



GSK Australia Submission: Australia's draft National Science and Research Priorities

GSK Australia welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Government's consultation on Australia's draft National Science and Research Priorities (the Priorities). We applaud the prioritisation of "healthy and thriving communities" and recognition of the important role preventive health has in achieving objectives and aims associated with it.

GSK supports the Priorities proposed.

This submission highlights actions to strengthen the suggested Priorities by recognising:

- Investment is essential for Australia to lead on preventive health.
- The value of clinical trials to Australia's health, research ecosystem and economy.
- Antimicrobial resistance as an area of critical research.

Investment is essential for Australia to lead on preventive health

Health is one of the cornerstones of a successful society. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the clear link between the health of the population and the health of the economy. As such, "Priority 2: Supporting healthy and thriving communities" will have a positive impact across all Priorities.

GSK welcomes the ambition for Australia to lead on preventive health. Achieving this objective would also support the other objectives around healthy communities and equitable access to healthcare. In addition, preventive health is key to manage government spending, as the Intergenerational Report predicts Australia's ageing population to account for 40% of the projected increase in government expenditure from 2022-2023 to 2062-2063.¹

However, Australia is underinvesting in preventive health. Australia allocates just 1.8% of its total healthcare expenditure to preventive health, whereas in the UK, the allocation is 3.7%, and in Canada, it stands at 5.9%.²

GSK also supports "equitable access to care" being an objective under Priority 2. As highlighted in the consultation, not all access to health care is equal. Lower socioeconomic groups have a far greater share of comorbidities and much lower life expectancy.³ Australians living in regional and remote communities have the highest rates of ill health compared to those living in major cities.⁴ In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have 2.3 times increased burden of disease compared to non-indigenous Australians.⁵

To meet the Objectives of Priority 2, a range of multidisciplinary and multisector activities are required. The Government has a key role in leading these activities in partnership with consumers, industry, technical experts in economics and social policy, and healthcare professionals. It is important to develop a whole-of-system understanding on the value of preventive health. While more investment is essential for Australia to lead on preventive health, more work is also required to ensure impactful investment decisions.



The Value of clinical trials to Australia's health, research ecosystem and economy

Australia's draft Priorities has a role in embedding recognition of the value of clinical trials.

Clinical trials build an innovative economy and improve the health of Australians. They also support the growth of a stronger research ecosystem and contribute to increased productivity. Every \$1 invested in clinician-driven clinical trials in Australia delivers benefits of \$5.80.⁶

Currently, Australia's clinical trials landscape is fragmented. The establishment of a National One Stop Shop and National Clinical Trials Front Door is essential to protect the existing clinical trial sector and maximise its potential and investments. These initiatives will harmonise clinical trial infrastructure, responsibility and governance nationally and boost Australia's global competitiveness as a clinical trials destination. However, this harmonisation hinges on stable support and commitment by all states and territories.

To remain competitive over time, the One Stop Shop and the Front Door will also need to be continually funded and reviewed against the needs of the clinical trials sector and the changing international environment.

Building on delivering clinical trials, translation of trial outcomes into practice and commercialisation are essential to maximising the impact of the Priorities. It's important this document acknowledges that for Australia to deliver on the objectives of the Priorities, better systems must be in place to support the discoveries.

For example, the route to public reimbursement for biotechnologies and medicines is lengthy. It currently takes an average of 1375 days from the time a vaccine is approved for use in Australia to it being listed on the National Immunisation Program (NIP).⁷

The ability to commercialise research in a timely manner is one of the considerations multinational companies make when considering where to conduct clinical trials. A fast route to reimbursement for biotechnologies and medicines that have been trialled domestically could boost Australia's ability to meet the objective of "Priority 3: Harness emerging technologies at scale" whilst also attracting multinational companies to conduct late-stage trials nationally.

Antimicrobial resistance an area of critical research

Antimicrobial resistance is a critical area of research for Australia to deliver on the Priorities.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when previously effective drugs no longer work on infections. Multi-drug-resistant bacteria (often called "superbugs") are commonly associated with hospitals but are in the community as well. These include pneumonia, sepsis, gonorrhoea and MRSA ("golden staph"). Drivers of AMR include overuse or misuse of antibiotics for people and animals, poor hygiene, lack of infection control and global travel.⁸ It is estimated that more than 1000 Australians die annually from AMR.⁹

Novel models to support antibiotic development are being explored globally and the need for research in this area has been recognised locally. In 2021, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport recommended that Federal, state and territory governments "develop and implement a pilot scheme for value-based payments for new antimicrobial drugs". This area is also being considered by the independent Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Policy and Methods Review underway.

New antimicrobials are hard to bring to market. They are generally kept "in reserve" for highly resistant infections and may be used very little, yet still cost large sums to develop and take through clinical trials. This means that there are few commercial incentives for biopharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to invest in the research and development of novel antimicrobial medicines.

AMR is a multidisciplinary and multisector problem and Government incentives are required to support better stewardship, and research and development of new antimicrobial drugs.

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GSK Submission – 28 September 2023



About GSK

GSK is a biopharma company with the ambition and purpose to unite science, technology, and talent to get ahead of disease together. We aim to impact the health of 2.5 billion people over the next 10 years.

At the centre of this is our R&D focus on the science of the immune system, human genetics and advanced technologies, and our world leading capabilities in vaccine and medicines development. In Australia, we offer a broad portfolio of innovative and established vaccines and medicines in respiratory disease, HIV, and oncology.

Our vaccines have been at the heart of the Australian National Immunisation Program from the time it began, helping to protect infants and children from multiple serious diseases. Beyond childhood, our vaccines help to protect Australians throughout life whether at home or travelling overseas.

Across the country, we employ approximately 500 Australians in many areas of expertise from graduates to senior managers. We have committed to accelerate our progress on inclusion and diversity and seek to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to reconciliation in Australia.

We have ambitious environmental sustainability goals in both climate and nature: aiming to have a net zero impact on climate by 2030 and a net positive impact on nature by 2030.

For further information please visit au.gsk.com.

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- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid, p.8.
- ⁵ Ibid, p. 11.
- ⁶ Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare. 2017. "Clinical trials pay off for safety, quality and the economy": <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/about-us/latest-news/media-releases/clinical-trials-pay-safety-quality-and-economy>
- ⁷ GSK Australia. "Risk to Resilience", p. 5.
- ⁸ Australian Government. 2022. "What causes AMR?". Fact sheet, available at <https://www.amr.gov.au/about-amr/what-causes-amr>
- ⁹ Wozniak et al. 2022 (1). "Disease burden, associated mortality and economic impact of antimicrobial resistant infections in Australia". *The Lancet Regional Health Western Pacific*, 2022 Jul 7; 27:100521.