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# Research Australia - A Collaborative Strategy

2017 - 2020

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Research Australia is *the* national alliance representing the **entire health and medical research pipeline** from the laboratory through to the patient and the marketplace.



It's time for Australia's Health and Medical Research sector to seize the opportunities and bold ideas that will drive change.

Australia has a strategic research advantage with world-class universities and research institutes highly successful in delivering research outcomes up to the proof of concept stage. As noted in recent studies, including the 2013 McKeon Review, we must do more to translate these successes into treatments and commercial opportunities so that patients and consumers here at home and overseas can benefit from our research efforts.

The post-mining boom search for the Australian industries of the future presents enormous opportunities for growth in an industry of health and medical research and the potential for innovation is enormous.

At the same time, the nation's health bill is growing: according to the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, Australia is now spending 10% of GDP on healthcare<sup>1</sup>. Governments will look to the health and

medical research sector for the evidence-based practices in our hospitals that will reduce spending on unnecessary practices and improve patient outcomes.

Our sector is being swept into a new era and I congratulate Research Australia on developing a Collaborative Strategy that sets out how it will lead Australia's health and medical research sector in responding to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

I am proud to be Patron of an organisation so uniquely placed to bring together the many pieces of such a complex system and I watch with great excitement the emerging opportunities and bold ideas that will transform healthcare for Australians.

**Sir Gustav Nossal** AC CBE  
Patron



<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Health and Welfare Expenditure Series, No 57, "Health expenditure Australia 2014-15"

# Introduction

Research Australia envisions a world where health and medical research is both acknowledged and celebrated as a central contributor to the economy and quality of life in Australia. Our mission is to use our unique convening power to position health and medical research as a significant driver of a healthy population and contributor to a healthy economy. We do this by championing the sector, inspiring the public, encouraging government and private sector support and investment, so all Australians can enjoy the best possible health and economic outcomes.

Research Australia is in the unique position of being the voice of health and medical research participants right across the health and medical research pipeline. It is because of this unique position we have broad insight into what patients and consumers, funders, researchers and commercial groups can contribute and require from it.

We also have a long history of demonstrated expertise in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing Australian health and medical research and we understand the stakeholders who influence the sector's future. There is broad consensus within the membership that Research Australia can play a powerful connecting and convening role alongside our advocacy and policy work.

Around sixty per cent of Australians do not have adequate levels of health literacy, with the level of health literacy decreasing for older Australians, lower levels of income and education (i.e. those who use the public health care system the most)<sup>2</sup>.

Our role as a promoter and champion of Australian health and medical research has never been more important. We want to ensure Australians understand the connection between health and medical research and an improved health system. We want to ensure that when governments measure the return on investment in health and medical research, this measurement reflects the value society places on improved health outcomes.

Research Australia must remain responsive and agile in responding to emerging issues across the sector, including through our policy and related advocacy work; however, we must also find focus on common areas that can achieve the greatest possible outcomes from and for our sector. They are:

- ◆ Data and its transformative role in our health
- ◆ Embedding evidence-based research in healthcare delivery
- ◆ Encouraging smart investment in health and medical research that balances resources with need, capacity and opportunity.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Australia 2006

Our analysis shows these are the largest areas that encapsulate both the challenges and opportunities in our sector. They are complex and, while there are multiple efforts underway to find best practice, the task is enormous and requires collective effort.

Significant government initiatives such as the Structural Review of the NHMRC's Grants Program, the Research Infrastructure Review, the Medical Research Future Fund and the Biomedical Translation Fund, are changing the landscape for Australian health and medical research.

Exponential digital disruption, machine learning, augmented intelligence and an array of new devices will see a digital revolution in healthcare which will easily match the progress of the biological revolution of the 21st century. Research Australia is uniquely positioned to convene the experts who can identify the foundational building blocks needed to support so much change.

It is against this backdrop that we, along with others, need to be bold in proposing change and driving the sector towards new potential. The three areas mentioned already, and identified in multiple formal reviews and common our own stakeholder consultations, provide platforms for collective effort and ultimately, for high impact changes in our society.

There is no doubt that we are stronger as a collective and it is incumbent on us all to ensure health and medical research has a recognised role to play in creating and being a crucial part of a sustainable knowledge economy with a population that can access the best possible healthcare available.

It is only right that health and medical research is front and centre and Research Australia looks forward to playing a meaningful role in this significant space.



