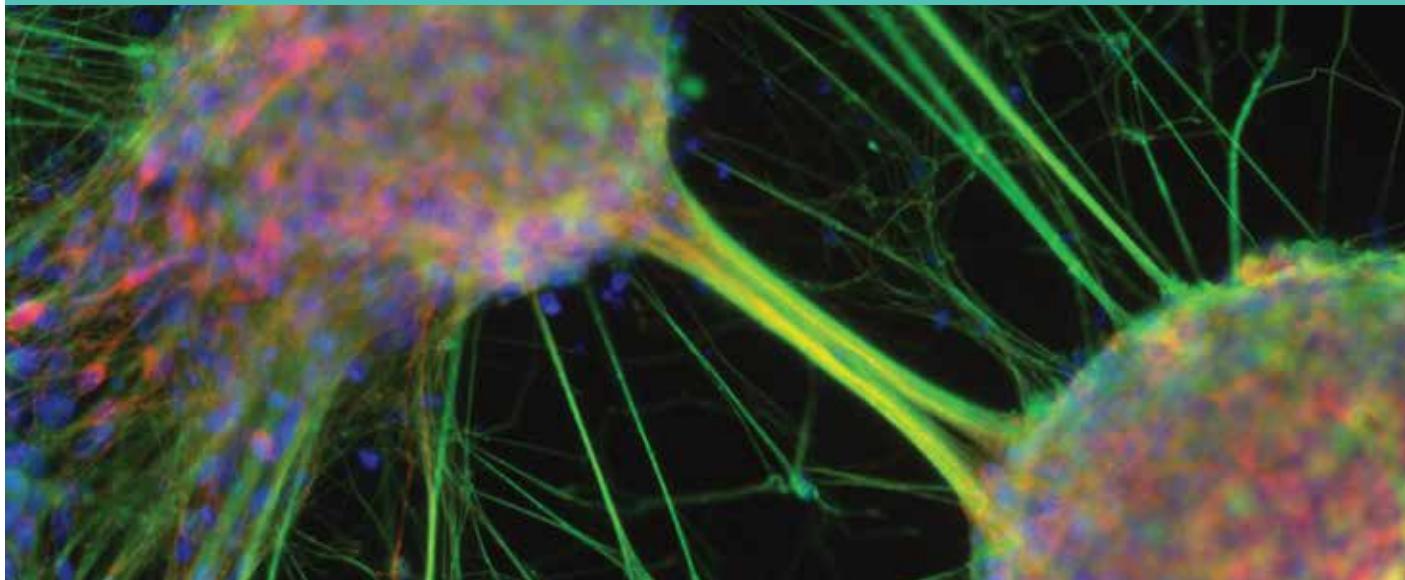




Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

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National Health and Medical Research Council
Strategic Direction 2015–16 to 2018–19

WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA

Message from the CEO



We live in a time of extraordinary growth in knowledge about human life, health and disease. We are also seeing the impact of decades of fundamental research on the prevention and treatment of previously intractable illnesses. This progress is the result of far-sighted investment by governments, foundations, the corporate sector and individuals around the world. NHMRC is proud that Australian researchers have been important contributors to global advances in the understanding of health and disease and in its application to the improvement of human health and wellbeing. We are fortunate to live in such times.

Today we also know enough to realise that this journey of discovery and implementation has just begun, that there is much we do not yet understand and that many brilliant ideas are yet to be translated into policy and practice. At the same time, we face new challenges with changes in the burden of disease, population demographics and global health risks which will only be overcome through the sustained effort of our health and medical research sector.

Over the next four years, NHMRC will continue to support the full breadth of health and medical research. It will fund the highest quality research and the best young and established researchers, foster national and international research partnerships, develop evidence-based advice on topics relevant to health, and provide national leadership in health and research ethics.

Australia must invest in research to meet its own current and future health needs and to contribute to solving the enormous health challenges of our shared world. The NHMRC corporate plan provides a blueprint for NHMRC to fulfil its mission in this national endeavour, and the strategic direction presented here provides a summary of the key messages from the corporate plan.

