



# NHMRC Newsletter

## December 2011

Thank you to all researchers who have helped NHMRC (and your fellow researchers) by participating in peer review this year. Many thousands of you, a record number in fact, help us as members of peer review panels and as external reviewers. For 2012, changes we have been able to make to RGMS will make these tasks easier. A list of those peer reviewers and external assessors involved in this year's grants rounds can be found on the NHMRC website at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/peer-review/peer-reviewers-and-external-assessors-2011>.

This newsletter provides an update on some of the major issues of the second half of 2011. For most readers, the announcements by Minister Butler on October 17th and Minister Plibersek on December 15th were probably the most directly significant events. However, the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia, announced by Minister Butler and to be conducted by a committee Chaired by Mr Simon McKeon was another major event. Also, NHMRC turned 75 in September; a time for reflection on the achievements of Australian researchers and the challenges ahead.

### NHMRC funding in 2011

The announcements of research funding on 17 October and 15 December were of the highest number of grants ever funded by NHMRC. A total of \$787.9M will support 1,299 grants across 13 funding schemes including Project, Program, and Development Grants; Centres of Research Excellence; Partnerships for Better Health Projects; NHMRC Research Fellowships, Practitioner Fellowships, Translating Research into Practice Fellowships; Australian-European Union Collaborative Research Grants; Post-graduate Scholarships; and Independent Research Institutes Infrastructure Support Scheme (IRIIS) grants.

Key statistics include:

- \$44.4 million for Indigenous health focussed research, 5.5% of total funding (44% success rate).
- 15 new CREs, 13 new Partnerships for Better Health Projects.
- The success rate for Project Grants is 22.1%.

**Table 1: Total Funding by Scheme**

Funding Scheme	# of Grants	Total Commitments (in millions)
Infrastructure Support	27	\$31.7
IRIISS	27	\$31.7
<b>People Support</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>\$146.7</b>
NHMRC Research Fellowships	124	\$71.0
Career Development Fellowship	65	\$25.6
Early Career Fellowships (held in Australia)	82	\$23.2
Early Career Fellowships (held overseas)	47	\$15.2
NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarships	130	\$10.5
Translating Research into Practice Fellowships	9	\$1.2
<b>Research Support</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>\$609.6</b>
NHMRC Project Grants	771	\$454.8
NHMRC Program Grants	10	\$94.5
Centres for Research Excellence	15	\$37.3
NHMRC Partnerships for Better Health Project Grants	13	\$9.9
NHMRC Development Grants	16	\$7.5
Australian – EU Collaborative Research Grants	9	\$5.6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,318</b>	<b>\$787.9</b>

**Table 2: Funded rates by Scheme (% applications funded)\***

Funding Scheme	# Applications	# Grants Funded	Success Rate
<b>People Support</b>	<b>1404</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>31.2%</b>
Career Development Fellowship	356	65	18.3%
Early Career Fellowships (Australia)	262	82	31.3%
Early Career Fellowships (Overseas)	128	47	36.7%
NHMRC Research Fellowships	292	105	36.0%
NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarships	324	130	40.1%
Translating Research into Practice Fellowships	42	9	21.4%
<b>Research Support</b>	<b>3,734</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>22.3%</b>
Australian – EU Collaborative Research Grant	9	9	100.0%
Centres of Research Excellence	79	15	19.0%
NHMRC Development Grants	97	16	16.5%
NHMRC Partnerships for Better Health Project Grants	36	13	36.1%
NHMRC Project Grants	3,495	771	22.1%
Programs	18	10	55.6%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>24.8%</b>

\*The number of grants funded does not include 27 IRISS grants and 19 Research Fellowship extensions

**Table 3: Total Funding and Funded Rates for States and Territories\***

State/Territory	# Applications	# Grants Funded	Success Rate	Total Commitments (in millions)
ACT	96	22	22.9%	\$11.7
NSW	1,456	347	23.8%	\$224.9
NT	44	26	59.1%	\$18.3
QLD	726	184	25.3%	\$122.7
SA	433	94	21.7%	\$59.7
TAS	47	8	17.0%	\$3.4
VIC	1,866	526	28.2%	\$317.7
WA	325	65	20.0%	\$29.5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4,993</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>\$787.9</b>

\*19 NHMRC Research Fellowship Extensions and 27 IRISS grants are not included in application numbers but are included in funding

**Table 4: Funding and Success Rates by Broad Research Area<sup>1</sup> (across all schemes)\***

Broad Research Area	# of Applications	# of Grants Funded	Success Rate	Total Commitments
Basic Science	2,356	611	26%	\$328.0
Clinical Medicine and Science	1,762	430	24%	\$285.3
Public Health	627	182	29%	\$111.9
Health Services	248	49	20%	\$31.1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4,993</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>\$756.2</b>

\*Funding does not include IRISS grants as they are not allocated to a Broad Research Area.

