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Dr Robin Olds
Chief Executive
Health Research Council
PO Box 5541,
Wellesley Street
AUCKLAND 1141

Kia ora

HRC Consultation on Targeted Investment Streams for Annual Funding Round

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation welcomes the opportunity to comment on five additional draft Targeted Investment Streams (TIS):

- Foundations for Advances in Health Research;
- Managing Chronic Conditions;
- Improved Outcomes for Mental Health and Neurological Disorders;
- Rangahau Hauora Māori; and
- Enhancing Health and Wellbeing

which, together with the Research for New Zealand Health Delivery TIS will provide the framework for the Health Research Council's (HRC) investment in future annual funding rounds.

NZNO is the leading professional body of nurses and nursing union in Aotearoa New Zealand, representing over 44 000 nurses, midwives and allied health workers. We have consulted widely with staff, members and our 23 specialist Colleges and Sections, in particular the Nursing Research Section, Te Runanga o Aotearoa, and NZNO's professional nursing, policy and research advisers.

NZNO congratulates the HRC for this concise and well focused document, which gives direction without being prescriptive and indirectly acknowledges that inequity is a key driver of health disparities. We support the emphasis on health equity in all five streams and believe these proposals are a significant improvement on past funding streams.

Nursing research has a somewhat short academic provenance in comparison with other disciplines, a distinct disadvantage in today's Peer Based Research Funding environment; yet the quality of nursing, as distinct from medicine, dramatically affects health outcomes, both for individuals and across populations. Nurses comprise over half of the regulated health workforce and work in virtually every health setting in Aotearoa, providing round-the clock physical, emotional and technical care, constant surveillance and emergency response. The comparatively minor research focus on nursing, and nurses' limited engagement in research, certainly suggests that there is potential for research to inform more effective ways of utilising the nursing workforce to maximize the efficiency and quality of health services. These proposals offer a real incentive for nurses to become more active in the research field and should provide opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, which will improve research quality and outcomes. We suggest that a dedicated funding stream for nursing research would be an excellent strategic investment and strongly advise the inclusion of nurse researchers on funding panels.

NZNO welcomes the primary health focus of the proposed additional investment streams; we believe the HRC has correctly identified research areas where the most direct and significant benefits are to be gained – chronic care, mental health, Māori health disparities and health promotion – and we strongly support having a open-ended investment stream (Foundations for Advances in Health Research) to nurture innovation and improved practice. It is vital that research actually informs and changes practice. We suggest that Aged Care should also be considered as a priority area of research. We note that no age groups are specified in the proposals,

but that aging is a significant health issue, albeit currently receiving comprehensive international attention.

While NZNO funds and produces research of utility to the professional development and design of the nursing workforce (for example the experiences of migrant nurses, employment and morale of registered nurses, and the training and activity of health care assistants in aged care), there is still a requirement for appropriate independent funding to support:

- workforce planning;
- evaluation of productivity initiatives;
- significant changes to nursing models of care; and
- the introduction of new cadres of health care workers

to name but a few of the potential topics of relevance to nursing, which, as we have pointed out, has a profound effect on health outcomes.

Though the proposals are not heavily detailed, we believe the information given in the appendices is generally adequate for the purpose. However, we suggest there could be more specific parameters set around outcomes. Since this is a somewhat new direction for HRF, and the funding streams have the potential to impact on areas where nursing has a major role, NZNO also suggests that attention be given to publicizing them in nursing arenas. (We acknowledge the excellent communication to date with nurses being aware of this document through DHBs, universities, workshops, etc.) We trust that the change from contestable to targeted research funding will facilitate more collaboration, and particularly offer opportunities for individual projects to be co-ordinated and funded through collaborative programme grants. This would reduce duplication of applications and foster networks of research excellence. The risk of new researchers being excluded from such established focal points is, we are pleased to see, partly addressed by stating that the priorities will be more important to the rankings than track record.

Finally, we would like to comment that five years is still a very short time for research, much of which is likely to be ongoing - the need for health systems research is a good example. Though it is very helpful for researchers to have a clear idea of the priorities and mechanisms for funding for the next 3-5 years, it is also somewhat unclear, even disquieting, that there is no guarantee that they will continue once allocated. Thus under the current

(pilot) stream of health systems delivery, how would a new model of care be researched if one emerged next year, for example?

We trust that the above addresses the consultation questions. We would be happy to discuss any aspect of health and/or nursing research with the HRC if further information is required. Once again thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully



Marilyn Head
Policy Analyst
Phone: 04 494 6372
Email: marilynhead@nzno.org.nz

ABOUT NZNO

NZNO is the leading professional body of nurses and nursing union in Aotearoa New Zealand, representing over 44 000 nurses, midwives, students, kaimahi hauroa and health workers on a range of employment-related and professional issues. Te Runanga o Aotearoa is the arm through which our Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership is articulated.

NZNO provides leadership, research and support for professional excellence in nursing, negotiates collective employment agreements on behalf of its members and collaborates with government and other agencies throughout the health sector. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals comprising half the health workforce.

The NZNO vision is "Freed to care, Proud to nurse". Our members enhance the health and wellbeing of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand and are united in their professional and industrial aspirations to achieve a safe, sustainable and accessible system of public health care for all New Zealanders.