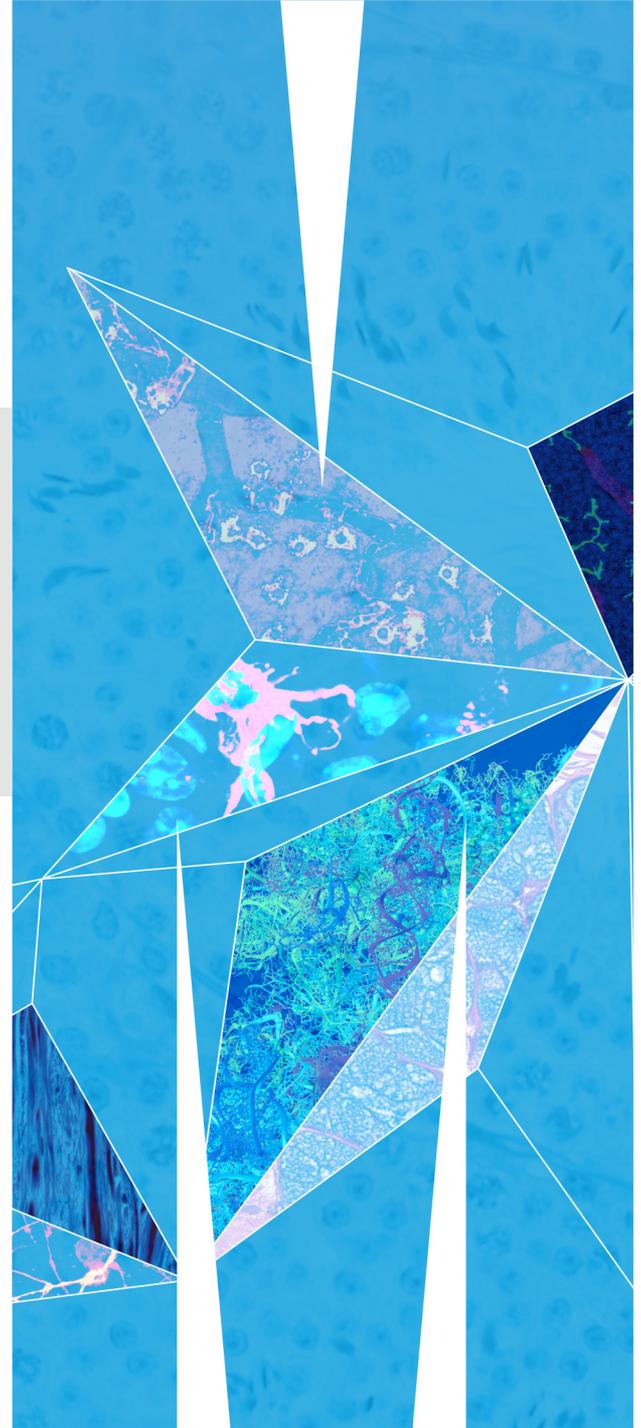


# Changes to the NHMRC funding system: implications for ECRs

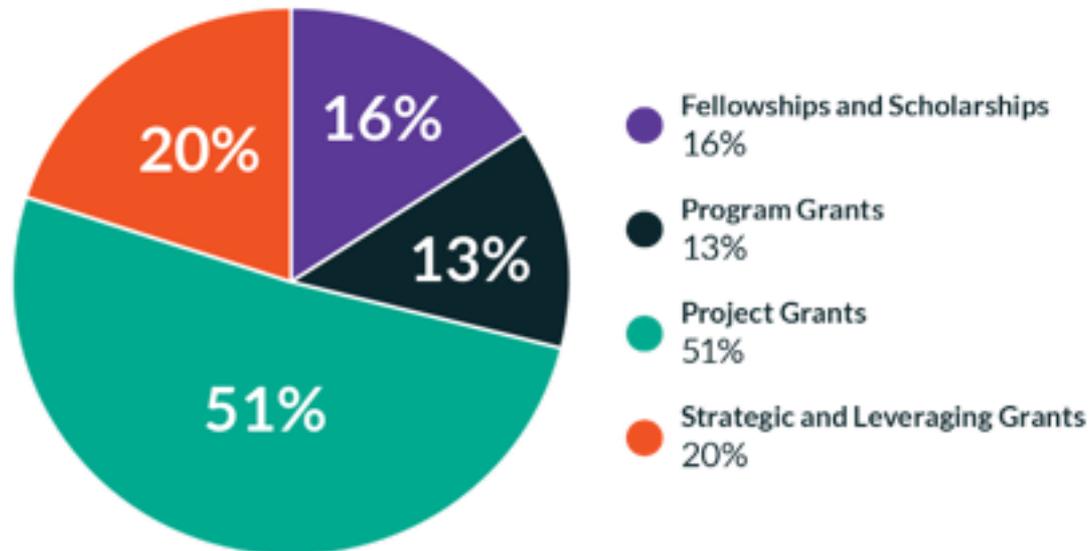
Associate Professor Zane Andrews  
NHMRC Career Development Fellow Level 2  
Head, Neural control of energy homeostasis lab

