

November 24, 2006

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**RE: Pre-Budget Submission**

We write on behalf of the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) to request **support in the 2007 Federal Budget for critical infrastructure in the non-"institute" health and medical research sector, that have fallen "between the cracks"**.

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.

Universities are society's bastions of higher education, research training and independent and creative thinking. Much of Australia's biomedical research is performed in universities and many of our top biomedical researchers (including our all living Nobel Laureates and others such as Australian of the Year Ian Frazer) have performed their seminal work in a university environment. Our nation's future health and medical researchers, health practitioners and allied health professionals, gain critical undergraduate and postgraduate training in universities. Infrastructure funding is crucial to support the expenses associated with conducting research. However, government funding to universities is inadequate to meet the costly research-related infrastructure needs essential for world-class research.

Seventeen medical research facilities justly benefited from capacity-building infrastructure support in the 2006 Federal Budget with a bolus allocation of \$213 million. Notwithstanding some exceptions (such as \$50 million to the John Curtin School of Medical Research via the Australian National University), support for university-based health research infrastructure has been neglected. University infrastructure has been run down over recent years, and is in desperate need of support.

***We urge federal recognition and the provision of adequate resources for high-performing Australian medical research facilities that do not fit within the classic "institute" structure, such as university-based centres and units conducting internationally-renowned research programs with peer-reviewed funds, that would demonstrably use such funds to greatly increase capacity. This capital support would be quite separate from NHMRC and DEST infrastructure funds, along similar lines to the 2006 budget allocation to institutes. ASMR proposes this one-off allocation be of the order of \$160 million to be distributed strictly for capacity building purposes to Go8 university-based centres and facilities.***

We urge the Government not to miss this opportunity to maintain Australia's competitive edge in the health research sector. We would be delighted to provide clarification on the above or any additional information.

Yours sincerely,



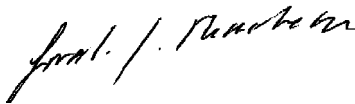
Professor Levon Khachigian  
ASMR President



A/Professor Maria Kavallaris  
ASMR President-Elect



Dr Mark Hulett  
ASMR Executive Director



Dr Sarah Meachem  
ASMR Executive Director

cc. The Hon Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Ageing