

# MENZIES 2021

STRATEGIC PLAN



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*In the spirit of respect, Menzies School of Health Research acknowledges the people and elders of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations who are the Traditional Owners of the land and seas of Australia.*

*For the purpose of this document 'Indigenous' refers to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.*



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## WHO WE ARE:

Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes. For more than 30 years – and supported through its partnership with Charles Darwin University – Menzies has undertaken research that aims to make a difference to the lives of people throughout Australia and across the region. It is dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians, and is a global leader in tropical research into life-threatening illnesses.

## OUR VISION:

**To find enduring solutions to health problems that matter.**

## OUR PURPOSE:

**To achieve sustainable health improvements through excellence and leadership in research, education and capacity development.**

The background of the page is a photograph of a building facade. The upper portion shows a complex, geometric wooden lattice structure in shades of orange and brown. Below this is a white wall with the word "menzies" written in a large, lowercase, grey sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there are green plants.

menzies

The Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is widely recognised for its work to improve health outcomes for people in Australia and across the tropical Asia-Pacific region. In particular, its ongoing partnerships to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians are well known and highly respected.

Menzies' new strategic blueprint – **Menzies 2021** – builds on its proud history of achievement and positions the institution as:

1. **A recognised innovator and leader in Indigenous and tropical health and wellbeing;**
2. **Achieving excellence in research translation and impact; and**
3. **A strong and resilient organisation.**

**Menzies 2021** demonstrates Menzies' commitment to undertake research that is world-class, translatable, and that makes a difference to the lives of people throughout Australia and across the region. Headquartered in the Northern Territory, Menzies is a multi-site institution with world-class laboratory facilities. It is therefore optimally positioned to provide the evidence base to address the health problems that face Australia's north and the neighbouring Asia-Pacific region, as well as having the capability to manage programs nationally.

**Menzies 2021** redoubles Menzies' efforts to build and strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research workforce. This is fundamental to achieving improvements in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians today and into the future. Menzies will achieve this by strengthening health research pathways – including through Vocational Education and Training (VET), Higher Education and Higher Degree Research, as well as increasing its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and representation on its Board.

Guiding **Menzies 2021** is the goal of achieving equality in health between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. This is an urgent national priority and must be backed by ongoing, meaningful action.

## IMPACT AND EXCELLENCE STARTS HERE

Menzies' values guide and underpin its work, and are critical to making a difference to the lives of people throughout Australia and across the region:

**Quality:** we strive for excellence and rigour in everything we do.

**Integrity:** we are open, honest and transparent, and maintain the highest standards of governance, accountability and ethics.

**Relevance:** we concentrate on solving problems that matter; our work is informed by the health needs and shared priorities of the people and communities with whom we work.

**Partnerships:** we seek to partner with communities, health and other service providers, policy-makers and other researchers.

**Innovation:** we embrace new approaches and technologies.

**Communication:** we maintain an ongoing dialogue with partners, stakeholders and the local and national community during the research process, from conception through to completion and translation of results.

**Accountability:** we take responsibility for our actions and results.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:

## RECOGNISED INNOVATOR AND LEADER IN INDIGENOUS AND TROPICAL HEALTH

Menzies will ensure that its world-class and innovative research remains strongly focused on finding new solutions to achieve sustainable health improvements for people in Australia and across the Asia-Pacific region.

Menzies recognises that strategic partnerships – and its capacity to support them – are integral to the leadership it provides in Australia and across the region. This encompasses projects in more than 60 remote communities in Australia and multiple countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region.

Menzies also understands that research training, and the presence of a vibrant research student community, is critical to achieving excellence.

**Menzies 2021** aims to position Menzies as:

- An authoritative voice, presenting evidence to guide the 'Developing the North' agenda (as it relates to Indigenous and tropical health); and
- Achieving the right balance between investing in existing, high performing areas of research and new and emerging areas.

**Menzies 2021** also aims to:

- Increase Menzies' higher degree research (HDR) student numbers and completions; and
- Invest in public health course offerings, increase student numbers substantially, and work with Charles Darwin University (CDU) to implement a growth strategy.

## PRIORITY 1 BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

### Key strategies:

- To strengthen high performing health research teams through targeted resourcing, capacity building, and strategic repositioning.
- To strengthen Menzies' position as an innovative centre for research training and public health education, including pathways to research studies.