<sup>1</sup> Broad Research Area is the applicants' nominations of the applications as being predominantly one of these four research pillars

**Table 5: Total Funding and Success Rate for Administering Institution – all schemes (top 25 Institutions)**

Administering Institution	# of Applications	# of Grants Funded	Success Rate	Total Commitments (in millions)
University of Sydney	653	179	27.4%	\$114.4
University of Melbourne	607	176	29.0%	\$87.5
University of New South Wales	378	88	23.3%	\$65.3
Monash University	506	122	24.1%	\$64.8
University of Queensland	382	101	26.4%	\$57.9
University of Adelaide	270	63	23.3%	\$45.1
Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute	107	36	33.6%	\$35.4
Murdoch Children's Research Institute	146	46	31.5%	\$30.1
Walter and Eliza Hall Institute	110	45	40.9%	\$28.6
University of Western Australia	268	58	21.6%	\$27.0
Griffith University	93	16	17.2%	\$24.9
Queensland Institute of Medical Research	105	33	31.4%	\$23.3
St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research	35	19	54.3%	\$20.4
Menzies School of Health Research	42	26	61.9%	\$18.3
Garvan Institute of Medical Research	102	27	26.5%	\$16.3
University of Newcastle	111	21	18.9%	\$12.7
Australian National University	88	20	22.7%	\$10.6
Flinders University	97	20	20.6%	\$9.7
Deakin University	63	18	28.6%	\$9.2
Queensland University of Technology	63	12	19.0%	\$8.2
Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research	33	8	24.2%	\$6.5
Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health	47	7	14.9%	\$6.5
Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research	24	9	37.5%	\$6.4
Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute	24	8	33.3%	\$5.9
James Cook University	26	12	46.2%	\$4.7
<b>Total Commitment</b>				<b>\$739.3</b>
<b>Percentage of Total NHMRC Funding</b>				<b>94%</b>

## NHMRC's 75th Anniversary symposium

NHMRC held a Scientific Symposium in Canberra from 29 Nov and 1 December, to celebrate 75 years since NHMRC was created by the Governor General-in-Council and the first meeting of the Council. The symposium theme was “Research for a Healthy Australia”, focussing on the future challenges facing health and medical research and their solutions. It was attended by early and mid-career research fellows and researchers nominated by their parent institutions. The topics considered at the Symposium ranged from building national wealth through innovation and new industries, through improving patient care and advancing treatment of mental health issues such as dementia to questions around how to improve policy and practice in the health system.

Our three Ministers all spoke in the opening session, Ministers Mark Butler, Nicola Roxon, and Warren Snowdon.

The symposium also coincided with meetings at NHMRC of the Heads of International (Biomedical) Research Organisations (HIROs), East Asian HIROs and of the Board of the Global Alliance for Chronic Disease. This provided the audience with an opportunity to hear directly from international leaders from medical research funding bodies around the world. Very interesting presentations were delivered by:

- **Dr Francis Collins**  
Director, US National Institutes of Health
- **Dr Alain Beaudet**  
President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- **Dr Ruxandra Draghia-Akli**  
Director, Health Directorate at the Research Directorate General, European Commission
- **Dr Robin Olds**  
Chief Executive, New Zealand Health Research Council
- **Professor Mats Ulfendahl**  
Swedish Research Council
- **Dr Cao Xue Tao**  
Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences
- **Dr Jiarui Wu**  
Chinese Academy of Science
- **Professor Tasuku Honjo**  
Head, Japanese Council for Science and Technology
- **Professor Iain Mattaj**  
Director General, European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)
- **Dr Belah Shah**  
Senior Deputy Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research
- **Sir Mark Walport**  
Director, The Wellcome Trust.

Video of all the presentations at the symposium can be viewed from NHMRC's website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/media/75th-anniversary-scientific-symposium>.

NHMRC thanks all the speakers, chairs of sessions, and attendees; we have received much positive feedback.

