Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

Building a successful career in research and leadership

Australian and New Zealand Nephrology Society

Annual Scientific Meeting

3 September 2024

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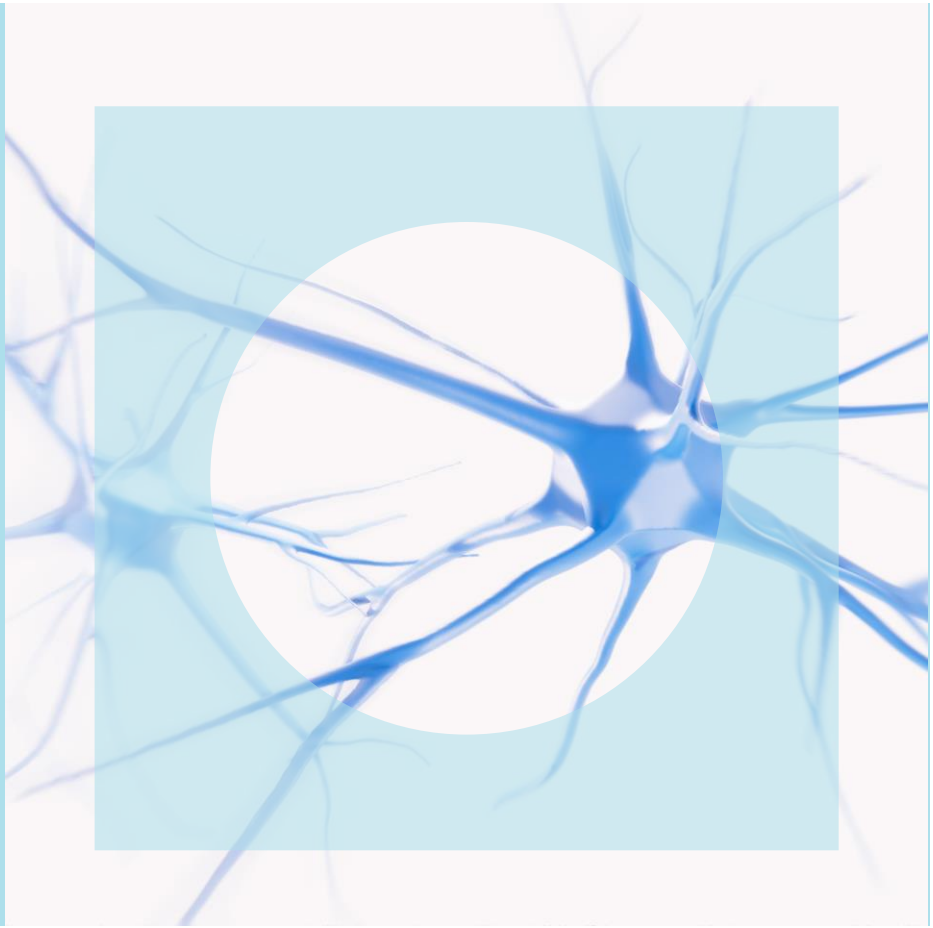

NHMRC

BUILDING
A HEALTHY
AUSTRALIA

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A HEALTHY
AUSTRALIA

Acknowledgement of Tarntanya Country

Traditional custodians Kaurna people

NHMRC

Themes

- Evidence
  - Research on research
- Personal experience
- Decision making
- Selling your track record

Questions

- What are the characteristics of high performance, high impact, translational research organisations?
- What are the characteristics of high performance, high impact researchers?
- How do you plan for “impact”?
- How do you ensure research has an impact on health outcomes?

Hierarchy of “key high impact characteristics”

Tier One

- People
  - Prioritise recruiting and keeping the “best”
  - Identifying key unique impact characteristics
- Leadership
  - Vision that values translation and impact
  - Consistency of values and vision
- Culture and value
  - Accountable autonomy
  - Social and ethical values, importance of health equity and improvement
  - Reward performance, based on impact and translation
  - Entrepreneurship, both product and policy
  - Health sustainability as a valued outcome

Hierarchy of “key high impact characteristics”

Tier Two

- Collaborations and networks
  - Evidence for AHSCs
  - Top down vs bottom up
  - Community involvement
- Multi-disciplinary capacity: social science, policy, economics, geography
- Infrastructure
  - Data, biobanks, imaging, genomics, registries, cohorts, data linkage, biostats, policy capacity
  - Low activation energy
  - Pump priming
- Buildings and precincts

Hierarchy of “key high impact characteristics”

Tier Three

- Strategy and Funding: very clear translational strategy
- Institutional and research unit practice, lived strategy
- Teams?: Project focused teams, “Line of sight”

Research on research: Evidence?