### Targets

Maintain ranking of '5' – well above world average – for the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) assessments for Field of Research, Medical and Health Science.

Implement HDR growth strategy to increase HDR student numbers by 50% by 2021 (25% of this growth will consist of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students).

Increase Higher Education student numbers (EFTSL) by 30% by 2021.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students VET completion rate of 75% for the Menzies accredited Certificate II.

## PRIORITY 2 INVESTING IN EMERGING AREAS OF RESEARCH STRENGTH

### Key strategies:

- To invest in emerging areas of research excellence to broaden scope and impact. This may include: intersectoral data-linkage, developmental health and wellbeing, genomics, a northern Australian-based clinical trials network, antimicrobial resistance, and participation in international research networks that respond to priority health issues.
- To initiate 'research horizons' planning with key stakeholders (including, but not limited to, communities, government and non-government institutions) to foster collaborations, reciprocity and respect, and forecast priority areas and key research directions.
- To undertake regular analysis of Menzies' work, including a focus on benchmarking performance and identifying emerging research methods, priorities and opportunities.

### Targets

Attract funding to establish two new research programs/centres by 2021.

## PRIORITY 3 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING ACROSS AUSTRALIA AND THE REGION

### Key strategies:

- To expand active partnership brokering – incorporating all Menzies office sites – to ensure Menzies builds and leverages its expertise, and is recognised as the preferred Indigenous, tropical and public health research provider in Australia.
- To position Menzies as an authoritative voice, presenting evidence to guide the 'Developing the North' agenda (as it relates to Indigenous and tropical health).
- To provide strong leadership to the revitalised Darwin Academic Campus and Central Australian Academic Health Science Centre.

### Targets

Ten additional joint appointments between Menzies and priority health service providers and government agencies.

Darwin Academic Campus and Central Australian Academic Health Science Centre research priorities and plan developed by 2018.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:

## EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH TRANSLATION AND IMPACT

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Menzies is widely recognised as a leading health research institution that achieves excellence in research translation and impact. This is critical to advancing its purpose of achieving sustainable health improvements for people in Australia and across the Asia-Pacific region.

Menzies welcomes the increased emphasis on promoting high quality research with impact from government, key stakeholders and the broader Australian community. **Menzies 2021** will ensure that we are strongly positioned for the Australian Research Council-led national engagement and impact assessment scheduled in 2018, which will examine how universities (including Menzies) translate research into economic, social and other benefits.

**Menzies 2021** takes a systematic approach to achieving excellence in research translation and impact by ensuring:

- Academics are equipped with the right skills, training and access to expertise;
- Effective systems are in place to capture and report on impact data; and
- The benefits of Menzies' work are communicated effectively.

**Menzies 2021** also refocuses efforts to embed research in service delivery, recognising the closer this nexus, the greater the impact.

### PRIORITY 1

#### BUILD INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITY TO MAXIMISE RESEARCH TRANSLATION AND IMPACT

##### Key strategies:

- To strengthen Menzies' staff and student expertise in research impact and translation through education, training and access to relevant expertise.
- To ensure research plans encompass strategies for translation and impact, and that systems are capable of capturing, reporting and analysing translation and impact data.
- To ensure that academic leadership, strategy and process drive high quality engagement and impact submissions for the 2018 national assessment (and subsequent assessments).
- To improve communication of Menzies' research impact and demonstrate thought leadership.

##### Targets

Achieve the highest rating for the national engagement and impact assessments for Field of Research, Medical and Health Science.

Undertake an analysis of the social and economic contribution of Menzies' work with return on investment (benefit cost ratio) > 2.7.

The delivery of a biennial national conference focusing on priorities relevant to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and/or tropical health.

### PRIORITY 2

#### EMBEDDING RESEARCH IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND PLANNING

##### Key strategies:

- To establish a joint Menzies-Government Centre to embed research in service delivery and planning to address key health and development priorities.
- To scale-up and replicate successful approaches to joint appointments with priority health service partners and governance agencies.
- To refine and strengthen Menzies' approach to relationship engagement and coordination with key partners and communities.

##### Targets

Ten additional joint appointments between Menzies and priority health service providers and government agencies – *earlier target re-stated here given relevance.*

Establish a joint Health Quality Improvement Unit with Top End Health Services by 2019.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

## ORGANISATIONALLY RESILIENT IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Menzies aspires to be a strong and resilient organisation that is flexible and adaptable enough to embrace new opportunities in a dynamic global environment.

