



Australian Government

**National Health and
Medical Research Council**



Translation Centre Review Panel Assessment Report

2018 Call for submissions for NHMRC accreditation as an Advanced Health
Research and Translation Centre or Centre for Innovation in Regional Health

September 2019

Accreditation as a Translation Centre

Report of the Translation Centre Review Panel

September 2019

Introduction

One of NHMRC's key mechanisms for supporting the translation of health and medical research in Australia is the accreditation of Translation Centres, which are leading centres of collaboration in health and medical research, research translation, research-infused education and training, and outstanding health care. NHMRC accredits two types of Translation Centres through its Translation Centre Initiative—Advanced Health Research and Translation Centres (AHRTCs) and Centres for Innovation in Regional Health (CIRHs). Both aim to encourage leadership and collaboration in health research and translation and promote the development and use of innovative and evidence-based models of health care practices and policies, with the focus for CIRHs being on research and translation of direct relevance and benefit to regional and/or remote areas of Australia.

By recognising and celebrating these centres of collaboration that are excelling at international levels of excellence, NHMRC wishes to encourage leadership in health research and translation in Australia, including in regional and remote areas. The Translation Centre Initiative is not a funding scheme, rather it recognises the value of excellence in leadership and collaboration in research, translation, training and health care. Ultimately, the goal is to improve the health and wellbeing of patients and the populations served.

NHMRC accredits Translation Centres for up to five years through open calls for submissions for accreditation. The first call for accreditation of AHRTCs was in 2014, resulting in four AHRTCs accredited in 2015. NHMRC subsequently developed the CIRH initiative and, in 2016, called for submissions from groups seeking accreditation as an AHRTC or a CIRH. As a result of this process, in 2017 a further three AHRTCs and two CIRHs were accredited.

Third call for submissions seeking accreditation

On 31 October 2018, NHMRC opened the third call for groups wishing to be accredited as an AHRTC or CIRH and closed this call on 18 March 2019. Six submissions were received:

- Five submissions for CIRH accreditation.
- One submission for AHRTC accreditation.

Assessment panel

An international Translation Centre Review Panel (the Panel) was established to provide advice to the NHMRC CEO about the Translation Centre Initiative, including:

- advice on the submissions from groups seeking recognition as an AHRTC or CIRH, including identifying which groups have demonstrated the required

characteristics at an internationally competitive level and whether groups show potential to achieve such characteristics, and

- advice on the design and operation of the current NHMRC Translation Centre Initiative, including the appropriateness of the accreditation model and actions that could be taken to encourage high-performing collaborations across research, translation, health care and training.

The Panel was comprised of international and national members with expertise in research, clinical practice, health partnerships, health systems and research translation and implementation, including in Indigenous and rural health. Panel members are listed below.

Members declared relevant interests as part of the process of being appointed to the Panel and updated interests as required whilst a panel member. Instances of the following categories of interest were declared:

- have worked or currently work with an existing (already accredited) AHRTC or CIRH, or one of their partner organisations, and
- prior or current work or social relationship with a researcher or health professional named in a submission, e.g. on grants, publications, executive boards, committees, co-editors on a journal.

Members discussed declared interests at the beginning of each meeting to determine if the interest declared constituted a conflict of interest and whether the member making the declaration would participate in the assessment of the relevant submission. The Panel determined that no interests required management, and that no members were required to be excluded from considering and assessing submissions.

Assessment outcomes

The Panel met by teleconference on 5 July 2019 to short-list submissions. It then met in-person on 6-7 August 2019 to interview the shortlisted applicants and assess the applications.

As a result of its assessment, the Panel recommended that:

- NHMRC accredit the Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre as a CIRH.

It considered that this applicant had demonstrated the required characteristics for a CIRH at an internationally competitive level.

As NHMRC is currently conducting a Review of the Translation Centre Initiative (the Review) and changes may be made to the current model, including the assessment criteria, the Panel chose to not identify any groups that showed the potential to achieve the required characteristics. However, examples of areas requiring strengthening across the unsuccessful submissions were:

- Better demonstration of effective collaborative arrangements between all partner organisations – the Panel considered that a number of applicants were still developing their collaborative and governance arrangements. Some had existing arrangements between particular partners, but appeared to still be implementing the arrangements for the entire collaboration.

