

# *The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) represents more than 60,000 Australians.*

## **Membership -**

- 1100 ordinary members
- 37 specialist societies
- 5 medical colleges
- 9 foundation associates
- Corporate supporters

*The list of Affiliates & Associates :*

*Arthritis Foundation of Australia  
Assoc of Aust. Med Resh. Institutes  
A'asian College for Emergency  
Medicine  
A'asian Assoc of Clin. Biochemists  
A'asian Fac. of Occupational Med.  
A'asian Menopause Society  
A'asian Soc. for Free Radical  
Research  
A'asian Society for HIV Medicine  
A'asian Society for Immunology  
A'sian Society for Infec. Diseases  
A'asian Society for the Study of  
Hypertension in Pregnancy  
A'asian Society of Blood Trans.  
A'asian Society of Clinical and  
Experimental Pharmacologists and  
Toxicologists  
A'asian Society of Clinical  
Immunology and Allergy  
ANZ Bone and Mineral Society  
ANZ Society for Cell & Develop-  
mental Biology  
ANZ Society of Nephrology  
Australian Assoc of Neurologists  
Australian Atherosclerosis Society  
Aust. Cystic Fibrosis Association  
Australian Diabetes Society  
Australian Kidney Foundation  
Australian Neuroscience Society  
Australian Physiological and  
Pharmacological Society  
Aust. Rheumatology Association  
Aust.Society for Biochemistry and*

*Molecular Biology  
Aust. Society for Psych. Research  
Aust.Society for Repr. Biology  
Aust. Soc. for the Study of Obesity  
Cardiac Society of ANZ  
Clinical Oncol.Society of Australia  
Comm. Health & Anti-tuberculosis  
Association  
Endocrine Society of Australia  
Fertility Society of Australia  
Gastroenterological Soc. Australia*

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*Fostering excellence  
in Australian health  
and medical research  
and promoting  
community under-  
standing and support  
since 1961.*

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*Haematology Society of Australia  
Haemophilia Fndn. of Australia  
High Blood Pressure Research  
Council of Australia  
Human Genetics Society of A'asia  
Juvenile Diabetes Fndn of  
Australia  
Muscular Dystrophy Assoc. SA Inc.  
National Assoc.of Research Fellows  
National Heart Fndn of Australia  
National MS Society  
Paediatric Rsh Soc. of Australia  
Perinatal Society of ANZ  
Royal ANZ Coll of Obstet. &  
Gynaecologists  
Royal A'asian Coll. of Physicians  
Royal College of Pathologists of  
Aust.  
Thoracic Society of ANZ  
Transplantation Society of ANZ*

## **Structure**

■ Eleven Directors who, apart from the President and President-Elect, have a *two year term* of office.

■ An Executive of the Board comprises the President, President-Elect, Secretary and Treasurer.

■ This structure ensures that the Board is always aware of, and responsive to, current issues within the health and medical research community.

■ The Board of Directors meets three times each year.

## Track Record

- ASMR's platform, proposed in 1996, was the doubling of the NHMRC budget. Our education program targeting all Federal MPs ensured the adoption of this recommendation by the HMRSR and its subsequent endorsement by Government.

- ASMR has maintained since 1994 that Capital Gains Taxation needed to be reformed to permit venture capital investment into Australia's Health and Medical Research sector. Such a recommendation was endorsed by the Ralph Review on taxation.

- ASMR has created awareness of Health and Medical Research in the community since the inception of ASMR-Medical Research Week in 1980. The week is now a national event. Australia's most recent Nobel laureate for Medicine and Physiology, Professor Peter Doherty, was the ASMR Medalist Touring Lecturer in 1998, followed by Professor Ralph Bradshaw, Past President of FASEB in 1999. These events attract significant sponsorship and media coverage around the country.

- ASMR public opinion poll data from 1995 and 1999, assessing attitudes of Australian's to increases in funding to Health and Medical Research, were persuasive instruments to government and are the only such polls conducted within Australia.

- Two workforce reviews conducted by the Society of Australian medical researchers have identified impediments to scientists continuing their work in Australia, forcing many to seek positions overseas. These studies provide data to support ASMR submissions to various bodies concerning the working conditions, funding opportunities and career development of Australian biomedical researchers.

- ASMR is frequently consulted by Government, media and funding bodies for examples of best case practice and recommendations on policy for Health and Medical Research and industry development. ASMR has organised press conferences, fora and discipline conferences, and is frequently quoted on radio, television and in print in Australia and in international scientific journals.

