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Science Academy welcomes biomedical research commitment

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Singapore: The Australian Academy of Science has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of the medical research grants awarded by the National Health and Medical Research Council for the coming year.

"The Academy is very pleased that Australia's excellent medical research effort will continue to be supported by the Federal Government," Academy President Professor Suzanne Cory said.

"We know that there is massive pressure to balance the Federal budget, so it is reassuring that medical research is being given the resources needed to take the work forward for the medium and long term.

"The announcement this morning by Health Minister Tanya Plibersek will ensure that many important areas of research are supported, and will encourage our nation's finest medical scientists to continue to live and work in Australia.

"The excellence of our researchers, our scientific facilities and our peer-reviewed grants systems is the best way to ensure Australia can attract and retain world-class scientists," Professor Cory said.

"The Health Minister Plibersek and Prime Minister Julia Gillard have acknowledged the value to the nation of protecting investment in medical research. This deserves warm congratulations, and the Academy looks forward to more

announcements confirming research support in Australia is secure across other portfolios."

Professor Bob Williamson, the Academy's Secretary for Science Policy, said NHMRC grants are essential because they link basic lab research to patients and the community.
"If support for the NHMRC had diminished, there would have been a real risk Australia would lose many excellent younger doctors and scientists, and the health care benefits they bring," Professor Williamson said.

"But beyond that, the grants system needs more certainty overall - longer term grants for the very best Australian scientists - because it's the consistent support of research that leads to important discoveries.

"The fields of research in which Australia is at the forefront, such as immunology or astrophysics, have been supported by the Government consistently for a decade or more.
"When the mining boom is over, it is our innovation in scientific research, engineering and innovation that will keep Australia in good economic shape: long-term support is an essential investment in Australia's future health, wellbeing and economic security."