



## **Strategic Research Development Committee**

### **Call for Applications for the Centre of Clinical Research Excellence (CCRE) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health**

#### **Supporting Document**

#### **Background**

The Strategic Research Development Committee (SRDC), a principal committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), is inviting applications for a Centre of Clinical Research Excellence (CCRE) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. The CCRE for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health will form part of the SRDC's CCRE program. This program has evolved from the previously funded Centres of Clinical Excellence (CCE) in Hospital-based Research program (1997-2001).

The CCE program began in 1997 as an initiative of the Government's 'Health Throughout Life' policy. Total program funding of \$1.5 million *per annum* for three years was provided to promote innovative hospital-based clinical research, and to address a perceived gap in maintaining and developing clinical research in hospitals and other health care facilities. Nine Centres were funded in the first CCE program round.

In April 2001, an evaluation of the CCE program was conducted, and the recommendations from the evaluation form the basis of the new program. Total program funding of \$4 million *per annum* is available to support ten CCREs over a period of five years, with a funding-dependent review to be conducted after three years. The evaluation also recommended that one of the Centres should be a designated Centre of Clinical Research Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. This recommendation is consistent with the NHMRC's commitment to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

The aims of the new CCRE program are:

- to support clinical (human) research with potential to lead to improved health outcomes for the community;
- to foster training of clinical researchers, particularly those with a capacity for independent research and future leadership roles; and
- to ensure effective translation of research outcomes into clinical practice.

In November 2001, an advertisement calling for expressions of interest in the general CCRE program was posted in the national press. While the advertisement encouraged all applicants to address Indigenous health issues, it was recognised that the designated CCRE in Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander Health would necessarily possess inherent characteristics of its own, and would therefore need to be developed independently and advertised separately at a later date. The characteristics for the CCRE in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health have been identified and refined via a consultative process involving the SRDC, the CCRE Working Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Agenda Working Group (RAWG) and with selected research institutions in Australia.

### **CCRE in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health**

In accordance with the aims of the CCRE program as a whole, the focus of the CCRE in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health will be on clinical research, the training of clinical researchers, and the translation of research findings into improved health care. In addition, the Centre will be required to develop and implement a structure, and processes of governance which will ensure effective Indigenous management of the clinical research and training activities of the Centre.

As with all NHMRC applications for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the applicants will be required to adhere to the NHMRC's '*Guidelines for Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*'. More information on these Guidelines can be obtained from <http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/issues/asti.pdf>. The applicants will also need to demonstrate that their application fulfil the NHMRC '*Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians*' (i.e. adequate community participation, sustainability and transferability of research outcomes). More information on the Criteria can be obtained from <http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/funding/indighth.pdf>. Further information on either the Guidelines or the Criteria can also be obtained from the project officer (contact details provided on page 4 of this document).

While the scope of the Centre's research activities may be limited to a relatively small number of research priorities, it is important that these priorities should be of national relevance (as opposed to local or regional relevance) to Indigenous Australians. In this regard, it should be noted that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Agenda Working Group (RAWG) (a joint initiative between the NHMRC and the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH)) is currently engaged in a consultative process to determine agreed national research priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. This consultative process is currently in progress, and is due to be completed by October 2002. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the consultations will be made widely available, and that the national priorities that have been identified may assist the successful Centre in further developing all, or part, of its research agenda.

#### Proposals will be required to address the following selection criteria:

- Scientific and clinical merit and, in particular, how the CCRE funding will make a unique contribution to existing research programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.
- How the outcomes of the research are likely to lead to improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- How the Centre intends to identify and recruit Indigenous clinical researchers, and what processes are in place to foster their training and encourage their career development.
- How the research outcomes will be translated into clinical practice.

- How the proposed structure and processes of governance for the Centre will ensure effective Indigenous management to direct and oversee the Centre's clinical research and training activities.
- How existing infrastructure and/or established linkages with Indigenous community organisations and Indigenous communities may support the proposed governance for the Centre.
- What processes are in place for ensuring adequate Indigenous community consultation and participation in:
  - research project development;
  - the research process;
  - evaluation of the research; and
  - implementation of any research outcomes and/or interventions.

Principal Investigator(s) will be required to demonstrate relevant experience in:

- High quality clinical research.
- Fostering of clinical research training and career development.
- Translation of clinical research findings into improved health care.
- Experience working in Indigenous communities, and with Indigenous people.

As well as demonstrating an ability to meet the CCRE program aims, where appropriate applicants may wish to incorporate:

- Synergistic approaches between basic biomedical sciences and clinical research and/or between clinical research and population health research or health services research.
- Collaborative interactions between different clinical disciplines.

