

## Media Release

14 August 2015

### Research Scholarships to Deliver Healthy Outcomes

Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA) today welcomed the announcement of three new complementary medicine scholarships by the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) in partnership with the Blackmores Institute, with the aim of further building on the research base for nutritional and herbal medicines to better inform and guide clinicians, health professionals, policy makers and consumers.

“This is welcome, positive news, following a week of announcements that highlight the less-than-ideal state of our country’s health and nutritional habits. New statistics show that half of all Australians have at least one chronic disease, and the CSIRO has given our collective diet a “dismal” rating of 61 out of 100 against the Australian Dietary Guidelines, or in other words a poor C,” said Mr Carl Gibson, chief executive officer of CMA.

“The conduct of high-quality research in relation to the use of complementary medicines for primary and secondary prevention of illness is undoubtedly in the public interest, as is encouraging and empowering all Australians to take better care of their health.”

“We are fortunate to have an exceptionally high standard of expertise within the Australian complementary medicine research sector. Australia has the capacity to continue to make a world-class contribution to rigorous complementary medicines research, to inform practice and to impact the growing disease burden,” said Mr Gibson.

“The cost-effective prevention and treatment of chronic disease is an increasing challenge for the Australian health system, and to date the inclusion of complementary medicines in health policy debate has been lacking. A number of complementary medicines have already been shown to have good evidence of effectiveness and to offer cost savings for the treatment of chronic health conditions. St John’s wort, for example, has been shown to be cheaper than current antidepressants and may suit some patients more than pharmaceutical therapy.”

“An additional welcome announcement this week was the successful passage of the Government’s legislation to establish its Medical Research Future Fund to support research that enables medical innovations and improves the health of Australians. However, preventive health is an essential move towards improving the cost-effectiveness of the Australian healthcare system and crucial in taking pressure off over-stretched hospitals.”

“The Future Fund underscores the Government’s commitment to research, and ideally a large focus will be directed towards preventive health measures as an important element of the broader health improvements for Australians.”

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