[Zane.andrews@monash.edu](mailto:Zane.andrews@monash.edu)



- Australian government's primary health and medical research funding agency
- Budget allocation = ~\$800 million

CURRENT NHMRC GRANT PROGRAM



# Why change?

- Growth in grant application numbers and costs of research main funding rates are at historical lows
  - Negative impacts
    - Significant periods of writing and reviewing grants (most unfunded)
    - Early and Mid-career researchers discouraged
    - Favour “safe” research over innovation
    - Burden of grant administration (preparing, reviewing)

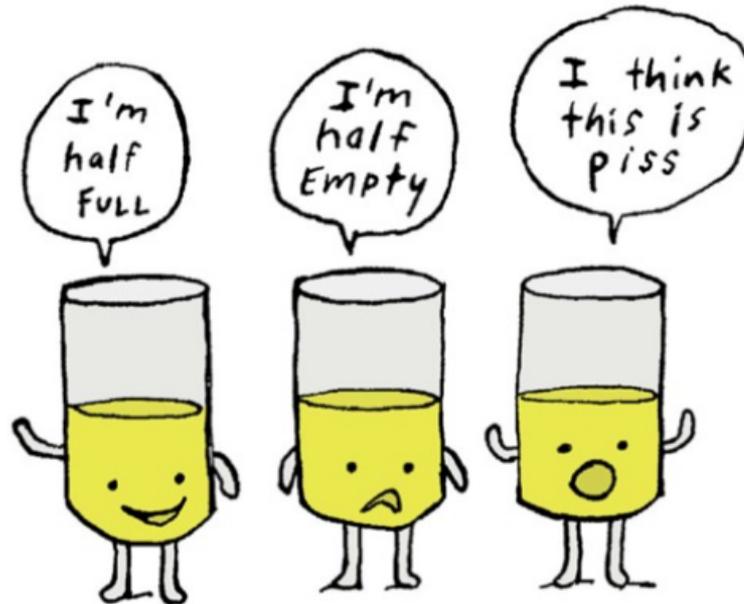


The grant writing process

# The aims.....

- Encourage creativity and innovation in research
- Provide opportunities for all career stages (ECRs and Mid-CRs)
- Minimise burden and workloads when applying

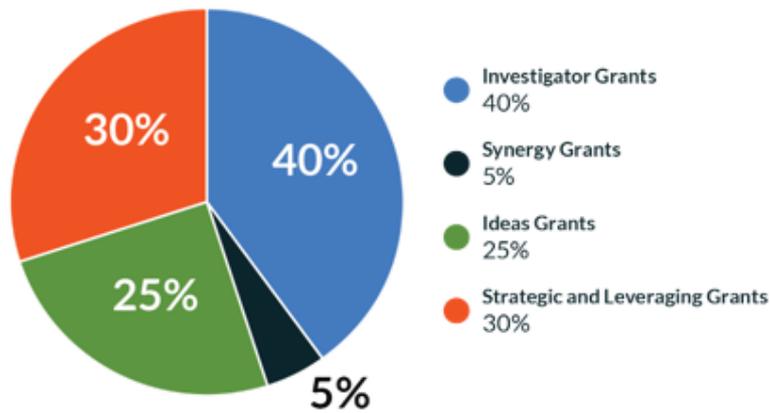
The new system  
Depends on your outlook ->



