aamri

Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes

RESEARCH IS THE FOUNDATION FOR BUILDING A WORLD-CLASS HEALTH SYSTEM

A 2019 election policy statement from the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes

This Federal Election we are calling on all parties and candidates to show their commitment for Australia's future health and wellbeing by supporting the following priorities:

1	**Stick to the 2018–19 Budget commitments and deliver a fully funded Medical Research Future Fund by 2020–21 so we can turn our amazing medical research discoveries into improved health outcomes more quickly and efficiently.**	**1.1.** Deliver a fully-funded $20 billion Medical Research Future Fund by 2020–21. **1.2.** Use rigorous and competitive expert review processes to evaluate Medical Research Future Fund opportunities and programs. **1.3.** Prioritise Medical Research Future Fund initiatives that seek to embed medical research within health services and deliver better health outcomes for patients.
2	**Provide continued strong support for new discoveries through the National Health and Medical Research Council.**	**2.1.** Provide above inflation increases to National Health and Medical Research Council funded research projects and career support opportunities.
3	**Attract and retain our best medical researchers by developing sustainable and rewarding career pathways.**	**3.1.** Use the Medical Research Future Fund to strategically invest in mid-career opportunities for our talented medical researchers. **3.2.** Prioritise the implementation of the Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics decadal plan recommendations. **3.3.** Make strategic investments from the Medical Research Future Fund in industry-exchange and clinician researcher fellowships.

AAMRI'S ELECTION STATEMENT OUTLINES THE POLICY PRIORITIES ANY FUTURE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD PURSUE TO ENSURE OUR MEDICAL RESEARCH SECTOR CAN HELP DELIVER A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS AUSTRALIA

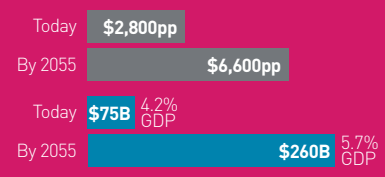
AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE PROSPERITY AND WELLBEING IS DEPENDENT ON US BEING A HEALTHY NATION

Our past investment in medical research has served us well, helping millions of Australians live longer, healthier and wealthier lives.

But for the first time we face the risk of our quality of life going backwards. More people are expected to be affected by chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and dementia, placing a greater strain on our health system.

Australia's ageing population[1]

Healthcare costs will continue to rise:



By investing in research today we can reduce healthcare costs in the future through better ways to prevent disease and improve healthcare practice.

Burden of disease in Australia[2]

- **138,000 are diagnosed with cancer each year**
- **More than half a million people are hospitalised with cardiovascular disease each year**
- **More than 430,000 Australians are living with dementia**
- **Suicide is the leading cause of death among people aged 15–44**
- **More than 18,000 people are hospitalised each year with influenza**

We already spend more than $180 billion each year on healthcare, an amount which is rising by around 3% in real-terms each year. **But we only invest around 0.6% of total health expenditure in MRFF/NHMRC medical research programs.**

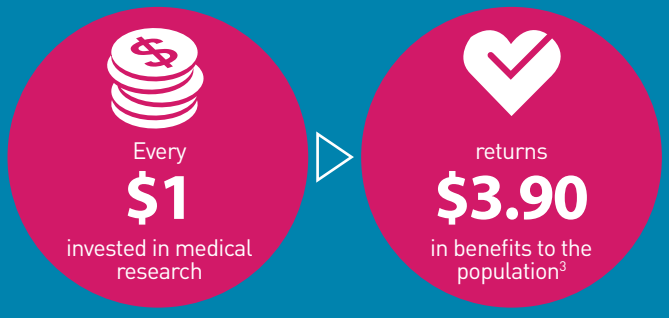
We only invest around 0.6% of total health expenditure in NHMRC/MRFF medical research programs.

Global health threats on the horizon such as deadly new strains of influenza and increasing resistance to antibiotics pose major threats to our health security and we need to be prepared.

Without urgent intervention we face a chronic situation of increased morbidity and mortality, significantly increased expenditure on our healthcare costs, and decreased economic productivity as ill-health prevents more people from working and remaining active in the community.

The only way to continue to improve the health of our aging population, while at the same time keeping costs under control is through investment in research. Knowledge gained through high quality biomedical, epidemiological, preventative and health systems research is the only pathway to a more efficient, effective and sustainable healthcare system.

A recent study by KPMG showed that for every $1 invested in medical research nearly $4 is returned to the economy through improved health gains, more efficient treatments and commercialisation returns.



> **NOW IS THE IDEAL TIME TO STEP BACK AND LOOK AT OUR HEALTH SYSTEM AND SEE HOW WE CAN USE RESEARCH TO MAKE TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGES. WE NEED TO USE RESEARCH NOT JUST TO FIND NEW CURES FOR DISEASES, BUT ALSO TO FIND SMART AND MORE EFFICIENT WAYS TO DELIVER HEALTHCARE."**
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> *Professor Vlado Perkovic, AAMRI President*

1 Australian Government (2015) Intergenerational Report: Australia in 2055; AIHW (2018) Health expenditure in Australia 2016–2017.
2 AIHW (2017) All cancers combined; AIHW (2018) National Hospital Morbidity Database; AIHW (2016) Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011.
3 KPMG (2018) Economic Impact of Medical Research in Australia.

USING MEDICAL RESEARCH TO DELIVER THE WORLD'S BEST HEALTH SYSTEM

Australia could have the world's best health system in the next ten years, where all Australians have affordable access to the latest cutting-edge and transformative treatments.

Achieving such a vision requires a new approach, and we need to examine all parts of the health system to see how we can improve. This requires a research-led revolution of our health system. Delivering this requires sustained investment in our medical research sector and a commitment to bring research and healthcare delivery closer together.

