

Protect the research which protects the community

The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR), Australia's peak body representing health and medical researchers, calls upon the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to commit to bipartisan support of further investment into health and medical research to adequately maintain both ends of the research pipeline from basic discovery to translation and commercialisation.

Australia has (so far) fared exceptionally well through the COVID-19 pandemic. A major reason for this is that Government have sought expert advice and implemented evidence-based policies with bipartisan support, providing an excellent model for how governments can operate effectively. However, the number of full-time equivalent health researchers supported by the major NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) funding schemes has dropped dramatically in the last three years. The ASMR's 2019 workforce survey revealed that a quarter of participants had uncertain job security and prospects for the following year. *These are the very people providing the evidence and advice which has protected the community so well.*

Our world class researchers, working at the coalface to develop better treatments, screening strategies and vaccines, are eager to use their skills and expertise to make an invaluable contribution to our future health and economic prosperity but can't deliver without appropriate funding support. Australia cannot afford to lose the valuable intellectual capital that creates a knowledge environment where collateral benefits can fuel a growing (or recovering) economy.

The research endeavour is not a tap that can be turned on and off, it is a continuum that is fed by basic discoveries that translate to better health outcomes.

Australia's NHMRC-supported research has a proven and enviable track record. The ASMR commissioned Deloitte Access Economics Report has determined that for every \$1 invested into the NHMRC Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) there is a return of \$3.20 into health and economic benefits.

Although the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is a valuable and innovative approach to investment, research translation to patient outcomes must be fuelled by basic translatable discoveries, something that NHMRC funded research has delivered on over and over throughout the last decades.

A fundamental task for any Australian Government is ensuring its citizens enjoy the best possible health/ healthcare, while being fiscally responsible to current and future generations. At no time has this become more apparent than in the wake of the current global pandemic.

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