

SRHMRA Submission 8 — Melanie Bahlo

Why is it in Australia's interest to have a viable, internationally competitive health and medical research sector?

Citizens of a first world country demand continuing improvements in health care. Australia's health and medical community has produced impressive achievements, many of them of international significance, that have led to fundamental improvements of people worldwide.

Evidence: our Nobel prize winners, our innovations such as bioinoc ear, gardasil, etc.

Australian health and medical research presents a good return for \$ spent in terms of revenue. Australia is world recognized for its achievements which are particularly impressive considering factors such as % GDP currently spent on research, our population size and distance geographically to other powerhouses.

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

Longer funding periods, more money to program grant teams with less money to short term projects as these are an inefficient use of research time. As researchers we are spending too much precious research time writing grants every year and the system is overloaded with applications which then necessitate another month or so of reviewing. ARC and NHRMC need to work more closely together so that the merry go around of conflicts over funding rules comes to a stop.

What are the health and medical research strategic directions and priorities and how might we meet them?

- Better targeted treatment to avoid adverse outcomes and improved outcomes.
- Funding to allow transitional work.
- Improved lifestyles through improvements in public health with more support for healthy lifestyles.
- More funding for staff and projects, less facility building.

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

Provide program grants for funding to translation into clinics and conversely let routine testing labs provide data to researchers that will allow research in this sector.

Encourage more responsible and balanced reporting of science and medical health achievements. More publicity of the top research projects funded by NHMRC in the media, not mediocre science that is chosen as the headline by the news outlets.