

Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Budget Estimates 2019
Health and Medical Research - Supplementary Hearing - 30 October 2019
Supplementary Questions

Questions from the Hon Mark Buttigieg MLC (on behalf of the NSW Labor Opposition)

ClinicalTrialsNSW

1. When was the ClinicalTrialsNSW Strategy developed?
 - (a) How much consultation was there on it?
 - (b) Who was consulted?
2. Who is working in the team?
 - (a) Who gets the emails that are generated from the 'Get in Touch' email on the Medical Research website?
 - (b) Why was the 'Get in Touch' email address changed from clinicaltrialsNSW@health.nsw.gov.au to MOH-OHMR@health.nsw.gov.au ?
 - i. When was it changed?
 - (c) Are they scientists?
3. How many staff are working in ClinicalTrialsNSW?
4. What is the budget for ClinicalTrialsNSW?
5. What internal plans have driven the development of ClinicalTrialsNSW?
6. When was the website updated?
 - (a) Why did it take so long?
 - (b) Was it just a coincidence that it wasn't updated until Labor started asking about it?

ANSWER

1. - 5.

ClinicaltrialsNSW is a clinical trial support unit function that sits within the Office for Health and Medical Research Strategy. It was established in 2019 to enable clinical trial capacity, capability and collaboration across NSW.

Consultation is ongoing to ensure continuing engagement of clinical trials sector stakeholders, and has included Local Health District Chief Executives, Research Directors and Clinical Trials Managers, AHRTCs, Cancer Institute NSW, Clinical Trials Directors of major pharmaceutical and medical technology companies running trials in Australia

The central email inbox is managed daily by the clinicaltrialsNSW team. The clinicaltrialsNSW team comprises management and Senior Project Officer roles, with staff having relevant qualifications. The change in address coincided with the launch of clinicaltrialsNSW Triage and Connect initiatives at the ARCS Clinical Trials Conference.

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6. (a – b)
The website was updated to coincide with the Australian Clinical Trials Association (ACTA) International Clinical Trials Conference in October 2019.
The website update was produced within the planned quarter and specifically targeted to coincide with the ACTA International Clinical Trials Conference.

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Investment in NSW Medical Research

7. How does NSW calculate the value of investment in medical research from overseas and other states from activities conducted within public organisations?
 - (a) If this information is not collected centrally by the NSW Government, who does collect it?
 - (b) How does the NSW Government manage an Office of Health and Medical Research if they don't know what the value of investment from overseas and other states is?
 - (c) How do we know that we are getting bang for our buck?
8. Why do the budget papers differ so markedly from year to year in the way that medical research funding is reported?
9. Is there a set amount of annual budget funding for the Office of Health & Medical Research?

ANSWER

7. The Clinical Trials sector in Australia supports 7000 jobs and provides access to therapies and technologies for more than 5000 participants each year. 55 per cent of trials in Australia are non-industry funded with \$775 million of public spending directed to medical technologies and pharmaceuticals (MTP) sector research and development.
 - (a) There are a number of organisations that capture investment into NSW, such as Austrade, NSW Department of Industry; Trade and Investment, and ACTA.
 - (b) The Office for Health and Medical Research is not reliant on investment from overseas or other States and therefore sets its work plan to deliver the NSW Government's investment in medical research and to support the research sector within NSW.
 - (c) The Office for Health and Medical Research evaluates its funding programs to ensure that project outcomes are being met, that they are being managed efficiently, and where appropriate, that economic returns are being captured.
8. The format of 2019-20 Budget Paper 3 differed from previous years due to machinery of government changes. Further information is available at page XI of NSW Treasury's 2019-20 Budget Paper 3.
9. Yes.

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KPIs to encourage CEOs to take advantage of NSW clinical trials

10. Who sets the KPIs for CEOs to encourage them to take advantage of clinical trials in NSW?
 - (a) How are they measured?
 - (b) How often are they measured?
11. Do CEOs receive bonuses or incentives for meeting the KPIs?
 - (a) What are they?
 - (b) How often are the KPIs reviewed?
 - (c) Who reviews the KPIs?

ANSWER

10. The Local Health District Service Agreements contain KPIs related to research.
 - (a) The Research Ethics and Governance Information System produces metrics to measure performance.
 - (b) Quarterly.
11. No. As indicated in the NSW Health Performance Framework, which is publicly available, research KPIs are set out annually in the Service Agreements. Research KPIs are reviewed quarterly by the Office for Health and Medical Research.

