 46 member organisations are international leaders in health and medical research, addressing practically every aspect of human health and disease. Collectively, AAMRI's members represent more than 15,000 staff and students.

## AAMRI Members

