

November 1, 2005

Mr David Crawford  
Budget Policy Division  
Dept of Treasury  
Langton Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600  
Email: [prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au](mailto:prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au)

**RE: Pre-Budget Submission and Summary**

Dear Mr Crawford

I write on behalf of Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) to support implementation of the funding recommendations of the *Investment Review of Health and Medical Research* in the 2006 Federal budget.

The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) is the peak body representing health and medical researchers in Australia. Through more than 1,000 direct members and affiliations with 47 specialist societies, medical colleges and patient groups, the ASMR network reaches an additional 140,000 Australians involved, or having an interest in, health and medical research.

The ASMR applauds the Government's positive response to the review with regard to the recently announced NHMRC restructure and additional infrastructure funding for independent medical research institutes. It is also notable that the NHMRC has announced an internal restructure which will ensure efficient translational of discovery into outcomes which deliver health and economic returns to Australia.

The ASMR now urges the government to respond to the Review recommendation of further strategic investment in funding for health and medical research. While part of this investment should come through the business and philanthropic sectors, the ASMR believes that Government has a key leadership role to play in increasing medical research investment through the NHMRC to OECD levels.

The ASMR has made a joint pre-budget submission with the Association of Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) and Research Australia entitled:

*"Accelerating Discovery and Capturing the Returns: A 5-year Plan for Investment in Health and Medical Research in Australia 2006-2011"* (attached).

Investment over the past 5 years has demonstrated tangible returns to Australia in the form of health outcomes and growth in the biotechnology industry<sup>1</sup>. Topical examples include the recent development of a vaccine for cervical cancer and Barry Marshall and Robin Warren's Nobel Prize winning discovery for stomach ulcer treatment. You will also recall that NHMRC recently showcased outcomes from recently funded NHMRC funded grants which was launched by the Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon. Tony Abbott in August of this year<sup>2</sup>.

Further investment is vital to:

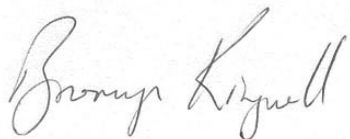
- better translate and implement new findings. We are good at discovery but too many breakthroughs are lost to Australia.
- target important health issues including those specific to Australia eg ageing, obesity, diabetes, heart failure, bird flu, bioterrorism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- for more strategic (disease-based) and co-ordinated approaches, balanced with strong investigator lead discovery.
- for development of a 'wide & deep' workforce (eg across all health areas, biotech and socio-economic).

The attached more detailed pre-budget submission recommends a staged approach to investment consistent with the Investment review recommendations. In 2006, the requested investment is \$42 million which ramps up to an extra \$307 million by 2010. The entire investment is \$828 million over the next 5 years and would build the NHMRC base from the current level of \$412 million to approximately \$720 million in 2010. This figure approaches the OECD average level of Government investment of 0.2% GDP.

Without this investment Australia is at significant risk of losing its best and brightest researchers to other countries and other sectors. Without an additional investment Australia will lose its capability and capacity to address real threats to the health of Australians. This will have a significant negative flow-on and impact on national productivity.

NHMRC is poised to administer further investment in a strategic manner. The ASMR is ready to work with Government and the NHMRC to ensure the highest level of accountability and communication of research outcomes to the community. The ASMR is also aware of the strong level of public support for this investment<sup>3</sup>. We urge the Government not to miss this opportunity to maintain Australia's competitive edge in the health research sector and to support the funding recommendations of the Investment Review.

Yours sincerely,



Bronwyn Kingwell  
President

CC The Hon Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Ageing

1. Access Economics. Exceptional Returns: The Value of Investing in Health Research & Development in Australia. In; 2003.  
<http://www.asmr.org.au/Campaign/campaign.html>
2. NHMRC Evaluations and Outcomes Committee. Ten of the Best.  
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/files/thebest.pdf>; 2005.
3. Crosby Textor. Health and Medical Research Public Opinion Poll 2005.  
[http://www.researchaustralia.org/aboutResearch.asp?id=286&parent\\_id=286&cid=1141#1141](http://www.researchaustralia.org/aboutResearch.asp?id=286&parent_id=286&cid=1141#1141).