## NHMRC Clinical and Health Services Research Translation Faculty

We are about to begin the establishment of an NHMRC Faculty of clinician researchers and health services researchers, as a first step of a stronger effort at bridging the gap between discovery and implementation of research findings.

This gap was much discussed by international leaders at the 75th Anniversary Symposium, and has been the subject of wide discussion especially in recent years (e.g. see *Nature* 453, 7197: 840-842. (2008)).

More detail soon, but NHMRC will shortly write to all funded clinical and health services researchers with an invitation to join the Faculty, to help NHMRC better support the sapiential work of its Council, particularly in the Major Health Issues that we are required by our Act to identify in our triennial Strategic Plan.

The Faculty will help advise NHMRC on how better to develop and implement programs that will increase national capacity in research translation, identify and prioritise evidence-practice gaps, identify barriers, enablers and possible solutions to the effective translation of research into practice, and develop standards for clinical practice guidelines.

We anticipate establishing an NHMRC Research faculty in Public Health, along similar lines, during 2012.

## Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research

NHMRC urges all researchers to have their say when the Committee established by government calls for submissions in 2012.

The membership of the Committee, chaired by Simon McKeon, Australian of the year, may be found at <http://health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Review+of+Health+and+Medical+Research+Terms+of+Reference>.

## Partnership Centres for Better Health

We have appointed Professor Jonathan Lomas, previously Director of the Health Services Research Foundation of Canada, to bring to fruition our vision for Partnership Centres for Better Health. Prof. Lomas was an original author of the recommendation on how to establish these Centres together with Dame Professor Sally Davies and Dr Chris Baggoley (currently the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the Commonwealth).

Professor Lomas and his team have been consulting with peak health-based and State Chief Health Officers and CMOs to garner interest in themes such as 'defining, measuring and improving system-level appropriateness of care, 'using a systems perspective for the prevention of lifestyle related chronic health problems, and countering cognitive and related decline in the elderly, as well as a number of other areas.

NHMRC hopes to be able to announce calls for expressions of interest in being involved with a number of Centres in the first half of 2012.

## NHMRC Partnership Projects for Better Health Funding Scheme

The NHMRC Partnership Projects scheme funds projects that require medium to long term support of research to impact on health policy, health practice and/or service delivery. Applications are proposed by alliances between researchers and policy and/or practice partner organisations.

This scheme allows strong linkages to be built between researchers and those organisations with a need for policy and practice focussed research.

New Partnership for Better Health Projects commencing in 2012 include:

- A Systems Approach to Improving Outcomes following Spinal Cord Injury: Delivering the Right Care at the Right Time in the Right Place. A/Prof James Middleton, University of Sydney (NHMRC Funding; \$1,050,325). Partners: Lifetime Care and Support Authority of NSW; Agency for Clinical Innovation (NSW) NSW; The Spinal Cord Injury Network (NSW); Ambulance Research Institute (NSW); and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- SEARCH: better evidence, better health for urban Aboriginal children. Prof Jonathan Craig, University of Sydney (NHMRC Funding: \$1,395,761). Partners: Beyond Blue; Sydney Children's Hospital Network; NSW Health; Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney; Awabakal Aboriginal Corporation, Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation, and Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation.
- STROKE123: a national initiative to monitor and improve hospital care and health outcomes associated with stroke. (NHMRC Funding \$1,200,000). A/Prof Dominique Cadilhac, National Stroke Research Institute. Partners: National stroke Foundation; Queensland Health; Stroke Society of Australasia; George Institute for Global Health; NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation; Monash University; Victorian Stroke Clinical Network; Departments of Health VIC, SA and WA.

## Funding of Indigenous Health Research

In the 2011 Funding Round, 5.5% of all funding went to research directly focussed on improving the health of Indigenous people. This figure maintains NHMRC's pledge to commit at least 5% of all competitively awarded funding to Indigenous Research.

**Table 6: Indigenous Health Funding and Success Rates by Grant Type**

Grant Type	# of Applications	# of Grants Funded	Success Rate	Total Commitments
NHMRC Project Grants **	60	34	56.7%	\$28,765,211
Established Career Fellowships	13	7	53.8%	\$3,869,325
NHMRC Partnership Project Grants	7	2	28.6%	\$2,893,085
Early Career Fellowships (Australia)	11	8	72.7%	\$2,312,668
Centres for Research Excellence	9	1	11.1%	\$2,544,967
NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarships	29	16	55.2%	\$1,260,776
Career Development Fellowship	14	3	21.4%	\$1,214,720
NHMRC Development Grants	3	1	33.3%	\$422,418
Translating Research into Practice Fellowships	4	1	25.0%	\$126,232
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>\$43,409,402</b>
Total Funding Commitments – All Schemes				\$787,943,424
Proportion of Indigenous Health Funding				5.5%

Note \*\* – Three Project Grants are funded through the MREA by DoHA

## New Targeted Calls for Research

NHMRC has two Targeted Calls for Research (TCRs) that are currently open and a number that are currently in development. These schemes are aimed at providing funding to address topics of importance to the health of Australians.

