



8 May 2019

Dr Roger Yazbek
President
Australian Society for Medical Research
Level 7, Suite 702
37 Bligh St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: asmr@asmr.org.au

Dear Dr Yazbek,

Thank you for your letter outlining the 2019 Federal Election Statement of the Australian Society for Medical Research.

As you are aware the research sector as whole features insecure working arrangements for researchers, combined with static investment in the Medical Research Endowment Account, which must function effectively if the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is to support later stage research as intended.

All of this indicates the present Government's failure to grasp the importance of basic, curiosity-driven research. If we do not invest in basic research, we will degrade our ability to do applied research as well, and eventually to develop commercial applications of that research. Since the Liberals and Nationals were elected in 2013, they have shown a clear preference for investing in research that turns a quick dollar.

The Morrison Government claims to be interested in outcomes that matter to all Australians, without understanding that investing in basic research is necessary to maintain the quality of the wider health care system, and through that, to ensure that Australia's economic prosperity is preserved.

Bill Shorten has declared on numerous occasions that a Labor Government will invest in basic research. We will seek to provide researchers with the best available resources – including a stable work environment – so they can do their work properly and securely.

Labor voted for the MRFF in the Parliament and we will maintain and strengthen the MRFF in Government. We do have concerns about the Fund's governance and the Government's claims about its funding levels. But we will work with the sector to address those and continue to support Australia's world-leading health and medical researchers.

Labor is determined to see the MRFF reach \$20 billion, and a Shorten Labor Government will achieve this target on the current timeline, i.e. in 2020-21.

Every investment in health and medical research is worthwhile. But the MRFF should be disbursed through contestable, peer-reviewed and transparent processes – not on the basis of pet projects or political pork-barrelling.

Labor has already announced a number of pre-election commitments to health and medical research, including our \$125 million commitment to cancer research – which stands over and above existing funding sources including the MRFF and NHMRC. For more on these plans, please see <https://www.alp.org.au/policies/investing-in-cancer-research/>

After six years of what has been effectively been a Liberal Government war on science, Labor will reset the relationship between the nation and the science community. A Shorten Labor Government will develop a compact with Australia's scientists: we will provide the best kit the nation can afford and in return we expect that they will work with us in solving the great challenges of the 21st Century.

Should we be successful in winning government on 18 May, we will also undertake the first comprehensive review of Australia's research system in more than 20 years. The review, led by the former Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, will assist a Shorten Labor Government in setting priorities. If we are elected, you and your colleagues may wish to make a submission to the review.

Thank you again for writing to the Australian Labor Party on this matter of profound importance for the future of Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Australian Labor Party

www.alp.org.au

Authorised by N. Carroll, ALP, Canberra

RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA - TERMS OF REFERENCE

A Shorten Labor Government will be committed to building the research base required for our nation to shape its own destiny in a complex and unpredictable world.

Public investment in research is the crucial enabler of the inspired risk-taking that builds national wealth in the fullest sense – cultural, social, environmental and economic.

Our future rests on our capacity to embrace research as part of the fundamental fabric of our country.

For too long, our research has drifted without a national strategy, a champion in government or a vision worthy of our true potential. Funds have been stripped and programs abolished without understanding or regard for the flow-on effects.

Labor's ambition is clear: 3 per cent of GDP to be invested in research by 2030, and every dollar well-spent.

As a vital first step, we will assess the overall support framework for research to understand what measures we need to take to position our researchers for the important contribution we rely on them to make.

This inquiry will examine, and provide recommendations, on:

- International best practice in the public programs and policy settings that are crucial to enabling research.
- Australia's existing research profile, and its alignment with national needs and strengths.
- The responsiveness of the funding system to needs and national priorities as they emerge, and the balance between strategic priorities identified by government and investigator-led research.
- Protection of public-benefit research, research integrity and ethics.
- The extent of, and support for, interdisciplinary research.
- Our influence at the global table, capacity to attract global talent, and connections with global partners
- The overall coherence of different channels of public funding, including research grants, research funding in departmental budgets, and research funding provided by the states and territories
- The adequacy, sustainability and effectiveness of funding for research infrastructure.
- The research workforce, its distribution, and its diversity.
- Balancing support for experienced and early and mid-career researchers
- The ability of the funding system to provide for the full spectrum of activities expected of the modern researcher.
- Mechanisms to develop effective and abiding collaboration between industry and the research sector.
- The oversight mechanisms required to maximise the outcomes for all Australians, whilst minimising the administrative burden on researchers.