



MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **MAJOR NATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH, TRANSLATION AND IMPACT NETWORK**

Translation Research Centres nationally have come together to address priority areas for women and girls across physical and mental health, recently amplified by COVID-19, and to support career advancement for women in health and medical research.

Under the auspices of their peak body, the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA), Translation Research Centres have formed the Women's Health Research, Translation and Impact Network (WHRTN). [The Network has received funding of \\$5 million over five years from the Morrison Government, The Hon Greg Hunt MP and the Medical Research Future Fund.](#)

This national collaboration across community, health services and academic institutions will boost national and international collaboration on women's health, build health workforce capacity, develop leaders in women's health, and advance research and translation to deliver impact and better health for Australian women.

Professor Helena Teede, the current Chair of the Network, and an AHRA Council member, says there has never been a more important time to focus on women's health and on career advancement for women.

"The pandemic has seen women hit hard on many fronts, juggling the burdens of working from home whilst shouldering the main load of home-schooling and caring responsibilities, alongside greater job uncertainty from casual and part time roles. This has impacted on career progress especially in academia and in early to mid-career stages," said Professor Teede.

"Mental health concerns have also been highlighted, especially among those of reproductive age, with women who are pregnant reporting higher levels of anxiety. We are also seeing women who were planning a family delaying their plans due to COVID-19 uncertainty, new parents relatively unsupported after birth and pregnant women excluded from many COVID-19 clinical trials. Of serious concern is also the reported rise in domestic violence," said Professor Teede.

The national Steering Committee have applauded the Government's support of this network which will enable a strong collective and united voice to partner the community, health and government as well as academia, to drive, support and enable inclusive collaborative research and translation to address gaps and priorities for women.

"This initiative will change the women's health research landscape within Australia, to ensure research aligns with policy and community needs, is co-designed and delivers tangible health impact," said Professor Teede.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women researchers will be specifically supported in capacity building through integration between the WHRTN and the established AHRA Indigenous Research Network," said Karen Glover, a member of the national Steering Committee.

The network comprises leaders including internationally recognised women, across the breadth of women's health and is committed to:

- leveraging and strengthening large scale national collaborative effort to improve women's health,
- partnering, engaging, training and empowering women in priority setting, research and translation,
- building capacity in women researchers across under-represented groups, diverse disciplines and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, and
- delivering research, translation and impact in agreed priority areas.

The priority health areas align with the government's health strategy and include a focus on preconception, pregnancy, postpartum and intrapartum health, reproductive health, sexual health, healthy lifestyle, nutrition, obesity prevention, violence and abuse prevention and recovery, Indigenous health, mental health, chronic disease prevention, and healthy ageing.

The research will include clinical trials, implementation and health services and public health research and translation, with a rapid track to health impact.

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**Further information:**

**Case study:**

- Pregnant and lactating women have often been excluded from participating in clinical trials.
- The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the urgent need to include pregnant women in clinical trials in order to rapidly identify and implement effective and safe treatment options.
- 131 million women worldwide give birth annually.
- Over 300,000 women gave birth in Australia in 2019.
- Of the many clinical trials focusing on the treatment of COVID-19, very few specifically include pregnant women
- *“Pregnant women should be afforded the same autonomy offered to other adults to decide about their own participation in clinical trials.”* Professor Susan Walker, obstetrician.

**About AHRA:**

The Australian Health Research Alliance is the peak body representing Australia’s network of seven Advanced Health Research and Translation Centres (AHRTCs) and three Centres for Innovation in Regional Health (CIRHs) accredited by the National Health and Medical Research Council. AHRA provides one voice for “Better Health Through Research”.

The Centres are strongly supported by the Government and working regionally and nationally, funded by Partners, State and Federal government, with strong support through the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

[ahra.org.au](http://ahra.org.au)

Our partners engage across 95% of Australia’s academic and research teams, around 80% of its acute health services with increasing primary care and regional reach. Our Alliance includes:

- Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre
- Brisbane Diamantina Health Partners
- Researcher Wappayalawangka, Central Australian Academic Health Science Network
- Health Translation SA
- Maridulu Budyari Gumal
- Melbourne Academic Centre for Health
- NSW Regional Health Partners
- Sydney Health Partners
- Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre
- Western Australian Health Translation Network