



739-1205

**The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for Health**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PETITIONS

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

27/5/2013

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter on 18 March 2013 regarding a petition calling for the House of Representatives to invest funding for research in to Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) and its accompanying illness Multi Chemical Sensitivities (MCS).

As you may be aware, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is the Australian Government's leading health and medical research funding body. The NHMRC invests in research support through a variety of mechanisms including investigator-initiated research projects, broad programs of research and people support schemes targeted towards supporting health and medical research for the Australian community.

The NHMRC considers approximately 4,000 applications for research funding each year and over 1,000 applications for individual support from the more junior level scholarships to senior level research fellowships each year.

In all cases, the research proposals are initiated by the researchers and not predetermined by the NHMRC. These schemes are highly competitive and undergo rigorous expert peer review. Research focussed on ME/CFS has continued to be well supported by the NHMRC with over \$1.2 million invested into this area of research between 2000 and 2012.

You might be interested to know that the NHMRC awarded \$500,000 over five years (2008-12) through a Practitioner Fellowship to the University of New South Wales for research into CFS led by Professor Andrew Lloyd. Professor Lloyd has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of CFS, with his work being the first to show the prevalence and variability of CFS, its differentiation from depressive disorders, its validity and reliability as a diagnosis, the heritability of CFS, and the first substantial randomised controlled trial of immune treatments.

For individuals with this complex medical condition, the Government continues to support access to high quality medical care and medicines through subsidies provided under Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which provides funding for services delivered in hospitals and supports good primary health care.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

**Tanya Plibersek**  
28.4.13  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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