

300 word summary

I believe that one of the greatest challenges facing medical research institutes (MRIs) in Australia today is securing long term funding. In order for the medical research sector to survive, alternative funding solutions must be devised. I understand that the Government doesn't have access to endless streams of money. But if the Government can't provide the funds directly, perhaps they could facilitate the donation and collection of funds or provide initiatives that enabled MRIs to do so themselves? One option could be to encourage the public to donate \$1.00 (or an amount of their choice) to medical research every time they fill a prescription. If it were made clear to patients by pharmacists that without medical research, there would be no new medicines for patients, I believe that people would feel compelled to donate as they would relate the benefits of medical research directly back to themselves. Donations could be deposited into a central, high interest account and delivered to the NHMRC each financial year in addition to the Government NHMRC budget commitment. Another initiative that I believe would bring significant financial benefit to MRIs would be to assist MRIs to source funds from non-Government sources. For example, if the Government made available a series of grants that funded a non-academic salary for a position devoted to fundraising, and such a grant enabled an MRI to employ one person that then brought in three times their salary in non-government funding, this would be a very positive investment by the Government in medical research, albeit indirectly.

Full submission

I believe that one of the greatest challenges facing medical research institutes (MRIs) in Australia today is securing long term funding. MRIs need sustainable funding to attract and retain outstanding scientists, to provide access to state-of-the-art technologies and to translate basic discoveries from the laboratory to the clinic. Although "there has never been more money invested in health and medical research than there is today", recent fears that the government might cut \$400 million from the NHMRC 2011-2012 budget provided scientists, patients and the Australian public with a sobering reminder of just how fragile funding for the medical research sector really is. In addition, I am extremely concerned that if the NHMRC budget does not significantly increase in the next couple of years, the situation is going to become dire once the construction of new MRIs is completed and a significantly larger numbers of scientists are competing for funding from the same pot of money. A failure to increase the NHMRC budget could see the \$700 million Government investment in building and upgrading health and medical research and training facilities largely go to waste if there is not enough money to support the scientists working in these and existing facilities!

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