

30 March 2012

**Submission to the Strategic Review of Health & Medical Research
by the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI)**

While South Australia has a strong history of health and medical research, the amount of government funding awarded to South Australian researchers steadily declined over the past decade in comparison to other Australian states. Recognising the challenges facing health and medical research, the South Australian Government commissioned the *Review of Health and Medical Research in South Australia*, conducted by Professor John Shine and Mr Alan Young AM. Released in May 2008, the Review recommended the establishment of an independent health and medical research institute in order to revitalise health and medical research in South Australia. This resulted in the establishment of the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) which is an independent MRI.

SAHMRI is a significant development in health and medical research for South Australia with a focus on attracting and retaining world-class researchers and clinicians.

SAHMRI fully supports the work and conclusions of the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) and the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) as articulated in their submission. With this submission, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight particular areas that are critical to the needs of South Australia.

Infrastructure

Health and medical research in South Australia needs to be supported by the provision of appropriate and modern infrastructure that includes physical facilities and information support systems. This will help to attract and retain talented researchers and clinicians as well as increase the capacity for researchers in South Australia to attract national and international funding. Caution needs to be applied to ensure that national funding mechanisms support and does not disadvantage smaller states.

Mechanisms of Funding

A strategic approach to attracting funds to South Australia (infrastructure, competitive and philanthropic) needs to be implemented. Additional funding will lead to greater critical mass, as well as the deepening and broadening of research activity which will contribute to meeting the strategic directions and priorities.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Collaborations and partnerships are fundamental to SAHMRI's success. SAHMRI's goal is to actively engage with research groups and organisational entities outside the flagship research facility with the purpose of developing and fostering collaboration across organisational boundaries. This integrated approach to research will harness technological innovation and translation within a framework of research excellence to make a major difference to the health of the community. States the size of South Australia with a stable

population have the advantage of being able to foster true state-wide collaborations. Funding support to promote these state-wide collaborations is essential.

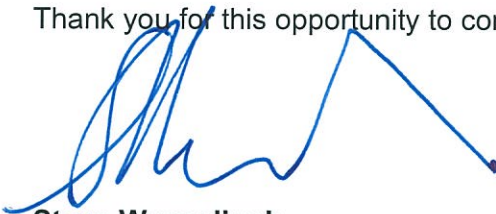
Translation

SAHMRI's aims to build on already established partnerships with the universities and health services sector and grow this relationship into the Northern Territory through the development of an Academic Health Science System. This is based on the concept of Advanced Health Research Centres introduced by the NHMRC. It is imperative to establish a supportive research environment and culture that enables researchers to innovate and where outcomes and the translation of research is highly valued.

Indigenous Health

The health and medical research landscape continues to change dramatically across Australia. However, SAHMRI recognises the importance of research into indigenous health within South Australia. Indigenous health will span across all of SAHMRI's research themes and will be a key element within each theme. There is a need for ongoing funding in this area for research teams who demonstrate success and leadership.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on health and medical research in Australia.



Steve Wesselingh
Executive Director
South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute