

## SRHMRA Submission 5 — Nicole Bryce

I would like to comment on point number 6, in particular the retention of a skilled workforce.

Currently, the NH&MRC supports a pyramid like career scheme with ever increasing numbers of people fighting it out for relatively few positions. Not all PhD scientists wish to become independent laboratory heads, a position that often entails leaving the bench for the office. It is becoming increasingly difficult for talented scientists, who contribute significantly to the generation of all the data, to get anything other than 1 year short term work contracts. This causes a considerable waste of time as we spend the last 6 months of the year looking for a new job or a continuation of the contract. This time could be better spent generating data.

A further complication is that as you get older and past the 3 years postdoc period, the grants don't cover your full salary, leaving only the younger postdocs as "hireable". It really reminds me of my time as a checkout chick approaching the full adult wage, watching all the 15 year old juniors get all the hours.

Another point to consider is that the majority of technical skills are taught to the honours and PhD students by either other students, or from the postdocs in the laboratory, not the lab heads. Postdocs often do not get the credit for all of the student supervision that they do as it is often not possible to be recognized for co-supervision at academic level A.

One possibility to address this problem is the creation of a "staff scientist" type role for the older postdoctoral fellows who want to stay in science and contribute at the bench, rather than the office. These positions could be competitive, last for 4-5 years, but they could be for people who want some stability in their life and for those who moving cities and/or countries every couple of years is not an option. It would be great if these were funded at a level that would allow official co-supervision of students.

There are so many passionate scientists out there, they just need a little help in making it a full time career, rather than getting to 5-8 years postdoc and having to quit science because it is impossible to get a job. I have seen this happen to too many people, it is a waste of training and a considerable waste of research resources.