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Medical research into drug therapies

12. In your response to Question 311 on the Budget Estimates supplementary questions, you failed to answer the following questions. How much money is spent on the development of medical research into drug therapies?
 - (a) What percentage of the medical research budget is this?
13. What is the Government doing to encourage medical research into drug therapies?

ANSWER

12. - 13.

The NSW Health Industry Partnership PhD scholarships are specifically targeting drug development with up to \$2.5 million available in 2019. This is 2% of the current annual research budget managed by the Office for Health and Medical Research.

A number of research grant programs administered by the Office for Health and Medical Research support and encourage research into drug therapies such as the Translational Research Grants Scheme, Cardiovascular Disease Grant Program, paediatric precision medicine and early to mid-career research fellowships.

The Genomic Cancer Medicine Program, Zero Childhood Cancer, and ProCan are – ‘omics programs that use data to match patients with the most personalised drug treatments (chemotherapies).

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Biotechnology Innovation Organisation

14. Is the Minister for Health and Medical Research attending Biotechnology Innovation Organisation Convention in San Diego, California in 2020?
 - (a) If not, why not?
 - (b) It's the world's largest biotech trade association. If NSW is not going, how are we engaging with leading biotech and medical researchers?
 - (c) Is the Minister aware that Premiers from other states go to this Convention to help promote their state for clinical research?
 - (d) Has the Minister discussed attendance at this convention with the Premier or any other Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries?
15. On the Department of Industry website it advises that the 'NSW Government is supporting a delegation to the 2019 BIO International Convention in Philadelphia, US 3-6 June'. Who attended as part of the NSW delegation?
 - (a) What was the cost of supporting the delegation?
 - (b) Where was this funded from?

ANSWER

14. (a – d)
The Minister's travel plans for 2020 are not yet confirmed, however it is expected that the NSW Government will be represented at BIO2020.
15. 30 NSW companies attended the BIO Convention as part of the NSW delegation, of which a selection were provided with financial support from the NSW Government as determined by a competitive process. The funding came equally from the NSW Ministry of Health and the NSW Department of Industry.

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PhD Scholarship Funding

16. In your responses to Question 329 on the Budget Estimates, you only gave figures for 2017 funding of PhD Partnership Program and said that there is an active Scholarship funding round. Does that mean that there were no PhD's allocated in 2018?
- (a) If not, why not?
 - (b) If there were no grants allocated in 2018, was there money in the budget for this?
 - i. If so, what happened to it?
 - (c) Who was on the Independent Selection Panel that assessed the grants?
 - (d) What was the criteria for the panel to assess the grants?
17. We understand that it can take more than a decade from new discovery to translation, but surely there must be an estimate of the economic or health impact of research as part of the criteria?
- (a) How does the panel pick winners then?
 - (b) If not, are Scientists on the Independent Selection Panel comfortable assessing grants that they hope may be efficacious to health outcomes without actually knowing any estimates of the economic benefit?
18. Who ensures that successful grantees are able to translate their work into clinical trials?
- (a) Is there an oversight of this?
19. At the time of our questions being put to your Department after the budget estimates hearing, we saw another quick update of the website. Is the website the only place these results are published?
- (a) If so, why were they hidden before that?
 - (b) On the website it doesn't quantify what grants have received what funding from the NSW Government? Why is that?
 - (c) Don't you think taxpayers are entitled to know where their taxes are going in terms of medical research?

ANSWER

15. Yes

- (a) – (b) 2018 funding supported early to mid-career fellowships.
- (c) The Panel included members with expertise in the key skill priority areas along with clinical, health services and population health research and knowledge translation.
- (d) Criteria:
 - 1. Skills Development Plan (SDP) (40%)
 - a) Development of a well-articulated SDP
 - b) Focused on acquisition of skills in priority areas
 - 2. Research Proposal (30%)

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- a) Focus on novel and relevant research
 - b) Supports knowledge translation into the health system
 - c) The extent to which the project supports research translation and knowledge dissemination.
3. Host University, Partner Organisation and Supervision (30%)
- a) Provision of an appropriate Academic Supervisor with suitable track record relevant to the PhD research area.
 - b) Extent to which the Host University supports the skill development of the candidate including both degree completion and any skills development separate from their thesis research
 - c) A relevant Partner Organisation supports the project and the PhD candidate
 - d) Engagement with a Health Practitioner/Policy Supervisor.
17. Applicants are ranked based on the average of the two assessor's scores against the selection criteria. When the assessor's scores for an application have a difference greater than 20, applications were reviewed and scored by a third assessor. Applicants were ranked based on their average score.
18. The ministry reviews regular reports to support and encourage the translation of research. The PhD candidates have a supervisor from their host university allocated to oversee the success of the research being undertaken.
19. No.
- (a) Results are published on the website which was launched in August 2018.
 - (b) - (c) This information is reported in the NSW Health Annual Report

