

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH SECTOR

Australia must have a clearly articulated national approach to support a sustainable research ecosystem, with a focus on excellence in fundamental and translational research and areas of global competitive advantage.

Australia urgently needs a National Health and Medical Research Strategy that ensures research priorities better meet health system and population needs and maximises economic opportunities. This strategy must be underpinned by a national stocktake of health and medical research and innovation programs to provide a clear picture of the existing investments being made and the gaps in funding support.

There are significant opportunities for real economic stimulus and jobs growth across Australia's health and medical research pipeline. Short and long-term reforms are needed to harness the skills and talent that can help us realise the ambition of a world's best health system.

Australia's economy remains poorly diversified. A decline in the export of just a few key commodities can jeopardise our whole economy.¹ Health innovation presents an opportunity to significantly diversify Australia's economy.

Fragmentation in the research ecosystem can impact the speed with which research is translated into better healthcare outcomes and commercial opportunities.

Funding inefficiencies burden the research community with job insecurity and time wasted on unsuccessful grant applications.

The Commonwealth, working side by side with States and Territories, health providers, industry and consumers under a National Strategy can improve translation of needs-based research into healthcare delivery and build our sovereign manufacturing and services capacity. This will improve health, boost our economy, and enhance our national security.

The value of medical research has been unequivocally demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Australians rank health and medical research in the top three priorities for government.²

Australia is in the fortunate position of having among the world's top talent in health and medical research and the institutions to underpin the creation of new economic activity. Our seeming inability to more effectively translate this research must be addressed.

Australia has demonstrated during the pandemic that it can speed up translation and commercialisation.

A more cohesive health and medical research ecosystem could be more easily scaled up to respond to national health challenges, such as future pandemics and climate change.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A national HMR and innovation strategy

Develop a national HMR and innovation strategy with the express aims of meeting health system and population needs by ensuring investment has maximum impact on national priorities and exploits areas of international competitive advantage. This must be underpinned by stronger investment in key supports for fundamental research, in particular the National Health and Medical Research Council which is a crucial part of building future capabilities.

Improve translation of research into best practice care to provide quality of life and care to Australians, minimise waste, reduce costs and improve the efficiency and productivity of our health system and its workforce.

Deliver a governance model that facilitates engagement with States and Territories and health providers in the identification of research priorities to ensure research outputs better support our health systems to respond to emerging health issues and community needs.

Build a framework to better capture the real impact research is having on health outcomes to inform appropriate future investment.

2. A national HMR Workforce Plan

Define the workforce the country needs and wants for the world's best future health system with research, innovation and commercialisation firmly embedded. Attract and support a highly skilled, sustainable research workforce with circular mobility between academia and industry.

Ensure that universities (and others) are equipped to train the next generation of researchers. Central to this are educators who are research active.

3. Consumers as co-designers of research

Enable researchers and consumers to meaningfully engage in research codesign by ensuring they have the skills to improve research translation and Australians' health.

4. Australia as a global health innovator

Systematically build Australia's capacity in commercialisation and medical manufacturing to meet local demand, grow industries and jobs and build export markets for products and services. Establish stronger global links between Australian health innovators and global funding networks and supply chains, both regional and beyond.

¹ The Harvard University Atlas of Economic Complexity rates the complexity of Australia's economy as 86 out of 133

² 2021 Public Opinion Poll on Health & Medical Research & Innovation, Research Australia, 2021

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This statement is issued by Research Australia on behalf of all stages of the health and medical research sector whom we represent. The following members have endorsed this statement.



Research Australia is the national peak body representing the entire health & medical research pipeline

