

# **AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR MEDICINE**

## **WORK PLAN FOR THE YEAR 2009**

The National Committee for Medicine will continue its attempt to increase its involvement in national activities related to medical research, in particular in relation to funding, and other issues that arise in the context of the new Government. Our prediction that the new ways in which Ministerial responsibilities are divided would lead both to new opportunities and new problems has turned out to be accurate. More important, the perceived financial crisis has led to reluctance to schedule new initiatives because of budget restraints.

The work plan for the coming year is based closely on our experiences during 2008.

The priorities are:

1. The NCM will continue, both during its own meetings and through Council and ExCom, to urge Government (including the Department of Health, which takes lead responsibility for medical research) to ensure that funding for medical research continues to keep pace with opportunities and needs. It will attempt to ensure it has a close working relationship with the new Minister of Health, and the new Minister for Science, and their officials. The NC Medicine does not accept that the financial situation should lead to cutbacks in research expenditure; indeed, it can be argued that research is more important than ever.
2. The NCM will continue to interact with the NHMRC with respect to funding in general, with particular attention to ensuring that younger scientists and clinicians are well supported through competitive grants and fellowships, that fundamental research continues to be supported, and that neglected areas such as Aboriginal health are addressed. The NCM is particularly concerned that NHMRC should become involved in ensuring that mentoring and skills acquisition is given a much higher importance, particularly for early career scientists and clinicians. The NCM will continue to advocate with NHMRC on the issue of a national framework for dealing with major issues of research misconduct, and also to ensure that the Australian Health Ethics Committee is representative of the community.
3. The NCM has now agreed a program of activities through which the Academy can interact with young scientists and clinicians working in medical and health research, to ensure that more of the excellent persons in career development grades know of the Academy and its role in relation to science in Australia. We will continue to discuss this with ExCom and Council.
4. We were not able to win any further concessions for charitable donations to medical and health research, and were advised by officials to discuss this again during 2009.
5. The cross-over of information between the NC Medicine and the NC Biomedical Research has continued, productively, during 2008. We hope to have a joint meeting of the two Committees for part of the day when we meet in March/April 2009.

We propose that there should be TWO face to face meetings of the NC Medicine during 2009, as there were in 2008, and request funding to ensure this is possible. We find that the current practice, where the Executive Secretary of the Academy attends our meetings, works very well and ensures seamless interaction between the NCM and Council on relevant issues.

Bob Williamson, 23/12/2008