

Meeting Tomorrow's Health Challenges

There has never been a time when health research has been better poised to tackle human health problems and to stimulate the creation of new industries. We understand the fundamental biological mechanisms of life at a depth much more profound than even a decade ago, we understand the influence of the social and physical environment on health much better. We have many new and powerful potential diagnostic and therapeutic approaches opening up and a very able and flexible, internationally oriented research workforce.

The challenges now are to continue to expand the frontier of knowledge across all research approaches – biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research – and maintain globally leading positions in the most important areas for the future. An even bigger challenge, is to ensure that new knowledge is captured for the benefit of health, through new diagnostics, new products, new therapies, evidence informed policy development, and evidence based best practice in care delivery.

NHMRC will help Australia meet these opportunities because of our unique research, advice and ethics framework, but to do this the NHMRC will need to continue to evolve. We need to make sure that we can identify and support the best and most important research and researchers, build excellence in all research approaches, develop a more robust means of supporting priorities, and ensure that the gaps between knowledge generation and better health and national wealth are bridged more efficiently and effectively.

We face many challenges, particularly the poor health of Indigenous Australians. We have also unique opportunities, not least of which will come from research and health engagement with the countries of south-eastern Asia.

It's an ideal time then to seize these opportunities and build a stronger NHMRC for the future. A major task for the triennium will be to work with government to build a new vision for NHMRC as Australia's peak health and research body. We will critically examine what Australia needs from the NHMRC in the future.

We have an ambition to be the benchmark internationally for supporting research, providing evidence based advice to the community and setting ethical standards.