**Chris Chapman**  
Chairman



**Nadia Levin**  
CEO and Managing Director

## Our vision

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Research Australia envisions a world where Australia unlocks the full potential of its world-leading health and medical research sector to deliver the best possible healthcare and global leadership in health innovation.

## Our goals

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**Connect** researchers, funders and consumers to increase investment in health and medical research from all sources.

**Engage** Australia in a conversation about the health benefits and economic value of its investment in health and medical research.

**Influence** government policies that support effective health and medical research and its routine translation into evidence-based practices and better health outcomes.

## Our mission

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To use our unique convening power to position health and medical research as a significant driver of a healthy population and contributor to a healthy economy.

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*As the trusted, unifying platform for the health and medical research sector, Research Australia is the collective voice to ensure health and medical research is a significantly higher national priority.*

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### **Nadia Levin**

*CEO and Managing Director,  
Research Australia*

# Key strategic objectives and actions

1

## Data as a national resource

Harnessing the transformative power of data to accelerate advances in health

2

## Embedding research in Australia's health system

Evidence-based healthcare driven by the best research

3

## Smarter investment in health and medical research

Smart investment in health and medical research balances resources with need, capacity and opportunity

At any given time, we run a multitude of campaigns, policy projects and thought leadership programs. We are always open to hearing from Organisations (members or otherwise) who are interested in partnering with us.



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| <b>1</b>   Promoting the value of data as a national resource both within and external to the health and medical research sector | <b>2</b>   Encouraging the policy settings for efficiently shared, linked and secured data for research | <b>3</b>   Educating consumers on how wellbeing can be advanced with technology and data e.g. wearables and e-health records |
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| <b>1</b>   Promoting stronger links between researchers, consumers and healthcare providers to enable faster uptake of evidence-based practice | <b>2</b>   Developing and advocating the sector-wide positions on government policies and incentives required to support better integration of clinical care and health and medical research |
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| <b>1</b>   Promoting the economic value of health and medical research | <b>2</b>   Advocating for better alignment of existing sources of HMR funding | <b>3</b>   Championing the commercialisation of Australian research |
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There are multiple projects which will be rolled out over the next 5 years in support of the key strategic objectives

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# Key strategic objective 1

## Data as a national resource

### **Harnessing the transformative power of data to accelerate advances in health**

Data has the potential to transform our wellbeing, our health system and our economy.

Our health system collects millions of pieces of information about us every day. While currently fragmented, this data has the potential to provide valuable insights into the Australian population and our healthcare if it is made more readily available for research. Researchers are also generating increasingly larger amounts of data that provide the opportunity for new and deeper insights into human health and disease. Historically, human health has made huge advances when medicine intersects with mathematics and data.

As well as sharing both health systems and research-generated data, continuing to develop the skills, infrastructure and capability to collect, manipulate and analyse this data, will position Australia to further harness the potential of its data reserves and accelerate the next wave of advances in health.

It is essential to engage people along the whole of the research pipeline about the transformative power of data and analytics. Research Australia can promote new opportunities for consumers to share their de-identified data, for the health system to collect data, and for researchers to efficiently access and use the data.

## The desired sector outcomes we work towards are:

- ◆ Raised community awareness and acceptance of the value and sharing of data and its link to better health outcomes through research.
- ◆ Legislative/policy settings that promote better links between existing data sets.
- ◆ Quantifiable progress towards multipurpose and uniform health data collection processes evident across all health systems.
- ◆ Quality public discourse about the benefits to consumers of sharing their health data with researchers, practitioners and clinicians.
- ◆ A better understanding of consumers' concerns and needs in sharing data for the purposes of health and medical research.

## Research Australia actions:

Through its unique connecting, engaging and influencing capacity, **Research Australia** will drive or support the following:

- 1 Promoting the value of data as a national resource both within and external to the health and medical research sector.
- 2 Encouraging the policy settings for efficiently shared, linked and secured data for research with systems that speak to each other.
- 3 Educating consumers on how wellbeing can be advanced with technology and data e.g. wearables and e-health records.



## Key strategic objective 2

# Embedding research in Australia's health system

### Evidence-based healthcare driven by the best research

Integrated healthcare means research and health services work together to deliver better outcomes – both clinical and economic.

To capitalise on research undertaken in places like medical research institutes and universities, researchers, clinicians and consumers need to be more strongly linked in ways that optimise outcomes for patient health. For many treatments, best practice is already known within the literature but it is not being utilised. Some studies indicate that it can take 15 years for more effective treatments to be incorporated into routine care<sup>3</sup>.

