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Attn: Dr Matthew Butlin
Chair and Chief Executive
South Australian Productivity Commission

Adelaide, October 9, 2020

RE: Response to SAPC Draft Report in specific areas.

Dear Dr Butlin,

We are pleased to see a number of our recommendations featured in this report including:

- supporting key HMR researchers so talent stays and is allowed to flourish in South Australia;
- reconsidering the governance structure of SAHMRI; and
- strong strategic leadership from all parties involved.

Below are select key points that the Medical School Research Committee agree should be ongoing priorities following this draft report.

Priority areas:

1. *Investment in research support of local research talent, including jointly appointed clinical research-academic leaders, to maintain competitiveness with other states*

While the draft report identifies this need, the proposal to achieve this through redistribution of current funds in our opinion is not viable. There needs to be further dedicated South Australian government investment to support our existing research strengths. The report outlines that South Australia's competitiveness in securing research funding has declined, largely as a result of a reduce prioritisation for Health and Medical Research relative to service delivery and cost containment. SA's investment into vital research infrastructure has allowed the establishment of an HMR precinct, but research success requires a similar investment in key research talent, both senior and emerging.

2. *Protection of research infrastructure and equipment*

While we fully support the focus in the draft report on supporting key researchers, it is suggested this be achieved through redistribution of current funds. **We feel strongly that this not come at the expense of important research infrastructure and equipment.** This must include integral research personnel including project management and

biostatistical support, and ongoing future investment in cutting edge facilities to support capabilities of a progressive research precinct.

3. *Revise governance structure, accountabilities and roles and responsibilities between key HMR organisations*

The SA BioMed City Precinct contains world class facilities with the potential for exceptional HMR. However, **the governance processes overseeing the connections between universities, healthcare sectors, and research facilities within this precinct are obstructive to successful collaborative research. Streamlining of processes and eliminating obstructive administrative processes are required to enable a precinct-wide research culture.** As highlighted within the draft report, this will require leadership from individual institutions with a focus on data accessibility between sites.

4. *Re-focus on clinical research in public hospitals*

Achieving excellent clinically based HMR with translational impact is a clear feature of the draft report. **The recommendation of instilling a research-based improvement culture through increasing the number of clinical academics is fully supported by our School, and an area that streams behind our counterparts in Victoria or Queensland.** Sustained long term reform of governance and accountabilities between the key HMR organisations as highlighted within the report is integral to this outcome. **A dedicated fund to support (i.e. pay for) protected research time for research active clinicians should be established.**

5. *SAHMRI*

We consider it crucial that South Australia maintains an MRI within the BioMed City precinct. An MRI with a restructured governance (skill-based and not representative Board) will inject energy, opportunity and sooner or later success in South Australian HMR sector.

Yours sincerely,



JOZEF GECZ
Chair, Adelaide University Medical School Research Committee



A/Prof Corinna Van Den Heuvel

9/10/2020

As Interim Head, Adelaide Medical School I have read through and provided input and agree to the report above.