

# the Australian Society for Medical Research



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## Media Releases

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February, 1996

### **MEDICAL RESEARCH - STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT, NO POLICIES**

Australians expect the country to lift its medical research capability, but neither party has a policy to meet those aspirations, researchers claimed today.

Health is one of the major concerns among voters this election. Opinion polls have shown that the public sees a very strong link between high-quality, efficient health care and the health research effort Australia puts in. Yet the major parties' health policy documents "Australia's Health" {ALP} and "A Healthy Future" {Coalition} hardly even use the word "research".

Results of a national opinion poll recently released by the Australian Society for Medical Research showed that a two-to-one majority felt Australia did too little medical research (only 1% felt we did too much).

We currently each pay six cents a day for government-funded medical research. On average, people were prepared to lift that amount by an extra five cents per day, or about \$300 million per year.

In contrast, funding increases announced by the Government in last year's Budget will lift our national health research capability, over four years, to just \$22 million per year more than it was in 1995 (Australia's national health and medical research effort costs about \$600 m per year, while health costs overall about \$36,000 million per year). The ALP has made no new commitments to research, and the Coalition has remained completely silent.

"The politicians are way behind the public on this one", said Dr Graham Mann, President of the Australian Society for Medical Research. "Australia's health and medical research effort matters to the vast majority of Australians, and they are expecting Government to give it much

stronger support than it currently receives".

"In fact, a large majority (80%) said they would be concerned if their preferred party did not have a policy of major increases to health and medical research support. I don't think they can afford to ignore that message", Dr Mann said.

The poll was conducted on the weekend of December 8-10, 1995 by Newspoll. Respondents were asked about their attitudes to Australian medical research, meaning all research aimed at improving health and the prevention and treatment of disease.

Poll questions and results are attached. Results were very consistent across age groups, sex, income level and voting intention.

**Dr Graham Mann**  
**President**  
**Australian Society for Medical Research**

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