MEDIA RELEASE

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Medical research reforms to improve our future health

The Turnbull Government provides more than $800 million through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) each year to fund life-changing research.

Health and medical research is one of the four pillars of the Government’s Long-Term National Health Plan. It saves lives and plays a critical role in improving our health system.

I am therefore delighted to announce NHMRC’s new research funding program.

The new program will reduce the burden on researchers in applying for funding across different funding schemes by providing consolidated, five-year grants for our high-performing researchers at all stages of their careers.

This will give them more flexibility to collaborate widely and more time to spend on what’s important – research to improve lives.

The improvements to NHMRC’s funding program will provide more opportunities for promising researchers early in their careers, ensuring future generations of world-leading Australian researchers.

They will also provide opportunities for clinical researchers, who split their time between research and caring for their patients.

There will be a new scheme to encourage more creative and innovative research ideas and a dedicated scheme for clinical trials and cohort studies, to ensure that we are investing in the most efficient, high-quality trials to test new treatments and interventions.

The improved program will also provide a $5 million boost to our most outstanding research teams, recognising that complex health problems can only be solved through the combined efforts of researchers from different disciplines.

The new program will support research across the spectrum, from discovery through to translation and commercialisation of new therapies and devices, and the implementation of new policies and practices, tackling the challenges facing our health system.
Australia has an enviable history of health and medical research – most of Australia’s Nobel Prizes have been in Physiology or Medicine.

Together, the reforms I am announcing today will ensure sustained support for an internationally-competitive health and medical research sector which will continue this proud Australian tradition of ground-breaking discovery and translation into better health for all.

As Health Minister, I am committed to strengthening health and medical research.

The Turnbull Government’s investment through NHMRC provides the foundations on which the Government’s investment in the Medical Research Future Fund and Biomedical Translation Fund can build.

Implementation of the new funding schemes will begin in late 2018 – early 2019.

The 2017-18 Budget delivers on the Turnbull Government’s commitment to support medical research.

We are on track to double our current medical research funding, with $1.4 billion allocated under the MRFF by 2020-21 – including over $640 million in 2020-21.

Under the MRFF, $65.9 million will be immediately shared by eight research projects, including trialling new drugs, devices and services, clinical fellowships, and projects to address childhood obesity.

Other projects include developing pandemic vaccines, tackling antimicrobial resistance, and supporting cutting edge ideas and the next generation of researchers.

We are also funding the latest in advanced medical research technology with $68 million towards the establishment of Australia’s first Proton Beam Therapy facility at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute.

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