

Friday 16 December 2022

The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
<https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm>

Dear Prime Minister,

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) has had static investment for over a decade. As a result, the research that supports disease prevention, healthcare innovation and patient care is being compromised.

**Research funding for public health is woefully inadequate.**

Public Health receives just over 5% of NHMRC Ideas Grants, compared to the 70% awarded for Basic Science and 20% for Clinical Medicine. Public Health Researchers receive half as many Investigator Grants as Basic Science Researchers or Clinical Medicine Researchers.

**This is despite the economic return estimated as \$14.30 for every dollar spent on prevention.<sup>1</sup>**

The AEA calls for a substantial increase in funding to be directed to the MREA in the next Federal Budget. This will benefit all of Australia's health and medical researchers, including public health researchers.

**Public health research requires dedicated funding.**

Nearly 50% of Australians now live with chronic disease. The status quo is to focus on treating people once they become sick, with scant regard to primary prevention. The National Preventive Health Strategy outlines an ambitious plan to improve the health of Australians and lower health care costs through primary and secondary prevention. It is critical that the Strategy is underpinned by robust and locally relevant public health research.

The AEA calls for the Government to allocate 50% of the Medical Research Future Fund disbursed funds over the next five years to strategically address the focus areas of the National Preventive Health Strategy. This will ensure that the Strategy has every chance of successful implementation, with long-term flow on effects of better health for all.

Yours faithfully

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<sup>1</sup> Masters et al. Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review. *J Epidemiol Comm Health*. 2017;71(8):827-834.