Professor Anne Kelso AO

Chief Executive Officer

National Health and Medical Research Council

NHMRC's strategic direction

The functions of NHMRC are to foster improved health and medical knowledge, including through funding research, translating research findings into evidence-based clinical practice, administering legislation governing research, issuing guidelines and advice for ethics in health and the promotion of public health. The CEO is required to identify the major national health issues that are likely to arise and to set out a national strategy for medical research and public health research for the period 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Major health issues

The National Health Priority Areas (NHPAs) have been designated by Australian governments as key targets because of their contribution to the burden of disease in Australia¹. The NHPAs underpin much of the work undertaken by NHMRC, with funding for research and translation activities being provided across all these areas, reflecting the strengths and interests of researchers. The NHPAs are:

- arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions
- cardiovascular health
- injury prevention and control
- asthma
- dementia
- mental health
- cancer control
- diabetes mellitus
- obesity

In consultation with Council, NHMRC has identified a number of major health issues relevant to the next four years:

- Create stronger pathways to capture the economic value of research discoveries
- Improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Harness the power of new technologies to improve health care
- Prepare for rapid and unpredictable change
- Develop and promote robust frameworks to support evidence-based decision-making
- Address the social, environmental and community dimensions of health
- Strengthen the quality of evidence from research

¹ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/national-health-priority-areas/>

NHMRC's strategic direction

Strategy for health and medical research

NHMRC's strategy for health and medical research addresses the major health issues, including the NHPAs, as well as other functions conferred on NHMRC by the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* (NHMRC Act).

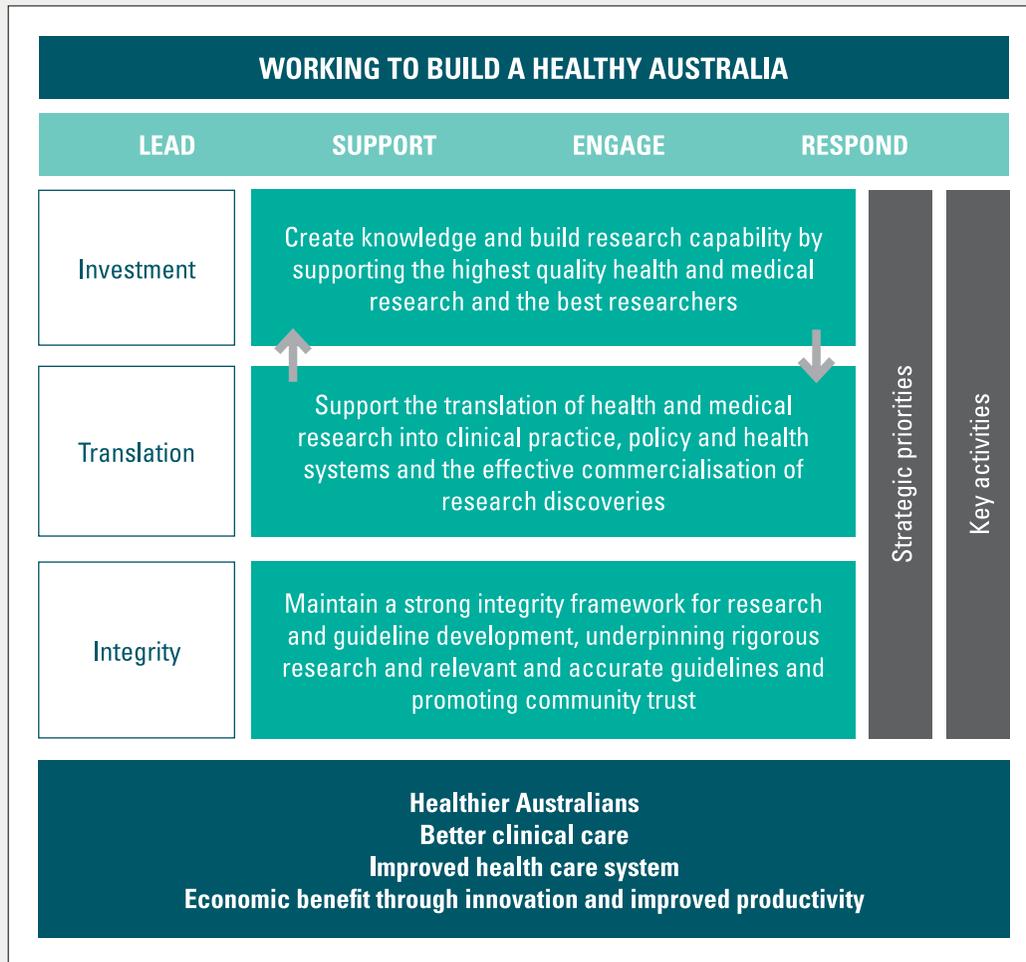
The themes of **investment**, **translation** and **integrity** represent NHMRC's strategy for health and medical research for the period 2015-16 to 2018-19. The model in Figure 1 depicts this strategy and includes an explanation of these three themes. Key strategic priorities for action within each theme are set out in the NHMRC corporate plan.

