

SRHMRA Submission 25 — Amanda Sainsbury-Salis

Australia needs a vibrant, viable, internationally competitive health and medical research sector because without it, the only health solutions available to the Australian public will be those provided by commercial entities. The trouble with this model of health care provision is that commercial entities do not necessarily allocate any of their budget to research into improved treatment strategies. I see this repeatedly in my field of research (obesity and weight management), where the Australian public spend exorbitant amounts of money on weight loss solutions from commercial entities, but very few of those commercial entities invest in developing better weight loss strategies. On the other hand, it is clear that the weight management solutions currently available to the public are hopelessly inadequate overall, and better solutions are urgently needed to tackle our obesity epidemic. The only way to address this shortfall is with health and medical research, tailored to the Australian perspective. We cannot simply adopt the solutions provided from health and medical research from other countries because a) finding solutions to complex problems such as obesity requires international collaborative efforts, including collaborations from Australia, and b) solutions that are relevant in other parts of the world are unlikely to be relevant to the Australian situation and will need to be tailored to our local conditions (e.g. the way our health care system is funded, the ways our infrastructure and cities are constructed, the way our food is grown and distributed, etc). Investment in health and medical research - with a balance of basic and applied research - is the only way to obtain better and ultimately more cost-effective health solutions for the Australian public.