For further clarification of program criteria, see 'Other Issues' below.

### **Format for Applications**

A proforma application can be obtained from the NHMRC website (under 'what's new') at [www.nhmrc.gov.au/new.htm](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/new.htm) or from Alison Clegg on telephone: (02) 6289 9570 or at e-mail: [alison.clegg@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:alison.clegg@nhmrc.gov.au). Enquiries regarding the submission of application (that have not already been addressed by the supporting document) should be directed to Alison Clegg on (02) 6289 9570 or at [alison.clegg@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:alison.clegg@nhmrc.gov.au).

Additional enquires about the intent and aims of the CCRE in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health should be directed to Professor Don Cameron on (07) 3240 7663.

Applications (one hard copy with signatures, and one copy by e-mail) should be lodged by **5pm Friday 15 November 2002**. Applications should be sent to:

POSTAL ADDRESS: Alison Clegg  
Research Development Section  
NHMRC – MDP 100  
GPO Box 9848  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

EMAIL: alison.clegg@nhmrc.gov.au

COURIER ADDRESS: Alison Clegg  
Research Development Section  
Office of NHMRC  
32 Corinna Street  
WODEN ACT 2606

TELEPHONE: (02) 6289 9570

### **Other Issues**

- An outline of plans for the promotion of clinical research training might include information on what formal/informal research training will be provided, strategies for selecting and nurturing Indigenous students toward an independent research career, and the provisions for appropriate mentoring.
- By ‘translation of clinical research findings into improved health outcomes’ the Evaluation panel would like to know both how the applicants might translate their own research outcomes, and how they plan to become advocates of evidence based practice in their research discipline.
- Researchers will be free to collaborate with, and participate in, international research studies. However, research under the auspices of the CCRE program should be conducted in Australia, and the funding allocated through this program should be spent in Australia.
- Researchers will be free to obtain research funding from other sources, but CCRE funded activities should be identifiable, with the capacity for discrete reporting. This does not preclude studies being expanded using other funding.
- Groups funded under the previous CCE program are eligible to apply.
- Program design should incorporate succession planning, so that by the end of the five-year funding period the research under the CCRE will be financially sustainable. While future financial sustainability will not be thoroughly assessed until the interim review process, a promise of some matching funds in the applicant stage may be an advantage.
- The applicant Centres of Clinical Research Excellence may be actual (i.e. comprising a single physical entity or institution) or virtual (i.e. geographically disparate, linking a collaborative research effort from several different organisations).

## **The Application Process**

It is expected that the process by which applications for the CCRE in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health will be managed is as follows:

- Applicants are invited to submit applications using the proforma application form provided, and in accordance with the instructions to applicants.
- An Evaluation Panel (comprising representatives from the CCRE Working Committee and RAWG) will convene to consider and provide comment on the applications. In addition, the applications will be peer reviewed by at least three independent assessors (Australian and/or international).
- Comments from the Evaluation Panel, and de-identified peer reviewer reports will be forwarded to the applicants, who will be invited to respond.
- The Evaluation Panel will reconvene to consider the applications, the assessor reports, and applicants' responses.
- Applicants may be invited to support their applications at interview.
- The Evaluation Panel will make recommendations for awarding of the grants to the SRDC.
- The SRDC will consider the recommendations, and make a recommendation to the Minister for Health and Ageing.
- Funding will be announced.

Successful applicants should note:

- The Evaluation Panel has the right to undertake site visits or other monitoring, and investigator(s) must be willing to participate in these visits, workshops, interviews or similar forums. The Evaluation Panel also has the right to provide advice and directives which will ensure that the objectives of the CCRE in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health are fulfilled effectively.
- Funding of approved research proposals cannot commence until all required clearances are received, in line with the standard NHMRC grant process.
- Where proposals include provision of expertise or equipment by industry or another body, funding cannot commence until written agreement to provide these resources, and in a timely manner, is received from this body.
- Successful Centres may use the designation 'Centre of Clinical Research Excellence' for the duration of their award.
- Detailed reporting will be required on an annual basis. A mid term review will occur after three years, with ongoing support dependent on a satisfactory outcome.
- Successful recipients of the grant are requested to provide the Director, Research Development Section, MDP 100, NHMRC, GPO Box 9848, CANBERRA ACT 2601 with a copy of conference abstracts or scientific papers at the time of their acceptance for presentation or publication.
- NHMRC funding support should be acknowledged in relevant presentations and publications.