

A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS VICTORIA



A vision for supporting and growing
Victoria's Medical Research Sector

Victorian State Election Submission 2022



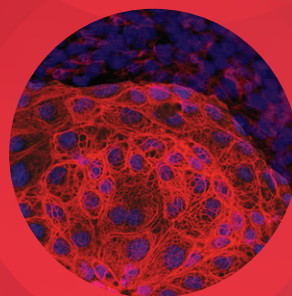
VICAAMRI'S ROLE

The Victorian Chapter of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (VicAAMRI) represents 14 independent medical research institutes, comprising over 5,500 staff and students.

Our member organisations work on a broad spectrum of human health issues such as:

- preventive health
- chronic disease
- mental health
- cancer
- immunology
- women's health
- Indigenous health

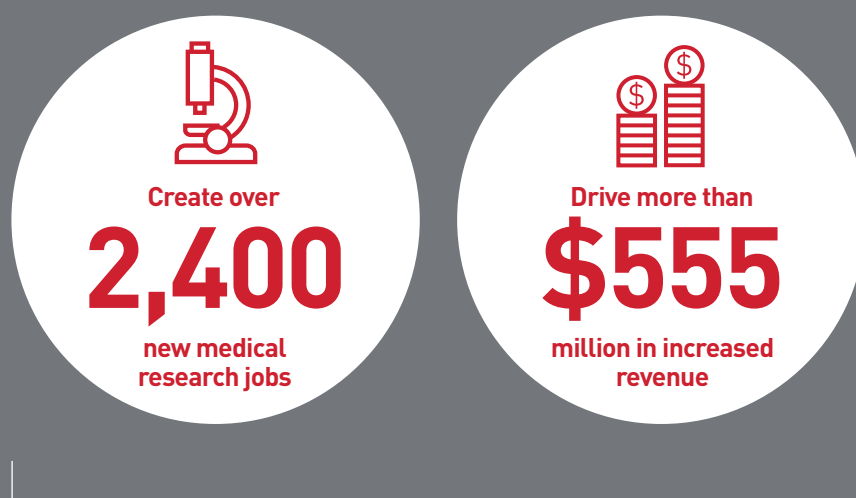
Their research ranges from **fundamental biomedical discovery** through to **clinical research** and the **translation and commercialisation** of their discoveries.



THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

New and targeted investment by the Victorian government will enable Victoria's medical research sector to create and **retain high-skilled jobs, maintain our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and help prepare for future health emergencies**, as well as secure our place as a global destination for researchers and innovators.

Ahead of the State election, VicAAMRI is calling for a significant investment in our medical research institutes and workforce over the next four years.



Together with the Victorian government, we can create over 2,400 new medical research jobs and drive more than \$555 million in increased revenue, in addition to the immense health and social benefits, in the coming decade.

VICTORIA'S EXCELLENT TRACK RECORD

The exceptional leadership shown by medical research organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates that they are key drivers of Victoria's economic growth. Investment in Victoria's medical research institute's will:

- Boost the research pipeline by supporting researchers to recover from COVID-19 disruptions ensuring a more diverse and innovative research workforce into the future.
- Boost research translation capabilities in the medical research sector to ensure Victoria can realise huge economic, health, and societal benefits over the coming decade.
- Bring the best and brightest researchers to Victoria to take our medical research sector to new heights and build on Victoria's reputation as a major global research destination.

Accelerating Victoria's recovery by investing in the medical research workforce will result in better health outcomes, a stronger economy, and more skilled jobs for all Victorians over the next decade.

This election statement has outlined four key priorities that need urgent investment to ensure Victoria's community and economy stay healthy and prepared for the next health crisis:

PRIORITY 1:	PRIORITY 2:	PRIORITY 3:	PRIORITY 4:
Increase investment in Operational Infrastructure Support (OIS) to support more life changing discoveries at Victorian medical research institutes.	Secure the future of our sector by investing \$20m over 4 years to support early career researchers.	Deliver more life changing outcomes from research by investing \$45m over 4 years in translation and commercialisation.	Invest \$15m over 4 years to attract the best and brightest minds to our state.

PRIORITY 1:

Support more life changing discoveries through a boosted Operational Infrastructure Support Program

Australian research grants do not cover the full costs of undertaking research. The indirect costs must be met by institutes. The list of indirect costs include: laboratories, buildings and facilities, biowaste and security services, professional support staff and programs, platform technologies, and the translation of research discoveries into better health outcomes.

