



the **Australian Society** for **Medical Research**

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Karen Crawshaw
Director, Legal and Legislative Services Branch
NSW Department of Health
73 Miller Street
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2060
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Dear Ms. Crawshaw

We would like to firstly thank the NSW Department of Health for the opportunity to provide comments on the legislation and review of the New South Wales Cancer Council Act 1995 ("the Act"). The Australian Society for Medical Research represents a diverse and vast number (approx 1,100 core members and 17,000 affiliate members) of medical researchers throughout NSW and Australia.

At the onset we wish to acknowledge that the NSW Cancer Council has made a number of significant contributions in the area of cancer control since the Act came into force. Below are some specific comments and points for further clarification related to the legislation and in particular to the Policy objectives of the Act.

- The Council operates under an Act that outlines broad policy objectives, which allows some flexibility for the Council in addressing its objectives and should remain as a feature of the Act. As a society concerned with Medical Research we support the continued policy objectives of the Act in particular those listed under "policy objectives of the Act" part (a) and (b) and (i) section (ii) "the provision of facilities for research and investigation in the causation, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer".
- It is important that the Act and the Council maintain a pivotal role in supporting research and researchers in this area. New knowledge nationally and internationally has highlighted the complexity of this disease: there is heterogeneity in every aspect of cancer, from the causative agents, molecular profiles, patterns of clinical presentation, treatment response, psychosocial considerations etc. Understanding this heterogeneity in a way that addresses issues of causation, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure remain challenges to be faced. An ongoing commitment to knowledge generation is essential in eventual control of all these dimensions of cancer.
- Cancer research is an area of strength in Australia and the state cancer organisations play a pivotal role in supporting this type of research. It is important to maintain this focus of the organisation as other granting agencies largely do not duplicate the role of the cancer agencies in supporting cancer research.

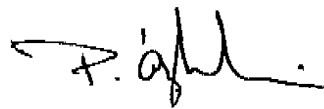
- The objectives to co-ordinate research activities (d and h) are important and it is not evident that these have been fully developed although there are signs of co-operation in fundraising etc between the states. It is worth highlighting that the effectiveness of the cancer organisations in supporting research and other cancer control activities is enhanced by virtue of co-operative activities. Joint funding of larger research projects - cancer councils in several states - for instance might be one way of maximising resources into cancer research.
- We would ask that there be clarification in relation to the policy act (i) section (iii) "the establishment of a cancer institute". The potential of this phrase as an objective is far-reaching, and might include provision to the people of NSW of a resource that could contribute directly to reducing the burden of cancer on the community. ASMR is aware of diversity of opinion on what constitutes "a cancer institute", but the complexity of the issue should not deprive the people of NSW of this opportunity. Accordingly, we propose that the clause be replaced by a more focused statement that allows the matter to be advanced:

That prior to the next review of the Act, the Council provide to the Minister an assessment of the means required to establish a cancer institute in NSW and the benefits such an institute would provide to the community.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments in relation to the review of the New South Wales Cancer Council Act 1995.



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