(a) data, (b) observation, (c) opinion

Attract the best with

- Consistent leadership and culture (a)
- Funding; appropriate length and amount (a)
- Infrastructure
  - Bioscience and translational (b)
  - Low energy of activation (b)
  - Buildings (c)

Identify the best (characteristics)

- High number of PhDs (a)
- Time spent on research (a)
- Value quality (a)
- Ambition and persistence (c)
- Skills other than research (a)
- Engagement with academics and non-academic stakeholders (a)
- Clinically motivated researcher (a)
- Interest in impact (a)

Research on research: Evidence?

(a) data, (b) observation, (c) opinion

Develop entrepreneurial teams

- Across collaborative networks (b)
- Geographic regions (b)
- With support, bespoke incubators/accelerators (c)

Develop impact pathways

- “Impact literacy” (c)
- Prospectively and retrospectively (c&a)
- Measure progress and speed and need for acceleration (c)
- Measure “payback” (a)

Reward

- Discovery (a)
- Translation (b)
- Impact (a)
- Entrepreneurship (c)
- International collaborations (a)

Characteristics of translational/high impact researchers (evidence from Payback case studies)

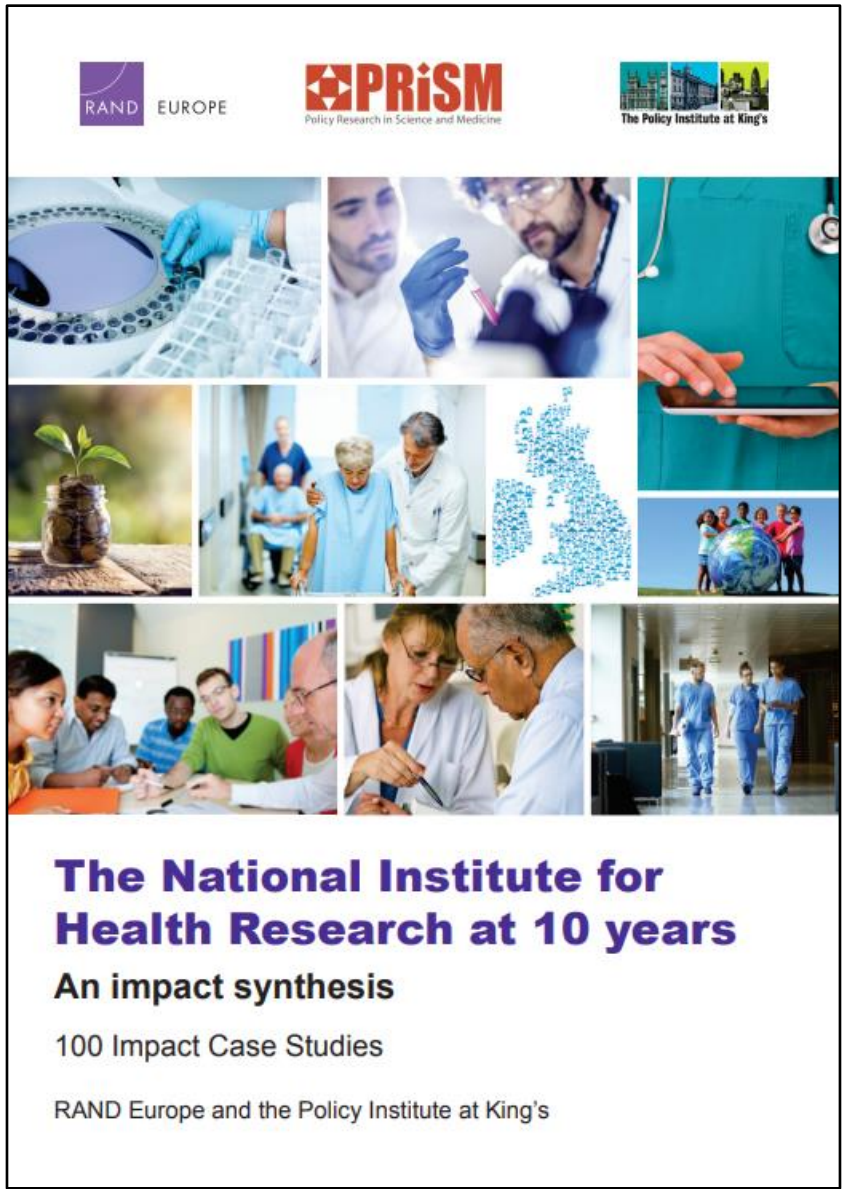
Adapted from "RAND"

