



**THE HON MARK BUTLER MP**  
**Parliamentary Secretary for Health**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**NHMRC RESEARCH COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED**

The Australian Government today announced the membership of the National Health and Medical Research Council's Research Committee for 2009-2012.

The Research Committee's major role is to advise and make recommendations on research grant applications and funding. The Government allocated more than \$700 million in the 2009 Budget to fund health and medical research projects, programs, scholarships, fellowships and infrastructure support.

The Research Committee plays a vital role in providing advice on matters relating to medical research and public health research, including the quality and scope of such research in Australia. The Committee will continue to play an important part in advising on applications for funding and will consider ways in which new researchers and Indigenous researchers can be better supported.

The committee will serve a three-year term to 30 June 2012 and will be chaired by Professor James Best, who has been appointed for a second term. Professor Best is currently Head of the School of Medicine at the University of Melbourne. He has more than 30 years experience in biomedical research, particularly in the areas of glucose metabolism and diabetes.

Professor Best will be joined by 15 other committee members including Professor Louisa Jorm of the Sax Institute in Sydney, who brings expertise in translating research evidence into clinical practice; and Dr Mick Adams, who enhances the emphasis NHMRC places on capacity building in Indigenous research.

Other committee members for 2009-2012 have expertise across a wide variety of medical, clinical and public health research activities.

The Research Committee is a Principal Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*. Its role is to provide advice to NHMRC's CEO, Professor Warwick Anderson.

The Australian Government thanks the outgoing members of Research Committee for their contribution and commitment over the past three years.

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## **2009-2012 NHMRC Research Committee members**

### **Chair**

#### **Professor James Best**

Professor Best is Head of the School of Medicine at the University of Melbourne. He has taught extensively during his career, especially on the topic of diabetes and metabolism. His research has involved physiological and molecular studies of glucose disposal, as well as studies of lipid biochemistry and epidemiological and clinical studies of risk factors for cardiovascular disease in diabetes.

### **Members**

#### **Dr Mick Adams**

Dr Adams, a descendent of the Yadhiagana people of Cape York Peninsula in Queensland, has been working in the health industry for more than 30 years. During the past 13 years he has been actively involved in addressing issues associated with the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. He has strived to ensure that men's health issues are promoted and placed on the national and international agenda through advocacy, research, publication and health management.

#### **Professor Jon Currie**

Professor Currie, a neurologist and addiction medicine specialist, is Director of Addiction Medicine and Translational Neurobiology at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, and Chair of the Victorian Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council. He has a longstanding interest in the neurobiology of addiction and the acute and chronic effects of alcohol and other drugs on brain function. He has particular expertise in the rapid translation of basic neuroscience and neurobiological research into novel and effective clinical treatments for a wide range of drug and addiction problems.

#### **Professor Simon Foote**

Professor Foote is Director of the Menzies Research Institute, University of Tasmania. He previously mapped the first human chromosome and was part of the team mapping the entire human genome. He was co-head of the Genetics and Bioinformatics group at Melbourne's Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and Senior Principal Research Fellow in the NHMRC fellowship scheme when he took up the directorship at the Menzies Research Institute. His research interests lie in identifying the components in a host's struggle against infectious disease and in finding genes underpinning complex human diseases.

### **Professor Lin Fritschi**

Professor Fritschi is a cancer epidemiologist with a particular interest in occupational causes of cancer. Over the past 15 years she has worked in Montreal, Melbourne and Brisbane and now heads the Cancer Epidemiology Group at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research. She has led a number of large case-control and cohort studies investigating whether work causes cancer. Her specific expertise involves improving the way we assess historical exposure to chemicals and she has recently developed a new web-based application (OccIDEAS) to assist in this task.

### **Professor Matthew Gillespie**

Professor Gillespie is Director of Victoria's Prince Henry's Institute, where he heads the Bone, Joint and Cancer Unit. His research interests are in the cellular mechanisms resulting in osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis and cancer metastasis to bone. He is a member of the Science Advisory Committee of the Cancer Council of Victoria and the Victorian Breast Cancer Research Consortium, and was a member of the NHMRC Research Committee (2006-2009). He is on the boards of the Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society and the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation, and the editorial boards of *Arthritis and Rheumatism*, *Bone*, *BoneKey*, *Endocrinology* and *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research*.

### **Professor Robert (Bob) Graham AO**

Professor Graham is Des Renford Professor of Medicine, University of NSW; Executive Director, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, Sydney; and President, Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes. A Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, his research focuses on molecular cardiology with emphasis on circulatory control mechanisms, hypertension, receptor signalling, cardiac hypertrophy and stem cell biology. He is the author of more than 200 peer-reviewed papers. He received a Centenary of Federation Medal from the Australian Government (2003), a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Heart Foundation (2008) and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2009.