- ASMR supports the development of junior, intermediate and senior scientists by providing awards for scientific excellence. ASMR also acknowledges the contribution of journalists offering annual "Journalism Awards for Excellence" in medical research reporting.

- ASMR commitment to Federal and State Research Agencies is acknowledged by key stakeholder positions that ASMR has in these organisations.

Currently health care is going through dramatic and rapid changes, due to rapid advances in our understanding of human physiology, particularly at the molecular level. Thus, in the current boom in biomedical understanding, research and development efforts are driving the health care system to advance at a rate which is arguably much faster than at any other time in history. The burgeoning information technology industry, while facilitating the dissemination of information does not facilitate the ability to interpret new findings in the field of medicine. The ability to interpret and implement the major advances in biomedical understanding can only be achieved through direct experience in the research that leads to those advances. Research experience for Australia's health care workers enables them to put into practice new diagnostic, therapeutic and management techniques many years before they are available as off-the-shelf technology. Australians deserve to have access to the best of health care as it evolves.

There has been lack of imagination and vision in the funding of R&D in Australia and consequently there has been a significant dismantling of Australia's R&D capacity. The future means understanding technology, inventing it and translating it in a meaningful way to our industrial sector and into our hospitals and clinics.

## How to Achieve Best Health Care?

ASMR believes that a healthy level of health and medical research investment would be 5% of total health expenditure. The figure of 5% is an international benchmark and is in accordance with the amount invested by other technology driven industries. The doubling of funds allocated to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in the 1999 federal budget had been advocated by ASMR for some time. This ASMR initiative and platform policy was developed as a recommendation of the Health and Medical Research Strategic Review in 1999 (HMRSR). It is now recognised by all parties that this level of funding is necessary to adequately meet the challenges that advances in knowledge-based technologies will bring to the Australian health system; and to adequately capture the economic benefit of national and international developments in health R&D. The Federal Government's decision to increase NHMRC fund allocations should permit growth in the Health and Medical Research sector, however this alone is insufficient for a sustained industry which would be capable of discovery, capture of intellectual property, commercialisation, and ultimately translation to altered medical practice. Another ASMR platform has been to alter the Capital Gains Taxation to attract venture capital investment into Health and Medical Research. This was recommended by the HMRSR and the 1999 Ralph Review of taxation, although the 125% corporate rate reduction for R&D will not alter.

The development of a vibrant research industry, which encompasses biotechnology, information technology, research investment and commercialisation ventures, along with public support are crucial for Australia to maintain and develop its pre-eminent position in health and medical research and to permit translation of discoveries to health care practice.

### ASMR Supports

#### A merit driven, peer-reviewed broad based biomedical research effort.

- Expenditure on biomedical research should be at a minimum of 5% of national health outlays.
- Mechanisms for assured stability and continuity of medical research funding.
- Better Government initiated mechanisms for Industry support of biomedical research.
- Improvements to the levels of, and mechanisms for, infrastructure support of Medical Research in Universities and Hospitals.
- The retention of the highly skilled workforce is required to maintain excellence in Australia's health and medical research effort.
- The continued expansion of ASMR-Medical Research Week activities and education of the public into areas of medical research.
- Ensuring that young Australian researchers have input into the political process, and that ASMR should be represented on PMSEIC.

## Submissions 1993/99

August 1999

**NSW Animal Rsh. Act Review**

April 1998

**HMRSR**

February 1998

**Ntnl. Strategy for an Ageing Australia**

February 1997

**Inq. into Medical & Public Health Rsh. in Victoria**

February 1996

**Inq. into Medical & Public Health Rsh. in Victoria**

August 1996

**Review of the ABC role and functions**

December 1994

**H&MR Funding to Y2000**

October 1993

**External Review of NHMRC**

**Awareness - ASMR Medical Research Week permits education and public awareness of Australian and international research discoveries**

**Career Development for medical researchers is offered by scientific fora**

**Education of primary, secondary and tertiary students is achieved by ASMR**

**Policy - ASMR's interaction with the community and government influences policy**

### **NSW Cancer Council**

In accordance with the NSW Cancer Council Amendment Bill 1997, ASMR provides a nominee for a position on the Board of the Council. The Act stipulates that the person shall be "*a person who has expertise and experience in conducting medical research with relevance to cancer and who is nominated by the Australian Society for Medical Research*".

**ASMR's 1998 campaign to activate the general public in support of Health & Medical Research was assisted by our associate members. A wide distribution of information leaflets reached the general public through their networks**

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