

NHMRC – THE NEW ERA

Challenges for Australian Health and Medical Research

Good health and wellbeing is something we wish for. If we do become ill, we want the health system to provide us with the best possible care.

Overall, Australians experience good health, but we still suffer from the major health burdens of the developed world (e.g. cancer, heart and vascular disease, mental illness, bone and muscular diseases, obesity and diabetes), and in some communities, most notably many Indigenous communities, diseases of the developing world.

Our health system is unique and often faces unique challenges. It is a combination of public, private and community-based health care and relies on many different professions. It extends from primary care to tertiary hospitals, from dense inner

urban to remote low density locations.

It needs to provide care to all members of our community from the very young

to the very old, address the health needs of both sexes, the chronically ill, and people from diverse backgrounds and

places of origin. Individuals have widely differing expectations of the system. It is understandable then that the health care system, perhaps our single largest industry, also relies on health research to develop, expand and improve. Research provides the evidence base to improve prevention, treatment and the effectiveness of health care. It leads to innovations that transform diagnosis and treatment, and generates the growth of new industries. It helps us understand ourselves as human beings.

Internationally, health and medical research delivers new insights into the human condition and the processes that lead to ill health. Australia has contributed strongly to this international effort, and this has benefited both individual and community health here at home. Our health faces many challenges, both old foes and new and emerging threats.

NHMRC is the leading health research agency for the country and so to meet the health challenges facing Australia, NHMRC must:

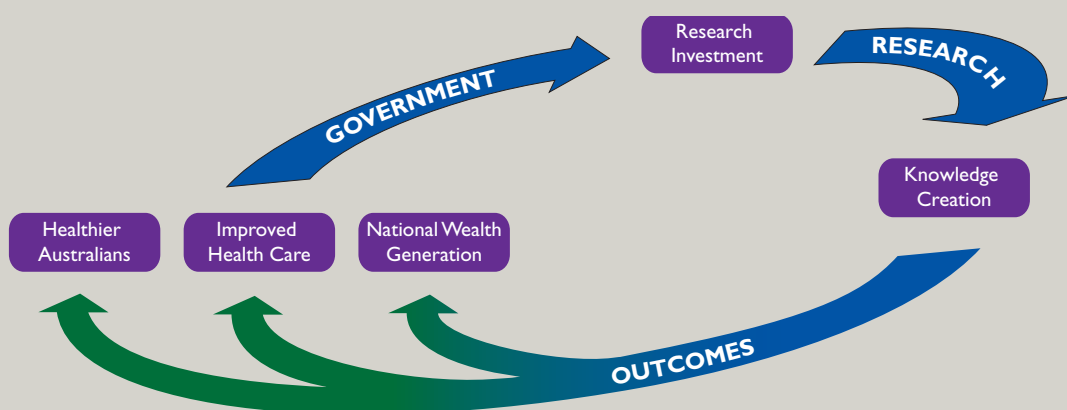
- *Fund the best and most relevant research to improve the health of all Australians and adopt the outcomes of health research conducted elsewhere around the world;*
- *Influence and support the infusion of evidence from research into improving the actions of health professionals and the health care system, and into public health policies;*
- *Provide leadership in the ethical framework in which Australian health is delivered and research is conducted; and*
- *Work to ensure the discoveries of health and medical research contribute to growth of an innovative industry sector.*

***The NHMRC is the leading health
research agency for the country***

This Strategic Plan casts NHMRC's triennial strategies within a longer term context, sets a series of objectives that challenge and stretch our organisation, and drives health and medical research and innovation into the future.

NHMRC will serve Australia through the support of excellence in all we do. This Strategic Plan emphasises the translation of research into policy and practice, by supporting research ideas that improve clinical and public health policies and practices, clinical applications, and national wealth, via the Virtuous Cycle¹.

Figure 1 – *The Virtuous Cycle*



Advances in health research make possible new treatments not dreamed of until now, but also produce new ethical dilemmas previously not thought of. NHMRC is the only organisation charged with national responsibilities in health ethics and this plan presents a stronger commitment to action in promoting and ensuring the best ethical behaviour in Australian health and medical research.

We work for the Australian community, accountable to the Government. We aim to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians and people around the world, now and into the future.



Warwick Anderson
 Professor Warwick Anderson AM
 Chief Executive Officer



Michael Good
 Professor Michael Good
 Chairman

¹ Commonwealth of Australia (2004) *Sustaining the Virtuous Cycle – for a healthy, competitive Australia – Investment Review of Health and Medical Research*, Canberra.