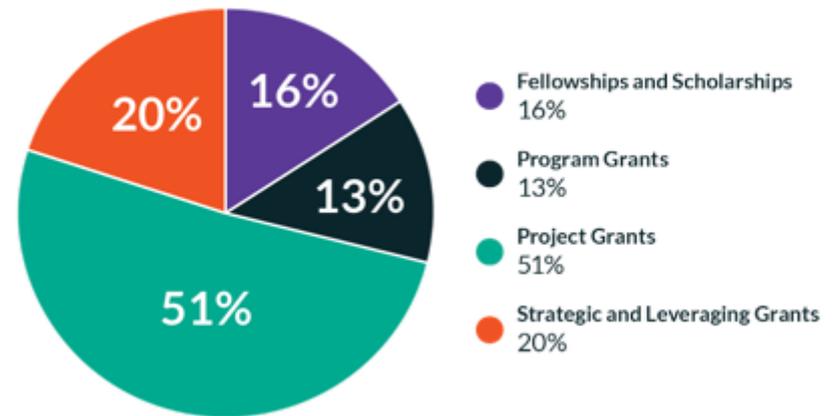
# The new system.....

- **Investigator Grants** (fellowship and research support at all career stages)
- **Synergy Grants** (\$5M for outstanding multidisciplinary research teams)
- **Ideas Grants** (Support innovative and create projects at all career levels)
- **Strategic and Leveraging Grants** (address identified national needs)

NEW NHMRC GRANT PROGRAM

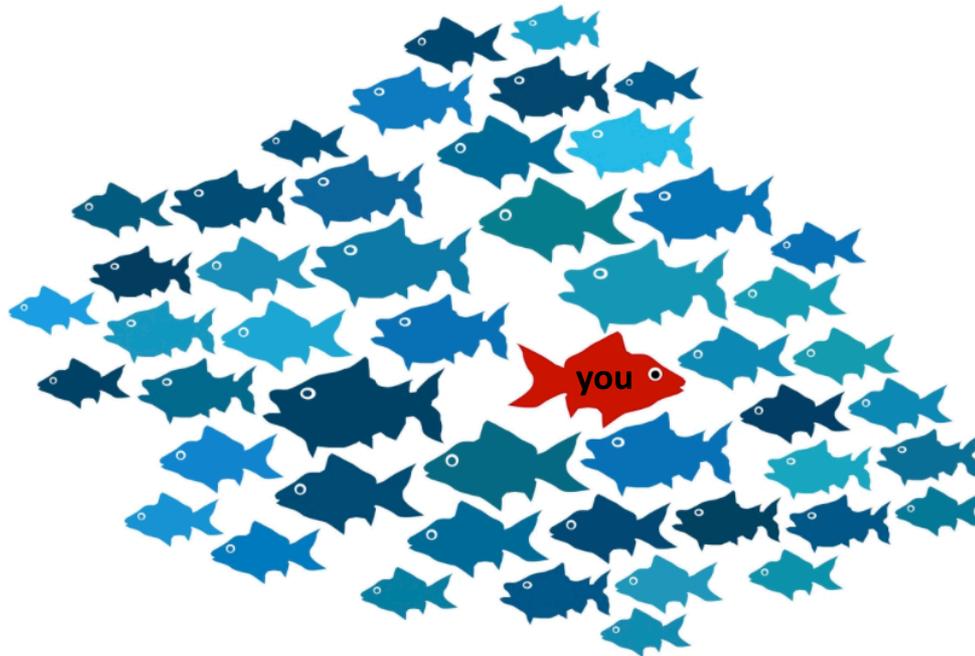


CURRENT NHMRC GRANT PROGRAM



# Investigator Grants.....

- 5 years
- Two categories
  - Emerging Leadership (EL) = NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow
  - Leadership (L) = NHMRC Leadership Fellow



# Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants...

- Restricted to <10 years post-PhD (excluding career disruption) on March 1.
- Two Levels (EL1 and EL2)

Current NHMRC Fellowship	Corresponding Investigator Grant
Senior Principal Research Fellowship Australia Fellowship	Leadership Level 3
Principal Research Fellowship Practitioner Fellowship Level 2	Leadership Level 2
Practitioner Fellowship Level 1 Senior Research Fellowship Levels A and B Career Development Fellowship Level 2	Leadership Level 1
Career Development Fellowship Levels 1 and 2 Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship	Emerging Leadership Level 2
Early Career Fellowship Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship	Emerging Leadership Level 1

# Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants...