Since 2001, the Victorian government's **Operational Infrastructure Support Program** has assisted some institutes to help meet these indirect costs of research. Other states, including NSW, have since emulated the approach.

But despite an uplift in 2017 to keep pace with indexation, **this funding is not meeting the rising costs** associated with Victoria's increasing success in securing competitive funding from Commonwealth peer review programs such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

This constrained operating environment acts as a significant brake on the growth of this key economic sector and means that many potential life changing discoveries are unable to be realised.

Our Institutes cannot continue to cover the short fall

Victorian independent medical research institutes spent over \$241 million on the indirect costs of research in 2020 – a 32% increase in just two years. Institutions based in NSW receive around twice the level of funding support to assist with these costs.

Without additional Victorian government support, Melbourne stands to lose its status as the one of the world's greatest health and medical research destinations.

VicAAMRI calls for an increase in Operational Infrastructure Support Program funding commensurate with the increasing indirect costs of research, and an expansion of the program support to more institutes.

Cancer research conducted by Peter Mac, and Orygen's mental health research, are two key research streams whose indirect costs currently go unsupported by the Operational Infrastructure Support program.

Expansion of the Operational Infrastructure Support Program

Expansion of the Operational Infrastructure Support Program would enable more of Victoria's independent medical research institutes to strengthen their capabilities in business development, commercialisation, intellectual property, and governance.


This essential funding would also provide for enhanced utilisation of advanced technologies, workforce development to retain innovation and commercially valuable research in Victoria and capacity to recruit local and international talent and industry.



Victorian medical research institutes need an increase to ensure life changing discoveries are made

PRIORITY 2:

Stemming the loss of talented emerging researchers



Conditions in Victoria's medical research sector over the past two years have left some researchers in a particularly vulnerable position. The cumulative impacts of **systemic biases, disruptions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, and low grant success rates** have meant that early- to mid-career researchers (EMCRs), women, trans and gender diverse people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are at greater risk of leaving the medical research workforce than ever before.

To recover from recent disruptions and maintain future grant competitiveness, VicAAMRI proposes a \$20m fund to **support the continued employment of these researchers at medical research institutes, universities, and health services, across Victoria**; with up to \$150,000 available per researcher. This initiative would directly support **133 top-tier researchers that are at risk of being lost to the sector and to Victoria.**

The future promising minds of our sector are at risk, and need \$20m over 4 years to ensure we can meet the next health crisis

PRIORITY 3:

Turning research into life changing medicine



Victoria's medical research sector has a key role to play in transforming the state's economy and taking advantage of new opportunities. By investing in the **translational and commercialisation capabilities of the medical research workforce**, Victoria can realise game-changing improvements that will reshape our state in the coming decade.

VicAAMRI proposes **a new \$45m fund be established to support the recruitment of new research translation specialists**. These specialists would fuel Victoria's ability to translate and commercialise Victorian research and innovation through partnering and capital fundraising, business development, knowledge translation, clinical trials and implementation, and other capabilities.

Research organisations would access, and match, funding of up to \$200,000 (over two years) per recruit into brand new roles.

225 new jobs would be created, leveraging investment from the medical research sector, and build on investments already made across our expansive clinical trials networks and through Breakthrough Victoria, mRNA Victoria, the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct, and the Australian Institute for Infectious Disease, among others.

**\$45m over
4 years will deliver
the outcomes we need
in translation and
commercialisation**

PRIORITY 4:

Attracting the best and brightest minds to Victoria



Medical research is a global and highly competitive sector. VicAAMRI member institutes have identified the need to offer competitive relocation packages and incentives to attract exceptional researchers and innovators.

A Victorian government investment of \$15m over four years will help recruit the world's best researchers to Victoria.

Leveraging the new Global Talent visa (subclass 858), this initiative will help overcome travel disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and compete with relocation support offered by other medical research institutes around the world.

Most importantly, this initiative will draw on the power of many great minds to launch Victoria's medical research sector to new heights and build on our reputation as a world leader in life-saving medical research. **Packages of up to \$500,000 will encourage and assist 30 of the world's best researchers to call Victoria home.**

**\$15m over
4 years will attract
the brightest minds
to our state**

VicAAMRI represents 14 of Victoria's world-class independent medical research institutes.



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