### Goal 8: Improve the grant application and peer review processes

Continually improve the grant application and peer review processes and reduce red tape for researchers

**Simplified and Consistent Health and Medical Research**

NHMRC will review the effectiveness of changes made to the Research Grants Management System and the introduction of video conferencing for some grant review panels to ensure an improved and consistent application process as well as a streamlined reporting system.

### Target 1: Review peer review process to enhance the efficiency of the peer review system

**Corporate Plan**

Continue to review aspects of the peer review process to maximise the excellence and efficiency of the peer review system and to manage the burden on peer reviewers.

Work ongoing

A new peer review model was trialled on the Development Grants funding scheme in the reporting period, with the purpose of reducing peer reviewer burden. The new model significantly increased the number of assessments per application to increase the reproducibility of scoring profiles, reduce assessor errors, provide wider expertise coverage and reduce the impact of divergent scoring. A key outcome of the trial was a substantial reduction in the time that each expert spent contributing to peer review. By implementing discussion of applications at the grant review panel meeting ‘by exception’, the meeting time was reduced from 3 days to 3–4 hours. This enabled the meetings to occur via videoconference, which conferred further advantages including increased flexibility for panellists.

### Target 2: Work towards an improved and consistent application process and streamlined reporting system

**Corporate Plan**

Work towards an improved and consistent application process and streamlined reporting system, including:

- Commence implementation of a new application front end to the Research Grants Management System (RGMS)
- Successfully implementing video conferencing for panel meetings where appropriate, with the first successful Go Live Grant Review Panel (GRP) to be held by October 2015
- Trialling a streamlined peer review process for key funding schemes by June 2016.

Commence implementation of self-service reporting capability to make NHMRC grant data more accessible.

Work ongoing

During the reporting period, NHMRC:

- Began to implement a new application front end to the Research Grants Management System. This will provide a more consistent approach and interface for researchers submitting grant applications
- Drafted an expression of interest, expected to be released in July 2016, to engage a suitable vendor and begin to implement a cloud-based, self-service data-reporting tool. The design phase is completed and initial implementation with a sub-set of NHMRC data will commence in July 2016. Full implementation is due in June 2017
- Successfully implemented video conferencing for panel meetings where appropriate. This will result in reduced travel time and expenses for
Outcome 8: Improve the grant application and peer review processes.

NHMRC continued to enhance its grant application and peer review processes in order to reduce the burden on the research sector, enabling researchers to spend more time producing high-quality research to benefit human health.

A trial of a new peer review model in the Development Grants scheme resulted in a substantial reduction in the time required of the expert peer review panel members. The implementation of video-conferencing for review panels, where appropriate, also reduces the need for travel by the thousands of peer reviewers who are located throughout Australia and overseas.

NHMRC also began implementing a more user-friendly front end of the Research Grants Management System, which enables researchers to apply for, track and administer NHMRC grants online, as well as participate in peer review.