

Media Release

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**New NHMRC committees will ensure health and medical research is in safe hands**

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia's leading expert body for supporting health and medical research, recently announced the new membership of its Council and Committees for 2015-2018.

Speaking on behalf of the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) in Sydney, President Dr Phoebe Phillips congratulated all newly-elected members, in particular ASMR Past-Presidents, Prof Maria Kavallaris and Prof Bronwyn Kingwell (Research Committee) and Prof Steve Wesselingh (Health Translation Advisory Committee).

*"The ASMR is very confident that the new NHMRC committees contain the broad coverage of expertise required for setting the research priorities and strategies of the nation"* said Dr Phillips.

*"Collectively, the members of the committees have experience across a broad spectrum of health and medical research, including basic research, translational research, implementation science, health economics and policy, innovation, commercialisation, public and indigenous health and importantly, consumer representation".*

The appointment of these key committees underscores the critical importance of the NHMRC as an authoritative, accountable organisation working for the public good.

The success of the independent expert review process in the distribution of government investment from the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) into health and medical research through NHMRC is clear. Conservative extrapolations of economic benefits resulting from NHMRC investment in health R&D between 2000 and 2010, measured across only five disease groups (cardiovascular, cancer, SIDS, asthma and muscular dystrophy), predict:

- savings of \$966 million in direct and indirect health costs to the health system<sup>1</sup>
- gains in wellbeing valued at \$6 billion<sup>1</sup>
- commercial benefits across these disease groups of \$1.6 billion<sup>1</sup>

This extraordinarily successful process of investment in health research through the MREA and NHMRC is facing an immediate crisis. Government investment in the MREA has been declining in real terms since 2011.

Dr Phillips said, *"An immediate injection into the MREA is essential to ensure the success continues and provides the platform for the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). The sector is haemorrhaging intellectual capital as expensively trained, highly skilled researchers, many of them world leaders in their field, cannot be supported due to insufficient investment into the MREA"*.

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, Returns on NHMRC funded R&D. In: 2011, <http://www.asmr.org.au/Publications.html>