



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

Minute

Professor Warwick Anderson  
Chief Executive Officer

Date Due: 28 February 2013

Reference Number: CBR13-00063

Contact Officer:

Contact Number:

Group Head comments:

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**LETTER FROM ACT CORONER - RESEARCH INTO MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY**

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**PURPOSE:**

For you to consider and sign a response to a letter from the ACT Coroner dated 25 January 2013.

**COMMENT:**

The Coroner has written to inform you of the tragic case of a [REDACTED] who committed suicide as a consequence of [REDACTED] suffering from Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), and has asked that any NHMRC-funded research in this area include an examination of [REDACTED]. He sent a copy of this letter to the AMA and to the DoHA CMO.


We have run a copy of the draft response past the Office of the CMO who have advised that Professor Baggoley has no comments on it.

We have also discovered that the Coroner has separately written to the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS), which issued a report in 2010 on MCS. NICNAS is currently consulting with the Office of Chemical Safety on how best to respond to the Coroner, and will provide a copy of their response when it is finalised.

The attached draft response focuses on NHMRC's responsibilities and responds to the Coroner's specific request to you.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

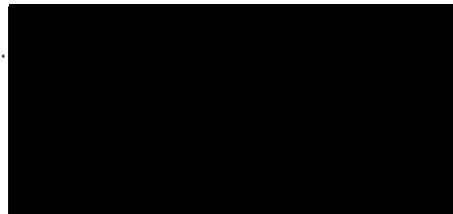
**R1** That you SIGN the attached draft correspondence.



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Virginia Hart  
Executive Director  
Research Programs

Date: 17 February 2013



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Professor Warwick Anderson  
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 17 February 2013

**R1** SIGNED/NOT SIGNED

**ATTACHMENTS:**

A. Draft reply to the ACT Coroner



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

NHMRC

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Mr Dingwall  
Coroner  
GPO Box 370  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Mr Dingwall

Thank you for your letter of 25 January 2013 concerning the recent inquest into the death of [REDACTED]

The situation you outline is truly heart-rending. Like many conditions, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity can create enormous problems for a sufferer. One of the great satisfactions that I derive from my job is to be able to provide support for research that leads to the development of new medications and medical procedures that improve the health of people and alleviates their suffering.

In 2011-12 NHMRC funded medical research to the value of some \$800 million. That money was allocated after rigorous peer review by independent medical experts assessing applications made by medical researchers. Our practice is not to direct research priorities but rather to identify research excellence from the applications received by each of the schemes we offer. The subject of research and the research methods adopted reflect the expertise and skills of individual investigators. There are always more worthwhile projects than we can fund and we believe this approach maximises the chances of success and the health benefits to be achieved from the work that we support.

An examination of our records indicates that, in the period 2000 to 2012, NHMRC has funded \$229 million of allergy research. Unfortunately that does not include any research specifically into Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. I think this reflects the importance of raising the awareness of this condition, and its consequences. Your writing to the Australian Medical Association and your willingness to share detailed information on [REDACTED] case is a useful contribution to this. I will certainly keep your offer to researchers in mind.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
Professor Warwick Anderson  
Chief Executive Officer

14 February 2013