To achieve this, Menzies must be:

- An organisation with a sustained focus on its staff, and its relationship with CDU;
- A decision-driven organisation with an ability to make important and informed decisions quickly, efficiently and consistently; and
- A financially sustainable organisation.

**Menzies 2021** outlines an ambitious and achievable agenda to foster talented and committed staff. Traditional human resources functions will be complemented by high value activities such as strategic workforce planning to benefit all staff and bridging funding for high performing academics. Specific equity considerations will also be addressed, including increasing the number, retention and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and female staff. Menzies will increase its Aboriginal and Torres Islander representation on its board and continue to work towards sustained gender equity.

**Menzies 2021** aims to build the necessary structures and ethos for effective decision making and accountability, as well as a modern fit-for-purpose approach to administration and corporate services.

**Menzies 2021** outlines a pathway to achieving long-term financial sustainability. A key focus will be to generate research-related income. In this regard, ongoing Australian Competitive Grant (ACG) success (particularly National Health and Medical Research Council) is crucial. Additionally, **Menzies 2021** will aim to diversify income streams through contract research, consultancies and philanthropic and corporate funding to respond to increased competition and the static competitive grant funding pool.

Finally, **Menzies 2021** will strengthen its working relationship with CDU for the benefit of both organisations. This includes:

- Reinvigorating the Institute of Advanced Studies at CDU – which includes Menzies – to provide opportunities to support research collaborations and share research infrastructure, as well as providing leadership and professional development for researchers and research students; and
- Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of research and corporate services.

## PRIORITY 1 STAFF AND EQUITY

### Key strategies:

- To foster talented and committed staff through strategic workforce planning, focusing on: talent recruitment and retention; career and succession planning; staff development; and cultural competency, safety and respect.
- To strengthen the Indigenous Employment Strategy to increase the number, retention and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, including at senior and executive levels.
- To implement a gender equity plan to support the progression and retention of women at Menzies, including at senior and executive levels.
- To identify bridging funding for high performing early/mid-career researchers.

### Targets

Commence implementation of workforce strategy by the first quarter of 2018.

Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in research and general staff positions by 10% FTE per annum.

Increase the percentage of female level D and E academics, so that at least 50% of level D and E academics are female, over the life of **Menzies 2021**.

## PRIORITY 2 DECISION DRIVEN AND ENHANCED WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

### Key strategies:

- To drive administration efficiencies through streamlined decision-making structures, business processes, fit-for-purpose enterprise systems and continuous quality improvement.
- To implement innovative strategies to improve inter/intra-office communications, embracing Menzies' national and international multi-site presence.

### Targets

Revised executive and committee structures implemented in 2017.

Commence implementation of research administration and corporate services improvement and resourcing plan in 2017.

>80% of employees indicate that Menzies' inter/intra office communication is effective and efficient.





## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

### ORGANISATIONALLY RESILIENT IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

#### PRIORITY 3

##### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

###### Key strategies:

- To strengthen internal enablers, including: start-up grants, performance-based allocation of funds, grant mentoring, preparation and review processes, and business plans to enhance Menzies' Brisbane and Alice Springs-based operations.
- To secure long-term funding agreements with the Northern Territory Government and CDU to realise mutual benefits.
- To operationalise the *Bridging the Gap Foundation*, streamlining engagement with Menzies' Development Team.
- To proactively plan and position Menzies for medium to longer term funding opportunities, such as the Commonwealth Government's Medical Research Future Fund and Regional Health Security Partnerships Fund.
- To strengthen business development activities to: grow consultancy research and non-research income, manage partnerships and ensure quality outputs.

###### Targets

Increase external research income by 5% per annum.

Income raised by the Development Team to reach \$8 million over the life of **Menzies 2021**.

#### PRIORITY 4

##### HARNESS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY TO REALISE MUTUAL BENEFITS

###### Key strategies:

- To secure a long-term service agreement between CDU and Menzies.
- To actively participate in the re-invigorated Institute of Advanced Studies at CDU.
- To implement Menzies-CDU shared-service projects to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of research and corporate services.

###### Targets

Revise the Memorandum of Understanding between CDU and Menzies by 2017.

Endorse a three-year CDU-Menzies shared-service strategy by 2017 (identifying priority projects, milestones and targets).





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