

New NHMRC grant program delivers longer grants, but highlights gaps in gender equality

Funding outcomes were announced yesterday for the new Investigator Grant scheme from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) congratulates the 246 outstanding medical researchers who were awarded funding in the first year of the scheme.

The highly anticipated results from the Investigator Grant scheme, the largest of the new NHMRC grant programs, awarded \$336 million of funding across Australia. These grants provide the most talented researchers with both salary support as well as a research package for up to 5 years. This means they will spend less time applying for grants and more time doing great research.

“The 5 year grants give real security to medical researchers,” said AAMRI President Professor Jonathan Carapetis, “It means they can spend more time actually doing research, making discoveries and getting treatments to patients faster, and less time writing new grant applications.”

Professor Carapetis said that upon reviewing the grant outcomes it is clear there is still a gender imbalance in the grants awarded.

“It is a shame to see the continued gender imbalance in the grants awarded, particularly at the senior leadership level. We note this isn’t new, but we need renewed efforts to address this critical problem,” said Professor Carapetis.

AAMRI’s own analysis is showing that AAMRI members performed better than the national average with around 18% of applications funded compared to a national average of 13%. The overall success rate is much lower than we would like to see, resulting in many outstanding researchers missing out.

Professor Carapetis said it is important to note this is the first round of the new grant program and it is inevitable that there will be some teething issues, such as increased application numbers, as many people will have wanted to try the new system at the first opportunity.

“We hope that the system will settle down over time and expect the NHMRC to make adjustments where necessary.”

“We should remember that adjusting the grant program to improve the overall funding success rate is only part of the answer. Sustained and increased investment to NHMRC grant programs is what will make a substantial difference.”

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About AAMRI

AAMRI is the peak body representing medical research institutes across Australia. Our 52 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 19,000 staff and students.

AAMRI Members

