

**THURSDAY 14 JUNE 2018**

## Long-term funding for independent research organisations brings major gains to health sector

A robust review of independent research organisations (IROs) receiving funding from the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) has driven home the benefits of long-term stable funding.

The mid-term review that's just taken place was part of a seven-year funding agreement between the HRC and four of New Zealand's IROs. These are organisations that exist outside of the Crown Research Institute and university sector, but are recognised by the government for doing work that's nationally significant and deserving of more stable funding.

The agreement began in 2014 when \$27 million in total was granted across four organisations: the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research (Wellington), Medical Research Institute of New Zealand (Wellington), Te Atawhai o te Ao: Independent Maori Institute for Environment & Health (Whanganui), and Whakauae Research Services (Whanganui).

As a result of the recent review, the HRC has just released another tranche of funding – \$17 million across the four organisations – in recognition not only of their achievements to date, but also their plans for the next three years which will uniquely contribute to the strategic priorities of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy. That brings the HRC's total funding to nearly \$45 million.

The HRC's senior research investment manager, Lucy Pomeroy, and senior manager of Māori health research investment, Mr Stacey Pene, managed the review process which involved four external review panels who conducted site visits and reviewed research and organisational performance as well as future strategic plans.

"All the panels were confident that the work planned over the next three years represents investment in excellent health research and directly contributes to a vibrant health research environment," says Mr Pene.

"These IROs are making major health, economic, social and environmental contributions to New Zealand, in excess of that derived from their funding."

What also stood out from the reviews was the difference that long-term stable funding makes, says Mr Pene.

“It’s enabled researchers within these organisations to extend their research plans and goals, secure patents and get published in high-impact journals,” he says.

“The spin-offs from long-term funding have touched every aspect of these organisations’ work – leading to linkages with clinicians, health providers, policy makers, community groups and industry, and enabling a diverse workforce within the health sector to grapple with a wide range of complex challenges in contemporary New Zealand society.”

Importantly, each IRO has been able to demonstrate how their work, underpinned by outstanding research, has contributed to improving the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

“We’re very happy that HRC investment in these organisations has added value to the research sector and beyond.”

Below are the funding amounts granted to IROs by the Health Research Council:

**Malaghan Institute of Medical Research**

\$14,244,000 awarded in June 2014 for the first four years  
\$10,683,000 awarded in June 2018 for the next three years

**Medical Research Institute of New Zealand**

\$6,804,000 awarded in June 2014 for the first four years  
\$1,701,000 awarded in June 2018 for the next three years

**Te Atawhai o te Ao: Independent Māori Institute for Environment and Health**

\$3,784,000 awarded in June 2014 for the first four years  
\$2,838,000 awarded in June 2018 for the next three years

**Whakauae Research Services Limited**

\$2,800,000 awarded in June 2014 for the first four years  
\$2,100,000 awarded in June 2018 for the next three years.

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**Background information:**

In 2011, the Government decided that long-term funding arrangements of up to seven years would be available to research organisations outside of the Crown Research Institute sector that hold significant research capabilities supporting national outcomes in areas of government priority. The Health Research Council responded to this requirement through the development of the *Capability in Independent Research Organisations Fund*.

In 2014, after releasing a Call for Applications for IRO capability funding, the HRC approved funding for four applications, each for a period of seven years.

The total commitment was \$44.95 million, with an initial investment in Years 1-4 of \$27.6 million, followed by an investment in Years 5-7 of \$17.3 million, conditional on the outcome of a review in Year 4, which has now been completed.

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