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Ten-year Strategic Plan for Medical Research from 2012

20. One of the recommendations from the NSW Health and Medical Research Strategic Review in 2012 was to establish an Implementation Committee and resourcing the Office for Medical Research to drive implementation.
- (a) Has an Implementation Committee been established?
 - i. If not why not?
 - (b) Who is on the committee?
 - i. How were committee members selected?
 - ii. Was there a formal expression of interest?
 - (c) Are members remunerated?
 - i. If so, how much?
 - ii. What budget are they remunerated from?
 - (d) Who chairs the committee?
 - (e) How often does it meet?
 - (f) When is the next meeting of the Committee?
 - (g) Please provide the dates and locations for all previous meetings
 - (h) Are minutes publically available?
21. Have resources for the Office for Medical Research been increased?
 - (a) Please provide the resources provided for each financial year from 2011-2019.
22. Have key performance indicators been established?
 - (a) If so, what are they?
 - (b) Are they available publically?
23. Ten years is a short time in research, what plans are on foot to move the strategy forward over the next ten years?

ANSWER

20. (a) – (h)

An implementation committee was not in the Government Response to the Strategic Review. The Government response provided for the Office for Health and Medical Research to be responsible for the implementation of the Strategic Review and ensure a high level of engagement with the sector.

The Office for Health and Medical Research facilitates and participates in a number of governance and stakeholder committees on a regular and as-need basis. For example, regular discussions are held with the University Deputy Vice-Chancellors of Research, Local Health District Chief Executives and Advanced Health Research Translation Centres. Collaboration with the sector is important in setting the direction of the programs of work, and provides an opportunity to communicate with the sector.

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21. Yes

(a)

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
\$36.8m	\$50.4m	\$47.4m	\$53.4m	\$78.65m	\$80.85m	\$80.85m	\$104.5m	\$108m

22. Yes

(a) Ethics and governance approval times for research applications to human research ethics committees and all senior executive staff within OHMR have KPIs in their performance agreements to ensure that programs are delivered on budget and time.

(b) Ethics and governance approval times are publicly available.

23. The strategic approach to health and medical research is continually being reviewed in order to respond to opportunities such as the Medical Research Future Fund and emerging NSW research strengths.

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NSW Regional Health Partners

24. What is the relationship between the NSW Government and the NSW Regional Health Partners?
25. Does the NSW Government provide funding to the NSW RHPs?
 - (a) What funding is provided and what is it used for?
26. What is the relationship between the NSW Government and the NSW Regional Health Partners?
27. Does the NSW Government provide funding to the NSW RHPs?
28. What funding is provided and what is it used for?

ANSWER

24. and 26.

NSW Government engages with, and consults all of the NSW National Health and Medical Research Council's advanced health and research translation centres and centres for regional health including the NSW Regional Health Partners.

25. and 27.

Yes

25(a). and 28.

NSW Health provided administration funding of \$100,000 to promote the following strategic objectives:

- facilitating research and promoting state-wide collaboration
- embedding research, research findings and evidence into clinical practice and health service policy and decision making
- encouraging engagement, knowledge transfer, equipment sharing and collaboration among clinicians, researchers, commercial companies, health services and other key stakeholders including patients
- driving research for evidence-based innovation in areas such as clinical practice and new treatments
- supporting research culture and capability in Local Health Districts through participation in activities to embed quality research into local health districts.

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NSW Medical Technology Industry Development Strategy – (Q19/442)

29. Which stakeholders were consulted in the drafting of the NSW Medical Technology Industry Development Strategy?
30. Why was the Australian Association of Medical Research Institutes not consulted?
31. What process for drafting the strategy was undertaken?
32. How much time did stakeholders have to consider the draft strategy?
33. How much will the strategy cost?
 - (a) How is it funded?
 - (b) What Departments?
 - (c) What time frame is it funded for?
 - (d) When will the strategy end?
34. Will there be an implementation committee for oversight?
 - (a) Who will be on the committee?
 - (b) Who will appoint them?
 - (c) When will their terms commence?

ANSWER

The NSW Medical Technology Industry Development Strategy drafting, consultation process and implementation was the responsibility of the Department of Industry (now NSW Treasury – Industry Development Branch) and as such this question should be referred accordingly. NSW Health was consulted on recommendations pertinent to its activities as part of this process.