Translating research findings quickly and efficiently into changes in clinical practice is one of the keys to improving patient management, reducing adverse events and readmissions, and reducing wasted spending on unnecessary tests and treatments. Ultimately, embedding research in Australia's health system can deliver safer, more effective, evidence-based, efficient health care.

Governments both state and federal, have a key role to play in supporting better integration of clinical care and medical research, chiefly

through providing incentives and opportunities for clinicians to undertake research or integrate the research outcomes of others.

There are successful collaborations operating right across the health and medical research sector which demonstrate how clinical care and health and medical research can be integrated. Research Australia is uniquely positioned to connect the multiple stakeholders who make up Australia's complex health and medical research environment to identify and promote these successful collaborations as good practice models for adoption by state and federal Governments.

By better understanding the incentives that drive researchers and clinicians to undertake research and those who support health providers to integrate research, we can promote a health system where all levels of staff recognise and embrace the idea that research and clinical care are intimately connected.

<sup>3</sup>AE. Andrew Balas and Suzanne A. Boren. "Managing clinical knowledge for healthcare improvement", *Yearbook of Medical informatics*, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD: 65-70, 2000

## The desired sector outcomes we work towards are:

- ◆ A health system better able to adopt changes in clinical practice as new evidence comes to light.
- ◆ An improved clinical trials environment driving evidence-based change in the health system and new commercial opportunities.
- ◆ Clinicians and researchers are better incentivised to close the gaps between research and practice.
- ◆ Identified optimised models for integrating healthcare and research that could form the basis for future government policy.

## Research Australia actions:

Through its unique connecting, engaging and influencing capacity, **Research Australia** will drive or support the following:

- 1 Promoting stronger links between researchers, consumers and healthcare providers to enable timely uptake of evidence-based practice.
- 2 Developing and advocating the sector-wide positions on government policies and incentives required to support better integration of clinical care and health and medical research.
- 3 Championing the late translational work, including investigator-lead clinical trials, which are driving evidence-based improvements to healthcare delivery.



## Key strategic objective 3

# Smarter investment in health and medical research

### **Smarter investment in health and medical research balances resources with need, capacity and opportunity**

Australia's expenditure on health and medical research should be a recognised investment in a healthier population with a health system guided by evidence-based research. Investing in health and medical research can optimise healthcare delivery and the role that preventative medicine play.

Smarter investment in health and medical research is how we can improve the effectiveness of our health system, constraining the rise in health costs that accompanies an ageing population and modern lifestyle factors. It is how we can create vibrant new pharmaceutical, medical device and biotechnology sectors that can then provide skilled employment.

It is an investment, rather than a cost, which has the potential to ensure Australia's future wealth is built on the capacity and ingenuity of its people. Any measurement of the return on investment in health and medical research, must reflect the value society places on improved health outcomes.

Not all research is the same, and the balance between need, capacity and opportunity varies. In basic research, where potential applications are difficult to identify, we must be guided primarily by excellence. As research progresses towards the patient,

need and opportunity become relatively more important. The returns will only materialise if we invest in the translation of research into reality: implementing research into practice and the commercial development of new therapies, products and devices.

Funding for health and medical research is currently being provided by a range of different funding programs and mechanisms with different aims, objectives and eligibility criteria. Giving researchers a clear line of sight to what is being funded and how projects are being selected for funding, will make it easier for them to concentrate their efforts on funding applications with the greatest chance of success.

By working with researchers, consumers, governments, industry, philanthropy and healthcare providers, we can highlight where there are gaps in funding and promote the opportunities that will enable the benefits of research to be fully realised.

Policy settings should be clearer on the outcomes expected when research receives public funding. Where there is an expectation that there will be an outcome beyond the publication of findings, innovation funding and/or other mechanisms need to be in place to support the achievement of this outcome.

## The desired sector outcomes we work towards are:

- ◆ The returns on investing in health and medical research - both economic and in terms of improved health outcomes - are understood and acknowledged through continued funding streams.
- ◆ Funding is accessible to researchers in a timely manner at all points along the health and medical research pipeline.
- ◆ Australia ready to maximise future commercial opportunities in health and medical research.
- ◆ Researchers better understand the pathway to commercialisation so that the outcomes of research are maximised to deliver both health and economic benefit to the nation.

## Research Australia actions:

Through its unique connecting, engaging and influencing capacity, **Research Australia** will drive or support the following:

1 Promoting the economic value of health and medical research.

2 Advocating for better alignment of existing sources of health and medical research funding.

3 Championing commercialisation of Australian research.



# Acknowledgements

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## Research Australia Board members

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