

the Australian Society for Medical Research



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Newsletters, News and Events

Media Releases

September 2, 1998

A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA NEEDS BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT FOR INCREASES IN MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING

While the USA has decided to double federal funding to its major medical research organisation, the National Institute of Health, over the next five years, the future for funding in Australia is looking decidedly grim. *Currently health care is going through dramatic and rapid changes, due to swift advances in our understanding of human physiology, particularly at the molecular level.*

We believe that there has been a lack of vision and imagination in the funding of R&D in Australia. Why this climate should prevail is not clear. Australian medical researchers are creative and successful on the world scene and they achieve this success on a relative shoestring. Any attempts by government to cut corners when distributing future funds for health related research can only be counterproductive for long term improvement to national health. The future means understanding technology, inventing it and translating it in a meaningful way to our industrial sector and into our hospitals and clinics.

With elections very much on the agenda, the Australian Society for Medical Research has just released its Platform for Health and Medical Research in Australia. ASMR, the major society representing medical researchers and promoting support for their endeavours from the community and the government, believes the platform should gain widespread support.

Two issues emphasised by the ASMR platform are funding of research to a level of 5% of national health outlays and encouragement of Industry support of Research and Development in areas related to health through more generous taxation concessions.

Times are changing in Universities and Hospitals where infrastructure was once a given for resident researchers

Today, with a switch by management to cost recovery on all fronts, research grant recipients see their allowance for fine chemicals being eroded to cover photocopying and email.

All political parties should value the enormous contribution made by medical researchers to improvements in the health and welfare of our nation, to export dollars and job creation. At present, the value-added component of this contribution appears to be underestimated.

If the Board of ASMR has its way, the Platform for Health and Medical Research in Australia will stimulate debate and lead the way to reform in funding of medical research.

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