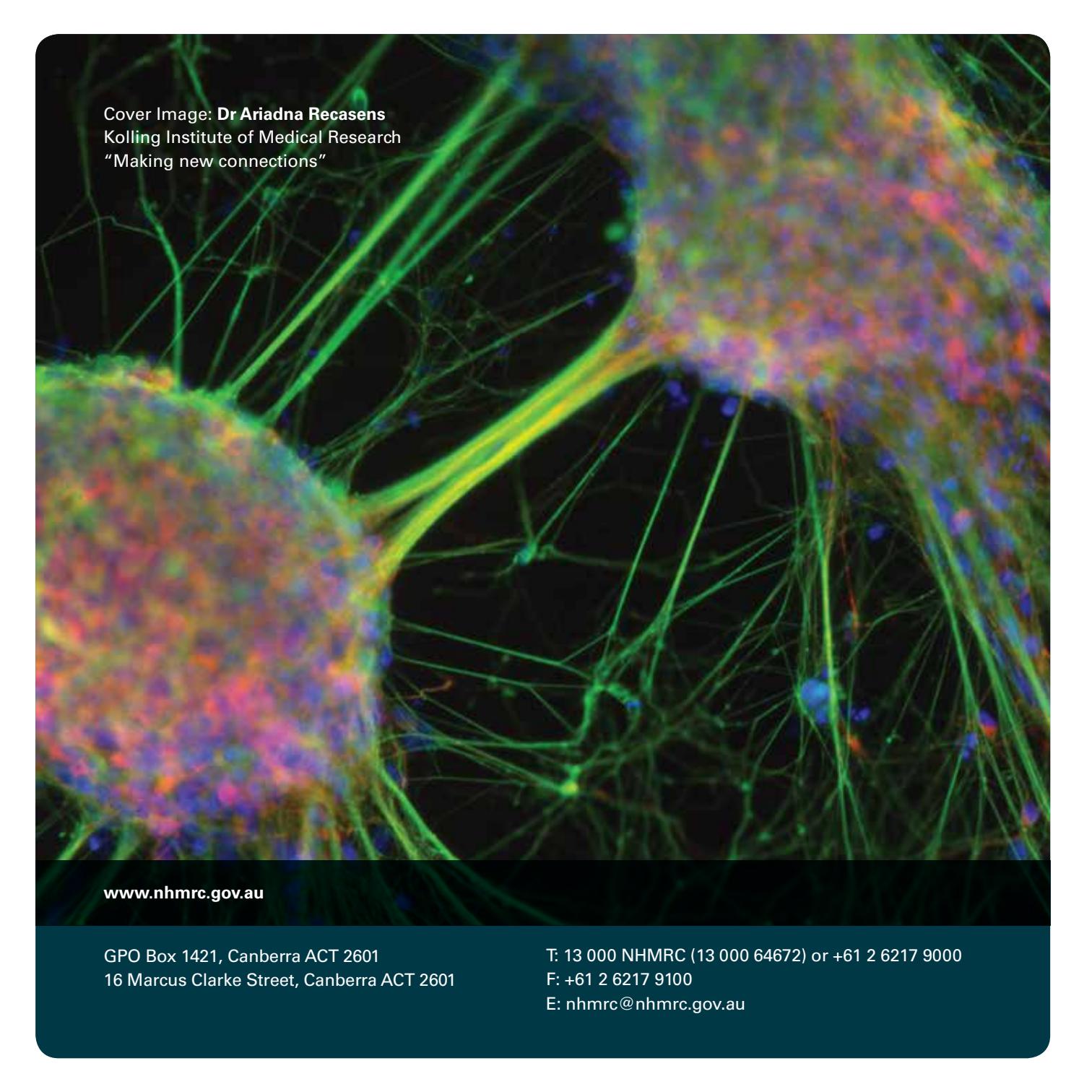
To fulfil its mission of working to build a healthy Australia, and to deliver against its strategy, NHMRC will:

- **Lead:** NHMRC is Australia's leader in funding health and medical research and research translation. It develops platforms and standards for health and medical research, and protects the integrity of the government's investment in health and medical research. NHMRC leverages the expertise and resources of others, and promotes translation of research into policy and practice.
- **Support:** NHMRC supports research across the four pillars of health research – biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research, and funds both individuals and teams and the highest quality research and researchers. NHMRC supports diversity of research and researchers across disciplines and sectors and fosters the career development of health and medical researchers.
- **Engage:** NHMRC engages with stakeholders and fosters partnerships among researchers and research funders nationally and internationally, with industry and policy makers and across all levels of government and enables collaborative networks.
- **Respond:** NHMRC responds to national priorities in health and science, to researchers, to consumer needs and community perspectives and to the needs and directions of government.

NHMRC's strategic direction

Figure 1 NHMRC's strategy for health and medical research



A fluorescence micrograph showing a complex network of neural fibers. The fibers are primarily stained in bright green, with some areas showing a mix of green and purple. The background is dark, making the glowing structures stand out. The fibers appear to be interconnected, forming a dense web-like structure.

Cover Image: **Dr Ariadna Recasens**
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"Making new connections"

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