### **Professor Jane Gunn**

Professor Gunn is the inaugural Chair of Primary Care Research and Head of the Department of General Practice at the University of Melbourne. A general practitioner, her current research interests include depression and related disorders. She serves on a number of professional committees such as the beyondblue Victorian Centre of Excellence and is a member of both the National Prescribing Service Research and Development Working Group and the Steering Committee for the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. She has been Chair and member of NHMRC grant review panels and serves on the editorial boards and advisory panels of several prestigious journals. In 2008, she was awarded the Bridges-Webb Medal by the Australian Association for Academic General Practice.

### **Professor Caroline Homer**

Professor Homer is Professor of Midwifery and Director of the Centre for Midwifery, Child and Family Health at the University of Technology Sydney. She holds NHMRC and

Australian Research Council linkage grants as a Chief Investigator and supervises PhD, Masters and Honours students studying aspects of improving maternity services including CenteringPregnancy, quality and safety in maternity care, workforce issues for midwives and obesity in pregnancy. She co-leads the Birth After Caesarean Interventions (BACI) consortium, which carries out research to promote normal birth and increase the rate of vaginal birth after caesarean section.

### **Professor Louisa Jorm**

Professor Jorm is the Foundation Professor of Population Health at the University of Western Sydney and Research Director at the Sax Institute. She is an epidemiologist who has held senior posts in government and academia. Her areas of expertise include research using large administrative datasets and facilitating the policy uptake of research. She leads the NSW node of the Population Health Research Network and the OSPREY program, which is using linked data to answer policy-relevant questions about the health of mothers and babies. She heads the management team at the Sax Institute for the 45 and Up Study, Australasia's largest cohort study.

### **Professor Melissa Little**

Professor Little is an NHMRC Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, University of Queensland. Her research interests are in the molecular basis of kidney development, disease and regeneration and she has been a pioneer in cross-disciplinary research between molecular development, experimental nephrology and stem cell biology. She founded the Renal Regeneration Consortium and previously held the position of Chief Scientific Officer of the Australian Stem Cell Centre. A recipient of the GlaxoSmithKline Award for Research Excellence and a Gottschalk Medallist, her contributions to Australian science have included membership of the Wills Review and the development of national research priorities for the Australian Government.

### **Mr Mitchell (Mitch) Messer**

Mr Messer has been a health consumer advocate for more than 30 years and is the immediate past Chair of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia. He is a Director of Thinking Beyond Pty Ltd, an organisation offering strategic planning, advocacy, policy development and project support. He is involved in a number of organisations and is currently President of Cystic Fibrosis Australia and Cystic Fibrosis Worldwide, Trustee of the Australian Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, a Director of Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited, Chair of the Genetic Support Council of Western Australia and a member of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

### **Professor Rob Norman**

Professor Norman holds a personal chair as Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Adelaide and is a subspecialist in reproductive medicine (CREI) and in endocrine biochemistry (FRCPA). He is Director of the Robinson Institute at the University of Adelaide, a collection of 350 researchers in reproductive health and regenerative medicine. He is an active clinician at FertilitySA and Flinders Reproductive Medicine in Adelaide, is leader of the NHMRC Program Grant on 'Periconceptual origins of health and disease' and has published 250 peer-reviewed publications and one book. He has served on NHMRC and

ARC committees including project and program groups and was awarded South Australian Scientist of the year in 2009.

**Dr Nicholas (Nick) Samaras**

Dr Samaras has an interest in translational research at the academic-industry interface. He runs his own corporate advisory practice, which specialises in providing strategic advice to a range of Australian and international companies in the health care and biotechnology fields. He has extensive experience in the global life sciences industry gained over the past two decades and has held several senior executive positions in management, marketing, sales, business development and research.

**Associate Professor Amanda Thrift**

Associate Professor Thrift is an NHMRC Senior Research Fellow, the Head of Stroke Epidemiology at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute and current President of the Stroke Society of Australasia. She gained her PhD in epidemiology from Monash University in 1995. Her interests are in the field of epidemiology of stroke and vascular disease, particularly relating to developing countries.

**Dr Nikolajs (Nik) Zeps**

Dr Zeps is involved in translational research in breast, gastrointestinal and gynaecological malignancies. He is chair of the National Research Advisory Group of Cancer Australia, the Research Group of the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia and the Biological sub-committee of the Australasian Gastro-intestinal trials Group. He is the Australian representative on the Consent and Data Access Advisory Committee of the International Cancer Genome Consortium. Dr Zeps works for St John of God Pathology and Radiation Oncology at Perth's Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. He is an adjunct senior lecturer in the Schools of Surgery and Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Western Australia.