

AAMRI welcomes NHMRC's steps towards improving gender equity in investigator grants

The Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) is pleased to see changes announced today by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to address systemic disadvantage faced by female and non-binary scientists.

While not all the proposed changes recommended by AAMRI were adopted, this is an important step towards retaining our women and non-binary early to mid-career researchers and addressing gender inequity in funding.

Professor Maxine Morand AM, Chair of the AAMRI Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, said she was pleased to see that Leadership Grants would now be divided equally by gender, and that non-binary researchers would be included alongside women in the interventions.

"These interventions announced by the NHMRC are a significant and welcome change to grant funding mechanisms, said Professor Morand.

"We know that women researchers are less likely to receive grants and publish and are less likely to be in leadership and senior academic positions. By addressing access to grant funding, we will see the flow on effect to increase the number of women in later career stages and academic levels in medical research."

While these changes will enable more women to receive funding, more work still needs to be done to address the issue of differences in career trajectories, including periods of part-time work. Disappointingly, the structure of NHMRC grant programs makes it more difficult to work flexibly.

CEO of AAMRI, Dr Saraid Billiards said, "If you are in receipt of an Investigator grant, you cannot extend the grant over longer periods when working part-time, meaning a five-year grant worked part-time is simply worth less money, and will likely result in reduced scientific progress and potential publications than those working full-time."

AAMRI hopes to see future changes to support career breaks and part-time work and is looking forward to seeing the future analysis in the upcoming grant rounds to see the effects of the current interventions.

AAMRI released their Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan late last year, with the goal to work together with the medical research institute sector to addresses biases and create a fairer and more equitable workplace for all.

"To drive innovation, we need a workforce that consists of people with different backgrounds and perspectives, and these interventions by the NHMRC are part of that process to achieve this, said Dr Billiards."

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About AAMRI

AAMRI is the peak body representing medical research institutes across Australia. Our 58 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.

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