

# Submission to McKeon Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia from the Westmead Research Hub

The response below addresses the following questions:

*How might health and medical research be best managed and funded in Australia?*

(Terms of Reference 2, 3 and 7)

and

*How can we optimise translation of health and medical research into better health and wellbeing?*

(Terms of Reference 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11)

## DESCRIPTION

The Westmead Research Hub provides an ideal model for economical collaborative health and medical research, and its translation into better health and wellbeing. It was formed through an externally facilitated strategic plan in 2001 with a subsequent MoU in 2003. Its governance consists of a Council composed of the Chairpersons of the two independent Institute Boards and the Chief Executives of the two teaching hospitals or their nominees and the Dean of the Sydney Medical School. The Hub Executive consists of the Directors of each of the research entities and senior managers or chief operating officers. With the construction of the WMI/Westmead Research Hub building which will incorporate the Hub core technology facilities (genomics, cell imaging, flow cytometry, cell and gene therapies, animal care and proteomics), a formal Affiliation Agreement is being developed to facilitate transfer of high technology equipment currently distributed around the campus into the one physical location with easy access to all researchers on campus. This high technology equipment 'core' will also be a resource to bio-medical and health care researchers in institutions throughout the northern part of Western Sydney, servicing over one million people. The ability to collaboratively raise funds for more than \$8m worth of high technology equipment in the 'core' in the past 5 years has driven research on the campus.

The Hub also facilitates collaborations as seen by the formation of a formal Hub centre in cell and gene therapy, as well as informal infectious diseases and immunology networks.

The productivity of the research hub is growing at approximately 5% per year, in terms of research grant income and numbers of researchers funded by such grants.

## ADVANTAGES

The partners of the Westmead Research Hub<sup>1</sup> believe that a medical research Hub, such as that which has been in existence for ten years at Westmead, provides the optimal framework for collaborative research, translation of research between research institutes, universities and teaching hospitals and a mechanism for establishing high technology facilities to drive today's technology intensive research. In view of its success the Westmead Research Hub partners are highly enthusiastic about continuing and strengthening our Hub model. We believe that it provides an answer to the problems of small institutes/silos of research which can be accommodated either within multi-disciplinary institutes on campus or within the Hub structure itself. It also provides the best framework for translation of research where close linkages between institutes and teaching hospitals within the Hub allows bi-directional interaction between clinical, translational biomedical researchers. The adult-paediatric research interaction is an added bonus. This model drives research both within and between disciplines. In our Hub we are aware that community research will need to be enhanced through the Local Health Districts.

Thus, there is great value in bringing together the research leaders and clinical leaders on a health care/university campus and the impetus this provides to translation of research (in both directions). It eliminates the isolation of high tech bio-medical research institutes and offers access to high technology essential for the work of outstanding clinical and translational researchers within teaching hospitals. Furthermore it provides a bridge between universities and teaching hospitals.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Children's Medical Research Institute, The Kids Research Institute, The Westmead Millennium Institute and the Western Sydney Local Health District (incorporating Westmead, Blacktown/Mt Druiitt and Auburn Hospitals) and the University of Sydney with Nepean Hospital and the University of Western Sydney as affiliate members.