

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 9 March 2018

Cancer Council welcomes new support for low survival cancers

Cancer Council Australia has welcomed the Federal Government's \$10 million investment into research for low survival cancers and diseases.

The new research funding was announced today by the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt. Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO, Cancer Council Australia said that previous analysis of Australia's research investment by Cancer Australia has shown that low survival cancers, such as lung and pancreatic cancer, receive proportionally less research funding than cancers with higher than average survival.

"While overall cancer survival rates are improving, improvements in prognosis are not being seen across all cancer types. For instance, lung cancer is our biggest cancer killer, causing more than double the number of deaths than bowel cancer, which is second on the mortality list. Yet it ranks around tenth on the list of tumour types by joint research investment. "Five-year lung cancer survival is only 16 percent and is even lower among disadvantaged populations like Indigenous Australians. This is in stark contrast to the overall 68 percent survival rate for all cancers."

Professor Aranda said she hoped the announcement would attract high-quality grant applications that would help drive a shift towards priority-research funding, including in clinical trials.

"Clinical trials are a critical way to test new and innovative cancer treatments before they are offered to cancer patients and reimbursed by Government. A lack of research demonstrating effectiveness restricts approval processes for new treatments."

Professor Aranda said that there was great potential for the Medical Research Future Fund to change Australia's approach to cancer research, but more research into health services was also needed.

"The Medical Research Future Fund is a critical addition to Australia's current research investment, allowing stronger priority setting in areas where there is the greatest need, the biggest disease burden, and the biggest inequalities.

"In addition to investment in new clinical research, Cancer Council encourages Government to also address health services research to ensure that our health system is designed to enable every patient to access best cancer outcomes regardless of capacity to pay or geographical location. This is important because we know the poorest among us are 30 percent more likely to die after a cancer diagnosis, than the richest."

For media enquiries please contact the Cancer Council Australia Media Team on (02) 8063 4109 (this number is monitored inside and outside of business hours) or media@cancer.org.au