NHMRC announces new gender equity policy

The National Health and Medical Research Council has today announced a new gender equity policy to support the retention and progression of women in health and medical research.

The revised Administering Institution Policy aims to address the underrepresentation of women in senior research positions across Australia and applies to all institutions that receive NHMRC funding.

In 2014, women accounted for 63% of all applications for NHMRC’s early career fellowships, but this figure fell to just 11% for NHMRC’s most senior and experienced fellowships.

Institutions will have until the end of 2015 to update their gender equity policies and submit them to NHMRC for consideration. Under the revised Administering Institution Policy, institutions should have:

- A strategy that addresses the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in health and medical research;
- Mentoring and skills training strategies that promote and seek to increase women’s participation;
- The provision of parental/maternity leave and carers leave, and transitional support to encourage return to work;
- Working arrangements that cater for individuals with caring responsibilities;
- Remuneration equity between men and women with the same responsibilities;
- Employment strategies that encourage the recruitment, retention and progression of women in health and medical research; and
- Strategies to address the need for the provision of support for childcare.

All submissions will be reviewed by NHMRC in 2016 to ensure the policies are acceptable.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said he was delighted to be able to introduce the policy.

“If we want to be able to solve the great health challenges facing us today, we need to retain and support all of our most talented researchers. It is not acceptable to see half of our talent go to waste,” Professor Anderson said.
The revisions and requirements were developed following extensive consultation with the research sector and follows NHMRC’s survey of existing policies last year.

“By and large, this sector is highly responsible and wants to do the right thing by their staff. But unfortunately when the statistics show that women are leaving research in numbers that increase drastically over the course of their careers, I think we can all acknowledge that we all need to do more,” Professor Anderson said.

“The revised policy is just one of many initiatives NHMRC has introduced to address the issue of underrepresentation, but it is my hope that this latest change will lead to environments where women are well-supported and encouraged to stay in research careers. It is crucial that our best and brightest minds are used to their full potential,” he said.

Further information on the policy and possible examples are available on the NHMRC website and feedback is welcome by emailing WiHS@nhmrc.gov.au.

CONTACT:  NHMRC Media Team

M: 0422 008 512

E: media@nhmrc.gov.au