- Similarly, for CIRHs, a stronger track record of programs and activities that accelerate translation of research findings specifically into rural and regional health care, and delivery of research-infused education and training across the collaboration – some examples were future focussed, rather than demonstrating achievements.
- Demonstration of depth of excellence across the breadth of research, particularly for AHRTCs.

The NHMRC CEO has accepted the Panel's recommendation to accredit Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre as a CIRH for a period of up to five years.

The Translation Centre Initiative

At the meeting, the Panel met with senior representatives of the nine accredited AHRTCs and CIRHs. This informal discussion enabled the Panel and centre representatives an opportunity to discuss the current operation of the Translation Centre Initiative and the characteristics of accredited centres. The Panel also heard about the collaborative work of the Australian Health Research Alliance, which is the alliance formed by accredited centres.

The Panel also met with Nous Group, the consultants assisting NHMRC to undertake a Review of the Translation Centre Initiative in 2019. This review is considering the design and operation of the initiative to determine whether it could be modified or reformed to strengthen research-based health care and training to improve the health and well-being of patients and communities, and the integration of research into multiple health services.

Accordingly, as part of the Review consultation, the Panel provided feedback about the current AHRTC and CIRH models. Some of the key points of discussion related to:

- the importance of improving patient outcomes through research translation
- the need for greater clarity about the difference between AHRTCs and CIRHs, including consideration of whether the current model was the best for achieving translation of research in regional and remote areas of Australia
- suggestions for strengthening accreditation requirements and assessment criteria, particularly around demonstrating an existing organisational structure for the collaboration that is operational and effective, for example:
 - require information about organisational arrangements for managing intellectual property, the funding/contributions from partners, ethics approval and research governance
 - require that partners contribute funding to the centre, to support its operation, and
- the re-accreditation process – the Panel noted that the accreditation of four AHRTCs expires in March 2020. It considered that a re-accreditation process based on the current model and criteria would not be relevant if the Review of the Translation Centre Initiative resulted in a new Translation Centre model, with a new assessment criteria. In that instance, any new accreditation process and criteria would apply to existing centres seeking further accreditation.

The Panel's comments about the initiative will be considered as part of the Review.

Membership of the Translation Centre Review Panel

Name	Biography
Mr Tony Kingdon - <i>Chair</i>	Mr Kingdon is the former General Manager of NHMRC, retiring in 2019. Mr Kingdon chaired the Translation Centre Peer Review Panel in 2014.
Ms Rebecca Davies AO	Ms Davies is a board member of a number of organisations within the health sector, including JDRF Australia, and is a member of the strategic research committee for the Heart Foundation (NSW). Ms Davies is currently a member of NHMRC's Community and Consumer Advisory Group and Health Innovation Advisory Committee.
Professor Sandra Eades	Professor Eades is the Associate Dean (Indigenous), Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, at University of Melbourne. Professor Eades is a current member of the NHMRC Council and chairs NHMRC's Principal Committee Indigenous Caucus.
Professor Cindy Farquhar	Professor Farquhar is the Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Auckland. Professor Farquhar is also the co-director of Cochrane New Zealand and co-ordinating editor of the Cochrane Gynaecology and Fertility Group.
Professor John Fraser	Professor Fraser is the Dean of Medical and Health Sciences at The University of Auckland. Professor Fraser is also the Joint Chair of the Joint Relations Executive of the Auckland Academic Health Alliance.
Dr Sharon Straus	Dr Straus is a geriatrician and clinical epidemiologist, and Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Toronto. Dr Straus is also the Director of the Knowledge Translation Program and Physician-in-Chief at St Michael's Hospital, Toronto.
Emeritus Professor Paul Worley	Emeritus Professor Worley is the National Rural Health Commissioner and former Dean of Medicine at Flinders University. An elected fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences, Professor Worley has expertise in the rural health and medical sectors.
Professor Tom Walley	Professor Walley is the Director of the Hunter Medical Research Institute. Previously, Professor Walley was head of the Institute of Psychology, Health and Society at the University of Liverpool, and has served as Director of the Health Technology Assessment Programme of the National Institute for Health Research.