Current TCRs are:

**Mental Health TCR:** NHMRC has allocated \$26.2 million over a five year period to support research that delivers greater evidence-based policies and practices aiming to improve mental health care and provision of mental health services in Australia, and in particular, improvement of youth mental health in Australia. This funding will be used to build research capacity and to fund a Targeted Call for Research (TCR) focusing on “prevention of, and early intervention in, mental illness in children and young people”.

Applications open on 30 November 2011 and close on 4 April 2012. Further details in relation to this TCR is available from the NHMRC website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/mental-health-targeted-call-research>.

**Hendra Virus TCR:** Due to the potential threat to public health of the Hendra Virus, NHMRC has developed an Urgent Call for Research to provide funding for research that will provide better insight to better understand the Hendra virus in terms of its impact on human health, animal health and environmental biodiversity.

Applications for funding under this scheme will close on 18 January 2012. Further details in relation to this TCR is available from the NHMRC website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/urgent-call-research-hendra-virus>.

**Other TCRs:** NHMRC is currently developing TCRs aimed at addressing mental health and suicide prevention issues in Indigenous populations and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder issues in Indigenous populations. Further details will be available on the NHMRC website.

## Development of RGMS

NHMRC has worked with the software suppliers and with the research community through 2011, including with the advice of our RGMS User Reference group (RURG), to improve the functions of RGMS for this year's project grants round and into the future. Changes made and further extensive stress – and load-testing of the system are aimed at improving RGMS's performance and user-friendliness.

Our Research Help Centre team is able to assist with any enquiries. The Centre can be contacted by telephone on: **1800 500 983** or +61 2 6217 9451 or by e-mail at [help@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:help@nhmrc.gov.au). The Centre is open from 9am to 5pm AEDST Monday to Friday, except over the Christmas/New Year period. Further detail on opening times during this period is available from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/help>.

## Upcoming NHMRC documents

We intend to review and update the *NHMRC Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research and its companion toolkits - the Model Framework for Consumer and Community Engagement in Health and Medical Research (2004)* and the *Resource Kit for Consumer and Community Engagement in Health and Medical Research (2004)*. These documents were developed to guide consumer and community participation across all types and levels of health and medical research.

Draft *NHMRC Australian Dietary Guidelines* have been released for public consultation until 29 February 2012. The draft guidelines provide evidence-based advice to health professionals and the general public about food choices to promote health and wellbeing and reduce the risk of diet-related diseases. The guidelines are grounded in good health outcomes, a strong evidence base (55,000 articles reviewed) and extensive consultation. To view the guidelines and information on how to make a submission, please go to <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au>.

## Other NHMRC documents under consultation

*National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*

Chapters 3.4 and 3.6

Closing Date: 11 Jan 2012 – 5:00pm

*5th edition of Staying Healthy in early childhood education and care – Preventing infectious disease in education and care services*

Closing Date: 16 Jan 2012 – 5:00pm

*NHMRC Statement on Thermal Imaging for Early Breast Cancer Detection*

Closing Date: 25 Jan 2012 – 5:00pm

Consultation on the following documents has closed recently:

- *Ethical Issues in research into alcohol and other drugs*
- *Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers*
- *Identifying and Managing Conflicts of Interest*
- *Draft Policies for NHMRC Committees and Working Groups Developing Guidelines*
- *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 7th Edition (2004)*
- *Clinical Practice Points on the Diagnosis, Assessment and Management of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents*

Finally, may I take the opportunity to wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday period. And of course it would be remiss of me not to gently draw your attention to the NHMRC Alcohol Drinking Guidelines and the draft Australian Dietary Guidelines in this period! For most readers, this is also a period of intense attention to applying for research grants, fellowships and more for 2013. Best wishes from us all here at the Office of NHMRC and our Council and Principal Committees.

**Prof. Warwick Anderson AM**

Chief Executive Officer