



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CLINICAL STUDIES
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Higher Education Review Expert Panel
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Dear Professor Bradley

I read with interest the matters raised in the *Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper*, and am writing to offer the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) support to the Panel as it finalises its recommendations to government.

NHMRC is Australia's principal agency for funding health and medical research; for developing health advice for the Australian community, health professionals and governments; and for providing advice on ethical behaviour in health care and in the conduct of health and medical research.

Delivering on one of our key objectives of fostering medical research and training, and public health research and training, NHMRC provides funding in two broad areas: support for Australian research through our project and program grants schemes, and building Australia's research capacity, primarily through fellowship and scholarship support for researchers.

It is estimated that NHMRC funds approximately 90% of the Commonwealth's funding for health and medical research. In 2007, NHMRC's expenditure towards health and medical research was \$539 million, with expenditure increasing to \$594 million in 2008. Universities receive approximately 75% of NHMRC funding. The top ten recipients of NHMRC funding, accounting for more than 70% of available funds, include all of the Group of Eight Universities.

I would like to draw to the attention of the Panel the fundamental role that an effectively functioning research environment plays in the education and training of post-graduate students in universities, and the flow-on effects that a high quality research environment has in the education of undergraduates.

An effective research environment is also essential for the creation and translation of new knowledge into improved standards of health and healthcare delivery. In order to be effective in undertaking research and leading the uptake and implementation of research findings, clinicians and healthcare professionals need to be research literate and research savvy. Research and research training should be incorporated into the curricula of all health professional training programs through universities. These issues are expanded upon in the NHMRC's recent submission to the House of Representatives *Inquiry into Research Training and Research Workforce Issues in Australian Universities*¹.

You may also be interested in the NHMRC's submissions to the *Review of the National Innovation System*².

Given the range of potential initiatives that are likely to arise from consideration of submissions your Review, I welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters in more detail with the Panel.

Yours sincerely



Professor Warwick Anderson
Chief Executive Officer

30 July 2008

¹NHMRC submission to the Inquiry into Research Training and Research Workforce Issues in Australian Universities (<http://www.aph.gov.au/House/committee/isi/research/index.htm>)

² NHMRC submission to the Review of the National Innovation System Review of the National Innovation System (<http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>)