



16 April 2020

Dr Matthew Butlin
Chair and Chief Executive
South Australian Productivity Commission

sapc@sa.gov.au

Dear Dr Butlin

RE: Inquiry into Health and Medical Research in South Australia

I have read with interest the issues paper released regarding the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Health and Medical Research in South Australia.

I am writing to you both as the co-author of the Shine Young Review (*Review of Health and Medical Research in South Australia – May 2008*) as well as in my current role as the Chair of the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) Research Advisory Committee and President of the Australian Academy of Science.

In 2008 when Alan Young and I undertook the Shine Young Review, we were excited by the opportunity to contribute to the transformation of the health and medical research sector in South Australia. It was clear then, as it is in South Australia now, that the State has a significant number of high calibre researchers, undertaking impressive and internationally competitive health and medical research.

Following our assessment of many key factors impacting on health and medical research in the State, including diminishing grant funding, critical mass, infrastructure gaps and the attraction and retention of staff, we concluded and ultimately recommended to the then Health Minister, Hon John Hill, that South Australia establish an independent health and medical research institute.

Both Alan and I were very proud and pleased that the Government immediately acted upon our recommendation and established SAHMRI in the following year. I think that the speed in which the Government acted emphasised how great the need was for South Australia to have a flagship health and medical research institute.

I am pleased to continue to be involved in the work of SAHMRI in my role as the Chair of the Research Advisory Committee, comprising a group of national and international experts aligned to SAHMRI's research themes. I have been in this role formally since 2011 and am grateful that I have had the opportunity to continue to witness the vision that Alan and I had for the State coming to fruition.

To me, it is clear that over the last five years (the point at which SAHMRI's Theme Leaders were all appointed and the themes were actively undertaking research) SAHMRI has developed a clear unity of purpose. The Institute has made rapid progress in establishing a strategic direction for health and medical research and has embedded itself in the health and medical research sector not only at the State level, but nationally and internationally as well.

As Chair of the Research Advisory Committee, it is clear that the scientific quality and research output of the Institute has continued to improve, soundly positioning the Institute in a very competitive position. The unanimous view of the Committee is that SAHMRI has a clear upward trajectory both in quality and quantity of research and has matured to become one of Australia's leading Health and Medical Research Institutes. In particular it has very clear leadership status in Aboriginal health and in the areas of translation, health services and policy. There is a clear and shared passion for working within the Institute, and in working towards the SAHMRI vision of improving the health of the community through research. The recent challenges raised by the COVID-19 virus are a salient reminder of the critical importance of an internationally excellent research institute closely aligned with government healthcare priorities – a unique resource for provision of immediate expert advice relevant to the State.

SAHMRI is performing well in what is a very competitive funding landscape and has an impressive record in publications in high impact journals. While these are important metrics, the Research Advisory Committee has also been very pleased with the efforts made by SAHMRI researchers in relation to the translation of their findings into direct health care benefits, through policy interventions or via direct health delivery changes. This is where SAHMRI has a unique advantage and this must be harnessed and not overlooked or undervalued.

Of critical importance is the collaborative nature of SAHMRI and the engagement with the three Universities and the SA Health system in undertaking critical health and medical research. The co-location of SAHMRI with the Royal Adelaide Hospital, and its important role within Adelaide BioMed City, highlights the importance of this collaboration, and the statewide leadership presence that SAHMRI has in a number of areas.

I would impress upon the Government the importance of continuing to support SAHMRI as the State's only independent health and medical research institute. SAHMRI and its researchers play a complementary role to the research undertaken within the university and clinical settings, and as a sector, with Government support, this collaborative venture can continue to grow.

I wish you well with the Review and look forward to hearing the outcomes in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Professor John Shine AC PresAA
President, Australian Academy of Science
Chair, SAHMRI Research Advisory Committee