

SRHMRA Submission 97 — Peter Czabotar

The NHMRC is the life blood of Medical Research within Australia. The majority of Australians recognise the importance of this industry not only to the future development of the nation but because Medical Research gives hope that currently untreatable diseases may be overcome by future advances. Medical research is of course the only means by which this goal can be achieved. It is thus vital that financial support for Medical Research continues to grow in the next decade.

A particular concern regards the plight of mid-career researchers in the near future. The ARC Future Fellowship scheme is nearing completion and a large number of awardees fall within the NHMRC framework. If a similar scheme is not developed, upwards of 100 researchers per year will be seeking fellowship support within the already overtly competitive NHMRC system. It is likely that many of these top researchers will be forced either overseas or into other industries if a new support scheme is not forthcoming.

The NHMRC rightly encourages open communication of results and recently has adopted a policy for open access publication. I support this endeavour, however, NHMRC grants currently fail to support publication costs, which are higher for open access publications, nor travel costs for dissemination of information at conferences.

It is important that the NHMRC continues to support both basic and applied research. After all, it is the breakthroughs in basic research occurring now that feed into translational research in the future. It is also important that the NHMRC supports collaborative efforts, particularly those spanning multiple disciplines, some of which have not been traditionally supported by the NHMRC, eg medicinal chemistry, structural biology. It is likely that these collaborations will be the engine house for future development of new therapeutics.