Frequently Asked Questions

The South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

Why does South Australia need a new health and medical research institute?

Although South Australia has a proud history of excellence in health and medical research, the share of national research grants awarded to South Australia is declining, with a major factor being the erosion of research infrastructure as cost pressures on universities and hospitals increase.

The establishment of an independent South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) will contribute to the State’s research capacity and status by building the reputation of its hospitals and universities, thereby attracting Australian and international researchers. The SAHMRI will have the potential to provide benefits to the health of South Australia’s population (and more widely) by providing capacity to respond to new and emerging health challenges.

Research conducted under the banner of the SAHMRI will foster innovation and improvements in health services, including primary health care and public health initiatives, leading to improved health outcomes for the whole community.

Has the Government consulted widely with the South Australian research community?

The South Australian Government commissioned a Review of Health and Medical Research in South Australia. This review (released in May 2008) was conducted by Professor John Shine AO and Mr Alan Young and included extensive consultation with hospital, university and government stakeholders.

The Shine Young review made three key recommendations aimed at supporting the strategic directions for health and medical research in South Australia:

> Establish an independent health and medical research institute;
> House the health and medical research institute in a new “flagship” research facility; and
> Build and maintain a health and medical research fund.

SA Health is coordinating the implementation of the recommendations from the Shine Young review in close collaboration with current South Australian research facilities, universities and the research community.

What research will the SAHMRI undertake?

The research undertaken by the SAHMRI will be based entirely on research excellence. Although the scope for research to be undertaken will be based around the “four pillars” of research supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC); basic research, clinical research, public health research and health systems research, it is anticipated that the SAHMRI will focus on a small number of research themes.

A detailed research strategy to support and complement current research activities within South Australia will be developed following appointment of the SAHMRI Director in early 2010.

Will the SAHMRI impact on funding allocation for other research organisations within South Australia?

The SAHMRI will work in partnership with other South Australian research facilities to ensure that the overall research funding allocated to South Australia increases.

Some national funding sources are currently only available to independent institutes, meaning that South Australia does not receive its share of national funding. Having an independent research institute based in South Australia to facilitate research collaborations and raise the international profile of research will increase funding and potentially benefit all South Australian research facilities.

The South Australian Health and Medical Research Fund (currently held by SA Health) will be used exclusively to support the activities of the SAHMRI.
Will the research community have input into the development of the SAHMRI?

SA Health is working closely with South Australia’s research organisations to ensure they are actively involved in the development of the SAHMRI.

Individuals from across various SA research organisations and SA Government departments have participated in project workshops and the major research organisations are represented on several working groups involved in the project.

What is SA Health’s role in the project?

The Minister of Health and SA Health are championing the development of the SAHMRI. The Research Reform Implementation Unit is responsible for the set-up of the SAHMRI and the Health and Medical Research Fund, while SA Health’s Major Projects Office is responsible for the development and delivery of the ‘Flagship’ Research Facility that will house the SAHMRI headquarters.

The project is also being supported under the Federal Government’s nation-building Health and Hospitals Fund, which is building health infrastructure for the 21st century, while also creating employment opportunities.

How will the governance structure of SAHMRI be determined?

The governance structure of SAHMRI is currently being determined and SA Health is working closely with key stakeholders, including representatives from all major research facilities in South Australia.

It is likely that the SAHMRI will be established under the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001, and a draft SAHMRI constitution is under development.

What will be the intellectual property arrangements in relation to the SAHMRI?

A working group that includes representatives from the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia, as well as SA Pathology and the Women’s and Children’s Health Research Institute has been formed to work through the issues around IP and commercialisation. The outcome of this work will provide recommendations in regards to the SAHMRI IP Policy and how to assist the commercialisation of IP.

Why would researchers be attracted to the SAHMRI?

The SAHMRI will attract highly skilled local and international researchers, driven by the desire to be part of a new vibrant research centre, providing the very latest in research technology and infrastructure. This will deliver research excellence that will foster innovation leading to improvements in health services.

When will the SAHMRI be operational?

The inaugural SAHMRI Board will be appointed in late 2009, followed by the first SAHMRI Director in early 2010.

For the first three years (2010 to 2012), the SAHMRI will focus on development of a research strategy and the recruitment of staff, as well as the development of strategic linkages and collaborations. Upon the completion of the SAHMRI facility by end 2012, the SAHMRI will operate from its new headquarters adjacent to the new Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Where will the SAHMRI Facility be located?

The SAHMRI ‘Flagship’ Research Facility will be located in a new purpose built research facility next to the new Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Will the SAHMRI partner with other research facilities in South Australia?

The SAHMRI will interface with a number of existing sites within the metropolitan area of Adelaide. These sites will be known as “nodes” of the Institute.
When will the new Royal Adelaide Hospital be completed and how will this impact on the SAHMRI?

The new Royal Adelaide Hospital, located in the city’s west end is expected to be completed in 2016. The ‘Flagship’ Research Facility (SAHMRI headquarters) will be built adjacent to the new Royal Adelaide Hospital and will be the first building to be completed within the new health and medical precinct.

The SAHMRI Facility will be integrated with the new hospital, co-locating practitioners, patients, students and researchers in an industry-leading health and medical precinct.

The co-location of research and hospital services will create synergies between researchers and care providers, integrating health and medical research and contributing to attracting and retaining key researchers to South Australia.

The interface between the SAHMRI and the new Royal Adelaide Hospital is a significant element of the two projects and is being addressed as part of both new developments. This will ensure consistency between the hospital, the SAHMRI Facility and the broader site.

The new Royal Adelaide Hospital will be the most modern hospital in Australia and will, amongst its many roles, provide facilities that allow clinicians to maximise teaching and research opportunities. Similarly, the SAHMRI will be the most modern facility of its type in Australia.

The co-location with the new Royal Adelaide Hospital will strengthen the links between research and clinical care, providing enhanced opportunities for improved disease management and illness prevention.

What is the timeline for the design and construction of the new Research Facility?

A robust delivery program has been developed to enable rapid delivery of the SAHMRI Facility.

- Market engagement (including appointment of an integrated design team and associated advisors) in Sept 2009.
- Concept design complete (will include a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process) by Oct/Nov 2009
- Work to begin on site in Feb/March 2010.
- SAHMRI Facility completed by the end of 2012.

How can I be kept up to date?