National Foundation for Medical Research and Innovation

NFMRI

Australia's leading innovators announced

The National Foundation for Medical Research and Innovation (NFMRI) recently announced joint winners of the Dr John Raftos AM Award for Advancing Innovation and new 2026 grant recipients. In the presence of industry, business and research experts, successful researchers from across the country received funding to support the advancement of their innovations.

The Medal, developed in honour of Dr John Raftos AM – a leading cardiologist who served the Board and Research Advisory Committee of NFMRI between 1982 – 2007 - to celebrate the achievements of Australia's recent biomedical research innovators, entails a $50,000 prize in the form of a research grant for each recipient and was awarded to both:

- **Prof. Roger Chung from Macquarie University, and**
- **Prof. Nicholas Huntington from Monash University.**

NFMRI's CEO, Dr Noel Chambers, said *"that the shortlisted candidates were of exceptionally high calibre, each demonstrating outstanding progress and advancement of their innovations towards the community."* He noted that the Foundation's research advisory committee felt it was impossible to compare and decide between the two finalists and hence the Board made the decision to award two medals:

- one to **Professor Roger Chung**, for his successes with the development of novel therapeutics to help treat ALS/MND through spin-off company Celosia Therapeutics;
- and one to **Prof. Nicholas Huntington** for his research program into NK cells and Cytokine, which have driven meaningful progress in Audax Bioscience's early-stage oncology portfolio and have informed new immune-oncology initiatives pursued by prominent past collaborators such as Gilead Sciences.

A number of other highly innovative proposals aiming to improve the lives of many in Australia and beyond were also announced as new recipients of NFMRI research grants at today's awards event. They include:

- **Dr. Emma van der Westhuizen**, St. Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, for a new Alzheimer's disease project using small molecules
- **Prof. Hui Chen**, University of Technology Sydney for the development of a novel RNA therapy to restore or preserve cognitive function in people with dementia
- **Dr. Thomas Tapmeier**, Monash University for the development of new and improved antagonists as future treatment options for patients with endometriosis
- **Dr. Livia Carvalho**, The University of Melbourne for the expansion of their existing ocular nanoparticle platform from drug to ocular gene delivery

Dr Noel Chambers noted that innovations from both Medal recipients were rapidly advancing towards improving the lives of many vulnerable people globally and that the Foundation was excited to be able to provide nearly $1.7 million dollars in existing and new funding for research advancing medical innovations of tomorrow.

NFMRI's 2026 Funding Opportunities

Our 2026 General and Alzheimer's disease grant rounds will be opening soon. **Those wishing to invite our CEO, Dr. Noel Chambers to deliver a presentation at their institution to coincide with our upcoming rounds should complete this** enquiry form as soon as possible for Q1 2026 since

availability is very limited. Upcoming presentations will be posted on our events page here.

The presentations help researchers better understand what NFMRI and other philanthropic partners are seeking to achieve and important considerations when making a submission. The presentation also focuses on the translational pathway, research planning and strategy as well as intellectual property protection.

2026 NFMRI Funding Opportunities

1. NFMRI General and Alzheimer's Disease Grant Rounds:
Opening: Tuesday, 27 January 2026
Closing: 6pm AEDT on Friday, 27 March 2026
More information is available on our website here
Online grant round Q&A session: 12pm AEDT on Monday, 9 February 2026 - register here

2. Nomination call for 2026 Dr. John Dixon Hughes OAM Medal
The Medal will be awarded to the researcher (under the age of 45) judged to be responsible for the best biomedical innovation and development paper published, patent taken out, or commercial-in-confidence report in the previous two calendar years. Innovations include Australian research and discoveries into new medicines, vaccines, biologicals, devices, tools or diagnostics. The Medal is awarded together with a prize of $50,000 in the form of a research grant to further support the activities of the researcher.

Opening: Tuesday, 27 January 2026
Closing: 6pm AEST on Monday, 18 May 2026
More information including the nomination form can be found on our website here.

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NFMRI is pleased to release its 2024 Annual Report, which highlights the progress and impact our grantees are achieving through the support provided by NFMRI and its partners.

In 2024, NFMRI carried out an updated analysis of its strategic outcomes to date, which includes projects completed before 2022. Although a number of research projects are ongoing and expected to succeed in attracting next-step partners, an analysis of projects commencing between 2013-2022 yielded better than expected results.

Sixty-nine percent of projects supported achieved our primary measure of success in attaining next-step partners **leveraging over $14.50** of external funding for every dollar of grant funding – a total of **$59.9 million** (this excludes one project that leveraged a total of $212 million). **Five innovations** have commenced **clinical trials** and **two innovations** are delivering **benefits to the community.**

Analysis of our strategic outcomes provides evidence that what NFMRI does is reproducible and effective, irrespective of indication, disease or innovation (medicine, vaccine, biological, device or diagnostic).

Examples of our impact can be found on our website here.

Partnering with NFMRI

NFMRI is always happy to consider partnership opportunities with other foundations, trusts, organisations or individuals looking to support innovative medical research in Australia and achieve greater outcomes from their funding. We are able to work within the disease and geographic parameters of our partners to collectively support new programs focussing on translation. This can better enable academic research outcomes, discoveries and innovations to move beyond academia and attract next stage partners including government, industry and venture capital. These partners have the expertise, capability and capacity to take research to the next stage, navigate the complex regulatory and approval systems and enable access to those in the community who are in need sooner.

NFMRI focuses strictly on supporting early stage biomedical innovations (drugs, vaccines, devices, diagnostics, biologicals and tools) advancements to cross the ‘valley of death’. Our processes, systems capability and capacity have been purpose built to support a unique strategy and deliver impact by assisting publicly funded research organisations to attract next stage partners along the innovation pathway.

This strategy and support has already prevented a number of research projects from withering-on-the-vine. These projects have attracted next stage partners, secured investment and entered clinical trials across a number of diseases and innovations.

Based upon a framework of good governance, scalable systems and reproducible evidence of success, NFMRI established a targeted partnering program to assist other well-governed funders of research access our capability and capacity. Every dollar put towards our partnerships is distributed to innovative projects that meet the objectives of both NFMRI and the partner.

If your organisation would like to discuss a potential partnership further, please don't hesitate to contact Dr Noel Chambers by emailing enquiries@nfmri.org.au

Recent blog posts

- NFMRI congratulates Prof. Nicholas Opie for recent Synchron advancements providing benefits to people in need
- Are you an inventor? - Panel with Professor Robert French AC
- Research translation, the beginning starts with the end
- Considerations when applying for NFMRI support
- Research with purpose: thinking differently

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