- Different skills: Fund researchers with more than just research skills—individuals are key when it comes to translation of research into wider impact.
- Engaged: Support your researchers to engage with non-academic stakeholders to help their work have a wider impact.
- Clinical: For greater impact on patient care within 10–20 years, fund clinical researchers
- Impact on society: If you want to have a wider impact, don't just fund for academic excellence.
- International: For high academic impact, fund researchers who collaborate internationally and support them to do so.
- Expectations: Most broader social and economic impact will come from just a few projects. (15%)

People: Attracting high impact researchers

- Attract and keep the best
  - Measure and value: Translation and impact
  - Value non-academic skills
  - Value international collaborators
- Invest in infrastructure
  - Low activation energy, core platforms, more than bioscience platforms
- Role of funding
  - Clinical funding more likely to have impact
  - Establishing sustainable and integrated training pathways for entrepreneurs, clinical academics, policy advocates
- Role of leadership and culture
  - Clear consistent vision
- Easier to get high research performance than high impact
- Characteristics of high performing group leaders
  - Stronger research commitment
  - Put more effort in group management and
  - Spend more time on network management
  - “In sum, leaders of high-performing research groups tend to be all-rounders.”

Impact Analysis: Increasingly important



Impact Pathway

- Impact case
- Description of underpinning research
- Where are you on the impact/translation pathway
- How fast are you going
- Plans for acceleration
- Measurement plan
- “Work backwards from impact”

Consumer engagement is essential for impact

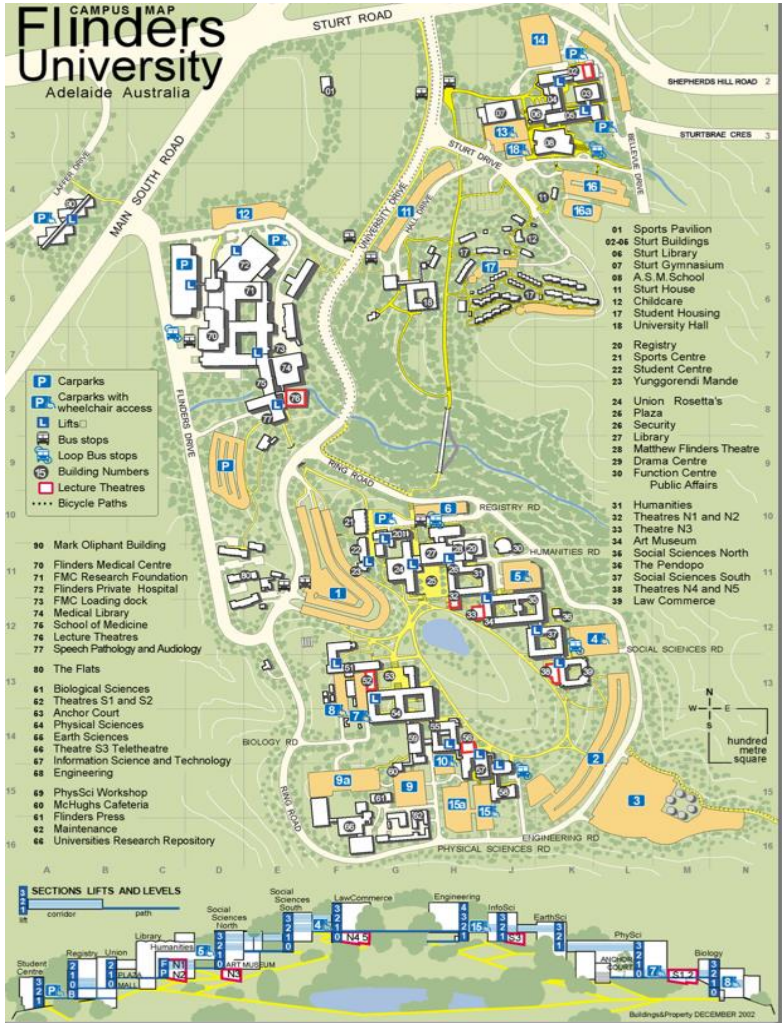
- Needs led
- If you asked the community want they want at the beginning, the project will inherently have greater impact i.e. impact as a measure of utility
- Partners in projects
- Essential
- Involved at all levels
- Learn from Indigenous health

Personal experience – How did I get here!

