

# Novartis Australia responds to pandemic challenges faced by patient organisations

May 28, 2020

- *COVID-19 is significantly impacting patient organisations' ability to undertake their critical work as funds and resources are diverted to COVID-19 initiatives*
- *As these patient organisations are altering their essential services to provide greater proactive outreach to patients, revenues from donations and community initiatives have slowed, or even stopped*
- *Novartis Australia has rolled out funding for COVID-19 related programs, support for mental health and stepped up its promotion of partner patient organisation campaigns*

**Sydney, Australia, 28 May 2020** – Novartis is responding to the challenges faced by patient organisations with the announcement of three key initiatives to help them continue their critical work throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

The initiatives provide funding and support at a time when resources are being diverted to help manage the critical and ongoing patient and caregiver need for COVID-19 related information, education, psychological support and health system navigation.

Novartis ANZ Country President, Richard Tew said, “Novartis regularly engages with and listens to the patient community, and we have heard that this is a worrying time for people with health conditions and their carers. Now, more than ever, patient organisations are needed to provide information, advocacy and essential services to those who need it most throughout the pandemic.

“To show our ongoing commitment to our partners, Novartis is proud to offer funding for COVID-19 related initiatives or COVID-19 impacted programs to our existing patient organisation partners. We are prioritising and expediting funding requests that address the immediate needs of those patients impacted by the pandemic, to ensure patient organisations can continue to provide much needed education and support for patients and their families during this time”, continued Richard.

“Furthermore Novartis acknowledges the additional workload and strain on employees of those organisations. Anecdotal feedback from patient organisations suggests that the crisis may be having an indirect impact on the mental health and wellbeing of staff, and we are pleased to offer employees of our partner patient organisations access to our local employee assistance program (EAP).”

Employees of partner patient organisations will have access to Novartis' EAP for a six-month period, commencing from the start of May until the end of November 2020. The service mirrors the service already provided for local Novartis employees. The EAP connects employees to immediate and confidential counselling support services, as well as specialised support for leaders and managers within their organisations.

One organisation to benefit from the COVID-19 funding is MS Research Australia for the Australian Multiple Sclerosis Longitudinal Study (AMSLS), Australia's longest running and largest study of people with MS.

Dr Julia Morahan, Head of Research from MS Research Australia said, “The not for profit sector has been

impacted significantly by the pandemic and it is disrupting funding sources for vital research. Support such as the COVID-19 funding from Novartis is important because it enables us to maintain our focus on research and programs so we can kiss goodbye to MS forever.”

“We are delighted that Novartis has also supported MS Research Australia by creating a team of associates who are personally walking, running and fundraising throughout the month of May for the May 50k (may50k.org).”

Further external training and support resources are being offered to local partner patient organisations by the global Novartis organisation. These resources includes topics relating to dealing with complexity, remote working, parenting, mindfulness and managing stress.

Additionally, Novartis has increased internal and external promotion of patient organisation campaigns to ensure greater visibility of key activities and events.

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