



Major National Health Issues

The *NHMRC Act* requires an assessment of the major national health issues likely to arise during the triennium. In developing this assessment the CEO has consulted with the Council, each Principal Committee of NHMRC and the staff. These issues are considered in developing NHMRC's work plans to implement this Strategic Plan, through coordination of activities in research, research synthesis and guidelines, and health advice.

NATIONAL HEALTH ISSUES:

Australian governments have identified the following as major health issues:

- *Arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions;*
- *Asthma;*
- *Cancer and cancer prevention;*
- *Cardiovascular health;*
- *Diabetes;*
- *Health workforce;*
- *Human influenza pandemic;*
- *Indigenous health;*
- *Injury prevention;*
- *Mental illness;*
- *Stem cell research; and*
- *Water quality.*

These issues will continue to receive strong research attention from NHMRC, and will be a major focus of activities where NHMRC provides evidence-based advice to governments and the community.

RELEVANCE
RELEVANCE
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*In meeting the needs
of all Australians.*

In particular, NHMRC will concentrate on health inequalities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with a focus on prevention, delivery of care and governance, and will consider the social, cultural and economic factors which contribute strongly to the health of individuals and communities.

NHMRC remains committed to achieving five per cent funding from the Medical Research Endowment Account for research relevant to Indigenous people.

NATIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

The Australian Government has adopted the following four National Research Priorities²:

- *An environmentally sustainable Australia;*
- *Promoting and maintaining good health;*
- *Frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries; and*
- *Safeguarding Australia.*

NHMRC has a particular responsibility for the National Research Priority, *Promoting and maintaining good health*, and the priority goals of:

- *A healthy start to life;*
- *Ageing well, ageing productively;*
- *Preventive health care; and*
- *Strengthening Australia's social and economic fabric.*

NHMRC will support the Government's efforts under the National Research Priorities.

CURRENT HEALTH ISSUES

There are other health issues in Australia in addition to those identified above. Some of these issues are outlined in Table 1. NHMRC anticipates that these issues will be subject to ongoing consideration by governments, non-government organisations, research organisations, and the community over the period of this Strategic Plan.

NHMRC will assist government and community consideration of these issues in a variety of ways, including the development of research activities. In particular, NHMRC will work closely with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, and the State and Territory governments to develop the research program and present the evidence required in advising governments.

EMERGING HEALTH ISSUES

In addition to the current issues identified above, there are issues of emerging importance that NHMRC will consider during the current triennium. Some of these are outlined in Table 2.

NHMRC will direct its research activities and advice to inform government and community consideration of these issues.

² http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/national_research_priorities/default.htm.