We are close to being able to deliver on this vision. We have a strong health system delivering quality care for patients, and our medical researchers are among the most talented in the world.

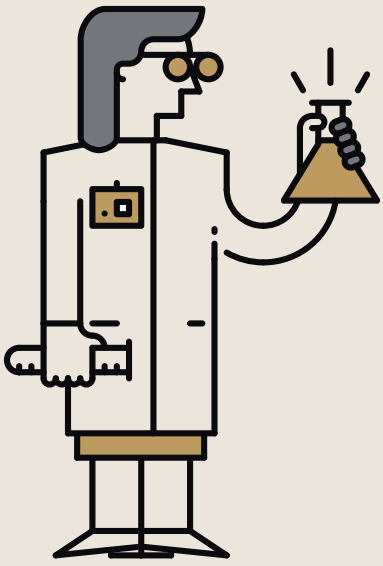
The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) continues to support world-first discoveries being made here in Australia. And our biggest challenges – of turning our great discoveries in the lab into new effective treatments, while also delivering an affordable healthcare system – is finally on the cusp of being overcome, thanks to new investment from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

This new investment has substantially increased our capacity to undertake clinical trials, allowing patients access to world-first treatment options. It is also helping us to substantially increase the number of active clinician-researchers, ensuring patients are receiving the very latest evidence-based healthcare.

For the first time, we are now able to invest in research at the scale required to make a substantial difference to health outcomes in some of the hardest to treat diseases such as brain cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

In the future this investment will allow us to undertake research to find out how we can deliver health services more quickly and more affordably.

Investing in medical research reduces healthcare costs



Prevening cervical cancer through immunisation

$79K

saved per death prevented in healthcare costs[1]

Preventing celebral palsy through early intervention

$2M

saved per case in healthcare costs in the child's first 18 years[2]

1 The cost of prevention is $23 per person for screening cost, $150 per HPV vaccination. Source: KPMG (2018) Economic impact of medical research in Australia.

2 The cost of prevention treatment is $190,000 per child. Source: McKeon, S. et al (2013) Strategic review of health and medical research.

1 DELIVER A FULLY FUNDED MEDICAL RESEARCH FUTURE FUND BY 2020–21 SO WE CAN TURN OUR AMAZING MEDICAL RESEARCH DISCOVERIES INTO IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES MORE QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY.

The MRFF is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revolutionise healthcare in Australia. When fully established it will be a $20 billion sovereign wealth fund where the investment proceeds from the fund are invested in medical research. We need the MRFF to help turn the most promising discoveries our medical researchers make into new treatments more quickly, allowing patients to benefit as soon as possible.

The MRFF is nearly half way to reaching its funding target. Just two more payments over the next two years are needed to get it there, and these payments have already been accounted for in the Budget forward estimates. For this investment in the MRFF to be most effective it needs to be carefully invested in initiatives that are best placed to tackle burden of disease. This requires a focus on initiatives that bring research and health services closer together, as well as the use of rigorous and competitive expert review processes when assessing funding opportunities.

Priority actions

1.1 Deliver a fully-funded $20 billion Medical Research Future Fund by 2020–21.

1.2 Use rigorous and competitive expert review processes to evaluate Medical Research Future Fund opportunities and programs.

1.3 Prioritise Medical Research Future Fund initiatives that seek to embed medical research within health services and deliver better health outcomes for patients.

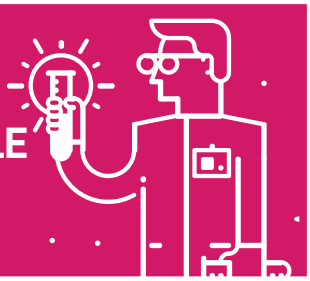
2 PROVIDE CONTINUED STRONG SUPPORT FOR NEW DISCOVERIES THROUGH THE NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funds the very best medical research and the very brightest medical researchers. The research it funds leads to breakthrough discoveries that the MRFF can subsequently turn into new treatments. In recent times funding for the NHMRC has flatlined leading to reduced support for research projects, as well as fewer career support opportunities for our researchers. Finding cures to diseases that bring so much suffering to patients and their families requires sustained funding over time. Continuous strong support for the NHMRC is needed to make sure we have a strong research system from discovery right through to new patient treatments.

Priority actions

2.1 Provide above inflation increases to National Health and Medical Research Council funded research projects and career support opportunities.

3 ATTRACT AND RETAIN OUR BEST MEDICAL RESEARCHERS BY DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AND REWARDING CAREER PATHWAYS.



For Australia to be the world's best place to do medical research we need to attract and retain the very best medical researchers. There is currently a lack of career progression opportunities for mid-career researchers, leading many talented scientists to either leave the research system or pursue opportunities overseas. The MRFF should strategically invest in mid-career programs and fellowships to help rebalance the medical research talent pool and allow the next generation of research superstars to excel here in Australia.

The continued gender inequity in medical research is unacceptable and is holding us back. The result is that the workforce talent pool is diminished, and our overall effectiveness is reduced. Addressing this problem requires action on all fronts and by all stakeholders. The Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) decadal plan identifies a range of important priorities that need to addressed and the Government should prioritise implementation of the plan's recommendations.

There continues to be low levels of career mobility between research, the health sector and industry. This problem contributes to Australia's relatively low levels of research-industry collaboration and can lead to a disconnect between researcher priorities and the needs of the health sector and industry. The MRFF should be used to support new programs that increase mobility between sectors, particularly industry exchange and clinician researcher fellowships.

Priority actions

3.1 Use the Medical Research Future Fund to strategically invest in mid-career opportunities for our talented medical researchers.

3.2 Prioritise the implementation of the Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics decadal plan recommendations.

3.3 Make strategic investments from the Medical Research Future Fund in industry-exchange and clinician researcher fellowships.

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