- Research support packages

	Salary		Research Support Package	
Category	Levels	Salary	Tiers	RSP per annum
Leadership	L3	\$175,201	LT4	\$600,000
	L2	\$164,911	LT3	\$500,000
	L1	\$141,474	LT2	\$400,000
Emerging Leadership	EL2	\$107,750	LT1	\$300,000
	EL1	\$75,738	ELT2	\$200,000
			ELT1	\$50,000

RSPs for EL1 and EL2 are awarded based on seniority.

RSPs for L1–L3 are awarded based on score in like-for-like assessment, rather than seniority.

# Eligibility for previous NHMRC Fellows for Investigator Grants

Highest Investigator Grant held	EL1	EL2	L1	L2	L3
None	Eligible if <10 years post phd	Eligible if <10 years post phd	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Emerging Leadership 1 (ECF)	Ineligible	Eligible if <10 years post phd	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Emerging Leadership 2 (CDF)	Ineligible	Ineligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Leadership level 1 (SRF)	Ineligible	Ineligible	Limitations (number of terms)	Eligible	Eligible
Leadership level 2 (PRF)	Ineligible	Ineligible	Ineligible	Limitations (number of terms)	Eligible
Leadership level 3 (SPRF)	ineligible				Limitations (number of terms)

-  Eligible if <10 years post phd
-  Eligible
-  Limitations (number of terms)

# Number of five year Investigator Grant terms

- Ability to have continuous support for 35 years

	EL1	EL2	L1	L2	L3
Max no.	1	1	2	2	5
No. of years	5	5	10	10	25

Maximum of 25 years in Leadership Investigator Grants

# Important considerations



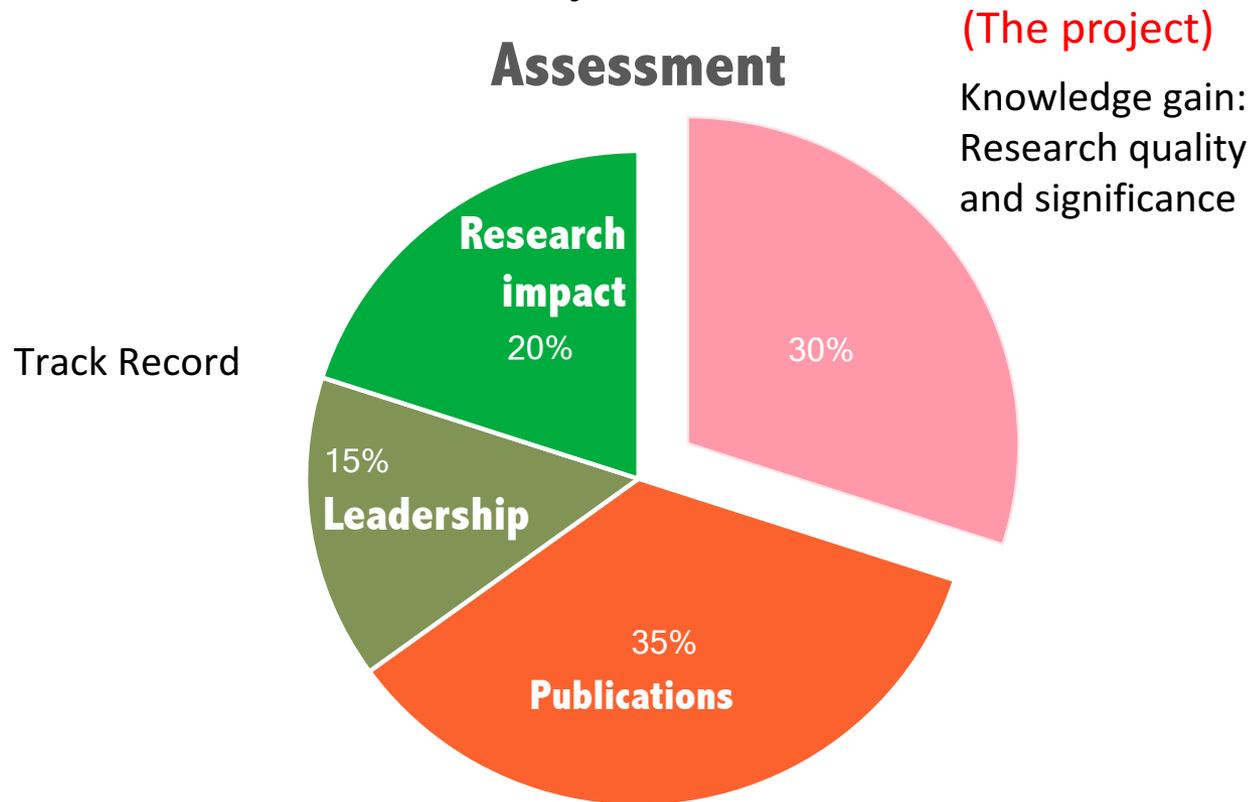
- A portion of Investigator grant can be spent overseas.
- Provides flexible access to training, development, collaboration and benefit to Australian health and medical research

