

NHMRC Outcomes 2015 – Announced by Minister of Health on 9/11/15

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia's leading expert body for supporting health and medical research, together with the Minister for Health announced investment outcomes for competitive grant schemes for both research support and people support on the 9th of November.

Speaking on behalf of the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) in Sydney, President Dr Phoebe Phillips congratulated all members who received an NHMRC project or fellowship. It is Governments investment into NHMRC and the NHMRC peer review process, which has resulted in unmatched returns on investment (every \$1 invested returns on average \$2.17 in health and economic benefits) and significant savings linked to increased well-being of Australians.

1. **Overall NHMRC investment** is static compared to last year. In 'real-terms' this is declined investment.
2. Static **NHMRC project grant** investment = \$419,719,973 (2014 = \$419,982,953). Total grant applications in 2015 (3758) was comparable to 2014 (3700), however, the proportion of successful project grants for 4 years was higher (27.9%) compared to 2014 (19.9%).
3. Funded rates for project grants are the lowest in NHMRC history = 13.7%.
4. **Fellowship Outcomes :**
 - a. ECR Fellowship investment = \$35,823,120 (Success rates = 21.4%; reduced investment and success rate compared to 2014)
 - b. CDF Fellowship investment = \$23,915,192 (Success rates = 11.9% in 2015 vs 19.5% in 2013; the lowest rates across all schemes; static investment)
 - c. Research Fellowship investment = \$55,654,700 (Success rates = 23.8% in 2015 vs 30.1% in 2014; Static investment)
5. **Centres for research excellence 2015** investment = \$36,826,720 (2014 Investment = \$46,342,931)
6. No announcement on **Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)** disbursements which were scheduled for 2015. Current funds in the MRFF account are well short of that required to allow disbursement of the \$10M promised this year.

Sadly for those dedicated and highly ranked researchers who missed out, many of them world leaders in their field, the actuality is that investment into NHMRC has been declining in real terms for a number of years, so much so that **we are at a critical point**, losing expensively trained, highly skilled researchers, to an extent that it may take years to recover the loss of valuable intellectual capital.

Dr Phillips said, *"The proposed MRFF is a positive step towards increasing investment, but it unfortunately **does not solve today's problem**. A significant injection of investment into NHMRC, with its proven track record of exceptional returns through transparent peer review, is required immediately to avoid the loss of intellectual capital which our workforce represents"*.

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Further information: ASMR's analysis of NHMRC Trend Data 2015 is available from:
<http://www.asmr.org.au/Media.html>