Flinders Medical Centre / Flinders University

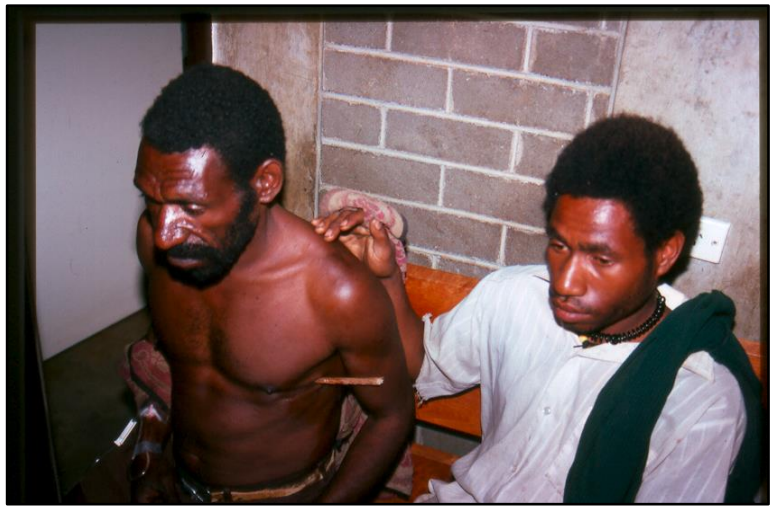
(under-graduate and post-graduate training)

- Very new medical school
- Slow development as researcher
- Unique Clinical and Post Doc opportunities
- Important role models
- Assumed that research was always embedded in health care



Goroka Hospital: PNG Highlands

- Worked at Goroka Base Hospital as registrar
- Immediate impact of medical research
- Developed passion for research and its impact
- Very clear equity issues



Johns Hopkins University

- Johns Hopkins Medicine
- “Best of the best”
- Research led
- Led US in NIH funding
- Top ranked US hospital
- Inspired by the culture of excellence and research embedded in health

Alfred Infectious Diseases Unit

- Large Infectious Diseases Unit
- Statewide HIV/AIDS Service
- Very close partnership with affected community in both delivery of care and research strategy
- Evidence-based development of models of care

Burnet Institute

- Leading Infectious Diseases, immunology and Public Health Institute in the region
- Successful and unique model of multidisciplinary research dealing with issues of major public health importance
- Biomedical Research & Public Health
  - Two-way process
- Evidence-based development and evaluation

Monash Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

- Large and ambitious
- Research outcomes driven
    - Grants, Pubs, Impact
- Terrific infrastructure: core facilities
- Close interaction with health care delivery

SAHMRI 2010-2023

SAHMRI
South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute

SAHMRI Research Themes

ABORIGINAL HEALTH EQUITY

SAHMRI WOMEN AND KIDS

PRECISION CANCER MEDICINE

LIFELONG HEALTH

SAHMRI IMPACT

- Four of SAHMRI's seven **Theme leaders** are women
- Thirteen of 26 SAHMRI research programs are **led by women**
- Six of 26 SAHMRI research programs are **led by researchers who identify as Indigenous Australians**

Professional Activities – Get involved

- Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) – President, 1998
- Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)
- Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID)
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
- Australian Academy of Health and Medical Science (AAHMS)
- Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA)

Help develop leadership skills, networks and partnerships

Impact on policy

Decisions you can make

- Develop a vision and philosophy
- Be confident about your values
- Develop skills and capability
- Partnerships and friendships
  - National and international
- Travel when possible
- Find a mentor – be a mentor
- Strive for innovation and creativity
  - Create a point of difference, uniqueness
- Grow a team
- Choice institutions that suit you based on, vision and philosophy, then size, ranking infrastructure

These decisions then lead to a competitive Track Record

Selling your track record

- Start with purpose and community need (plus community involvement)
- Highlight underpinning philosophy and values
- Strength of team and therefore your leadership
- Partnerships developed (national and international)
- Impact
- Plus impact pathway, including funding and future plans
- Evidence for impact, including pubs, policy and commercialisation
- Professional activities
- Summary statement

Thank you