Investigator grant	Level	Time overseas
Leadership	1,2,3	1 year
Emerging Leadership	EL1 or EL2	Up 2.5 years; final 2 years in Australia

EL Investigator Grants retain some of the CJ Martin flexibility

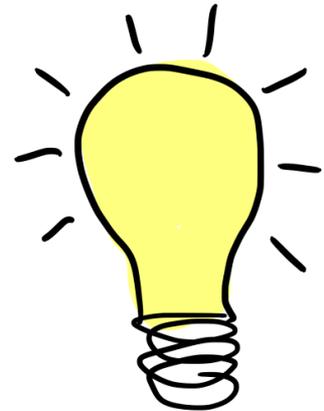
# Assessment

- Track record (70%) and Knowledge gain (30%)
  - TR is the value of past achievements
  - Quantitatively scored using evidence-based metrics
  - Similar metrics to current system

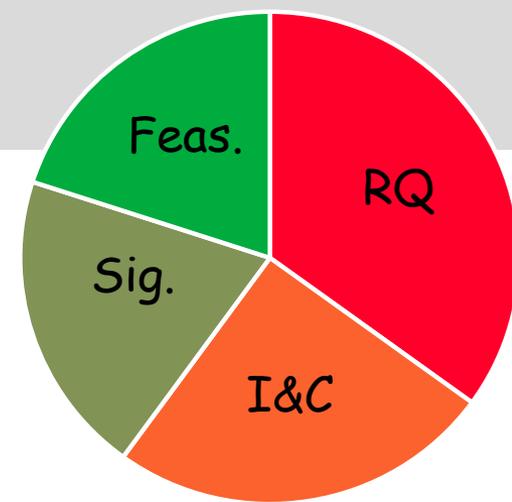


## Ideas Grants – designed with ECRs in mind

- Support innovative and creative projects addressing a specific question
- Available to all career levels
- Up to 5 years
- 1-10 CIs
- Funding based on budget for research support (PSPs and DRCs)
- CIs may request salaries



# Ideas Grants – Assessment Criteria (no track record)



- **Research Quality - 35%**
  - Quality, research design, robustness, hypothesis
- **Innovation and Creativity - 25%**
  - Shift current paradigms and/or major impact on health research
  - Creative research concepts, approaches, methods, technologies
  - Integrate and adapt concepts, methods and technology from other fields
- **Significance - 20%**
  - Substantially advancing knowledge, clinical/public health applications, policy development or change in field
- **Feasibility - 20%**
  - Ability to achieve stated aims (resources, personnel, expertise, equipment, infrastructure)

- How to assess feasibility?
- Research will be done in lab of mentor – this factors into feasibility (will Track record subconsciously considered?)
- Ideas grant constructed with support of mentor (mentor resources?)
- Using mentor to get ahead?

# Eligibility

GRANT TYPE	INVESTIGATOR GRANTS	SYNERGY GRANTS	IDEAS GRANTS	STRATEGIC & LEVERAGING
Maximum number of <u>applications</u> allowed per round	1	1	0	Not capped relative to Investigator, Synergy or Ideas Grants
	1	0	1	
	0	1	1	
	0	0	2	
Maximum number of each grant type that can be <u>held</u>	1	1	0	Not capped relative to Investigator, Synergy or Ideas Grants
	0	1	2	

Can concurrently hold an Investigator Grant and Ideas Grants  
 But 50% budget cut for 1 Ideas Grant and 100% budget cut for 2 Ideas Grants

# Take home messages for ECRs

- New scheme developed after significant consultation
- Developed to improved ECRs opportunities (ideas grants)
  - Creativity and innovation rewarded
  - Need to generate networks and collaborations
- Investigators grants
  - Some rebranding
  - Significant research support
  - Still opportunity to travel overseas (CJ Martin)
- Some uncertainty in first few years

- “Success comes not from having certainty, but being able to live with uncertainty”
  - Jeffrey Fry