

# Who is looking after Australia's long-term health?

**We the undersigned call on both major parties to present their policy vision and forward financial commitments for Australia's health and medical research.**

An investment in health and medical research will ensure Australia's future health and wellbeing by:

- Targeting chronic diseases: asthma, arthritis, diabetes, dementia, cardiovascular disease and cancer
- Keeping an aging population healthier and more productive in the workforce
- Addressing threats to our children's health such as obesity, depression and indigenous health inequalities
- Reducing health costs and improving outcomes by implementing the latest research into health practice
- Safeguarding our nation by control of global threats such as: AIDS, SARS, Bird Flu, Bio-terrorism
- Building a globally competitive knowledge economy, creating new biotechnology businesses and jobs.

## **Australian health and medical researchers are world leaders**

Significant increases in health and medical research funding over the last 5 years brought a much-needed boost to Australian researchers. We are recognised world leaders in many areas including immunology, cancer, diabetes, asthma, neuroscience, malaria, stem cells, public health research and medical devices such as the Bionic Ear. Our research has been crucial in preventing disease, injury and providing better health for all Australians. We are currently riding on a wave of knowledge and opportunity.

## **Australia trails behind the world in research funding**

While funding in the last five years allowed Australia to "catch-up," other countries have since doubled their funding again. Currently we are at the lower end of the OECD spectrum on medical research expenditure. Australia's future health, education and intellectual capital are under threat without proper investment.

## **Health and Medical Research generates exceptional returns on investment**

The rate of return from health research is so extraordinarily high that the benefit from any strategic investment is enormous. According to a recent Access Economics report<sup>1</sup> every dollar spent on health research and development returns at least \$5 in national economic benefit! Health and medical research that reduced cancer deaths by just 20% would be worth \$184 billion to Australians.

## **Australians call for greater investment in Health and Medical Research**

A recent survey has shown that 87% of Australians would like to see increased spending on health and medical research; 64% would like to see it more than doubled<sup>2</sup>.

**Any long-term policy vision for a healthy Australian future will require a substantial increase in the investment on health and medical research.**

Dr. Andrew Child, Chair: Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges  
Professor Graeme Clark, AC, FAA, FRS, Senior Australian of the Year 2002, Director: Bionic Ear Institute, Melbourne  
Professor Suzanne Cory, AC, FAA, FRS, Director: Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Melbourne  
Professor Peter Doherty, AC, FAA, FRS, Australian of the Year 1997, Nobel Laureate, University of Melbourne  
Professor Bruce Dowton, Chair: Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools  
Professor Michael Good, President: Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes  
Professor Patrick Holt, FAA, Deputy Director: Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth  
Professor Frederick Mendelsohn, AO, Director: Howard Florey Institute, Melbourne  
Professor John Niland, AC, Chair: Research Australia  
Professor Sir Gustav Nossal, AC, CBE, FAA, FRS, Australian of the Year 2000, University of Melbourne  
A/Professor Peter Sainsbury, President: Public Health Association of Australia  
Professor John Shine, AO, FAA, Director: Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Sydney  
A/Professor Andrew Sinclair, President: Australian Society for Medical Research  
Professor Grant Sutherland, AC, FAA, FRS, Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide  
Professor Judith Whitworth, AC, Director: John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU, Canberra  
Professor Bob Williamson, AO, FAA, FRS, Director: Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Melbourne  
Mr. Peter Wills, AC, Chair: Health and Medical Research Strategic Review

1. Exceptional Returns: The value of investing in health R&D in Australia, Access Economics Report, Sept. 2003 ([www.asmr.org.au](http://www.asmr.org.au))

2. Research Australia Health & Medical Research Public Opinion Poll 2003. ([www.researchaustralia.org](http://www.researchaustralia.org))