



CRC for Mental Health

Level 2, 161 Barry Street, Carlton South VIC 3052
Ph: +61 3 8344 1645
ABN: 80 151 016 492
Web: www.mentalhealthcrc.com

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McKeon Review Secretariat
PO Box 4226
Manuka ACT 2603

Dear Committee Members

Submission to the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research (McKeon review)

I have pleasure in providing to you the CRC for Mental Health's submission to the strategic review of health and medical research in Australia.

The CRC for Mental Health is a research consortium comprised of 20 different organisations including research institutes, universities, philanthropic organisations, industry and clinical endusers. In addition, we receive \$23million in federal funding through the Cooperative Research Centre to undertake research into the prevention, early diagnosis and effective treatment of mental health illnesses such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, schizophrenia and mood disorders.

I believe the breadth of experience and range of views within the CRC offers us a unique perspective on the terms of reference and we are pleased to attach our submission.

If I can be of any further assistance during the course of your review, please do not hesitate to contact us on 03 8344 1645.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "I. Cooke".

Professor Ian Cooke
Chief Executive Officer, CRC for Mental Health



CRC for Mental Health Submission to Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research

Summary

The CRC for Mental Health's submission focuses on the two key questions:

- How might health and medical research be best managed and funded in Australia?
- How can we optimise translation of health and medical research into better health and wellbeing?

The CRC for Mental Health is a beneficiary of the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) program, a Federal Government Initiative which supports end user driven research collaborations to address major challenges facing Australia. We believe the CRC program's focus on collaboration by multiple institutions and the involvement of end-users and industry throughout the research process offers an opportunity for solutions to large-scale problems to be investigated in a manner which would not be possible under other funding mechanisms in Australia.

Submission

As stated in the terms of reference of the review, "twenty years ago, individuals and small groups could initiate and carry out meaningful research. This has changed, and in most cases, significantly larger groups, often interdisciplinary in nature, are now required". Over the course of the seven-year funding cycle, CRC's allow multi-disciplinary groups to be assembled to undertake research into a well-defined major challenge, with a clear path to commercialisation by industry, or adoption by end-users.

During 2009/10, the eleven health based CRC's reported collaborating with 323 businesses, which included 79 international alliances. As an example of the scale of collaborations possible, the CRC for Mental Health alone has 20 Participant Organisations which includes:

- Six pharmaceutical / industry organisations
- Two philanthropic / consumer advocate organisations
- Four patient-focused endusers (hospitals, aged care providers)
- Five research institutes
- Three universities

Of particular note to items 3 and 4 of the terms of reference, the CRC for Mental Health's list of Participants shows that the program can offer opportunities to improve support for Australian health and medical research through "private sector support and philanthropy", as well as supporting suitable relationships "between business and the research sector, including opportunities to improve Australia's capacity to capitalise on its investment in health and medical research through commercialisation and strategies for realising returns on Commonwealth investments".

We believe the track record of CRC program outcomes in this regard speaks for itself, with the overall program returning a net increase to Australia's Gross Domestic Product of \$2.7 billion between 1991 – 2005 (www.crc.gov.au, accessed 22 March 2012). Individual examples of success include:

- Vision CRC's high-oxygen-permeable soft contact lenses developed in partnership with CIBA Vision and Novartis AG, which generate \$2 billion per year in global sales and have returned over \$150 million in royalties to CRC partners and over \$100 million in research fees.
- Oral Health CRC's Recaldent technology, which helps prevent and reverse dental decay, currently earns over US\$400 million in global sales per year.



CRC for Mental Health

As stated in item 6 of the terms of reference to the review, Australia needs to be able to “attract, develop and retain a skilled research workforce which is capable of meeting future challenges and opportunities”. We believe the CRC program significantly contributes to this aim.

CRC's are funded based on “clearly articulated, major challenges” and are required to include an education program which supports the development and retention of a skilled workforce within the articulated research program. This allows a flexible 7-year program which addresses short to medium-term skills shortages by providing highly capable early career researchers with exposure to industry.

The cross-disciplinary nature and involvement of industry in CRC's also increases the opportunities and networks for early career researchers. This provides early career researchers with exposure to commercial environments, increasing their marketable skills. In 2009/10, 22 health sector CRC students took up industry employment. The CRC for Mental Health aims to support a minimum of 15 PhD students over its seven year life-span, assisting to address the shortage of researchers in fields associated with ageing and mental illnesses.

Conclusion

The CRC for Mental Health believes the CRC program to be a significant contributor to the range of funding options available for the health and medical field. We believe the inclusion of industry and end-user participants significantly adds both to the translation of research into health outcomes for Australians, as well as providing valuable commercial oversight which can lead to significant returns on Commonwealth investment. The clearly articulated challenges addressed by CRC's, as well as the flexibility of a 7 year funding cycle, encourage the retention of early career researchers within Australia. We encourage you to consider the CRC program when providing your recommendations.