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InGeNA Policy Paper:

Advancing Genomic Medicine in Australia

Summary of Recommendations

The Industry Genomics Network Alliance (InGeNA) calls on the Australian Government to commit to making Comprehensive Genomic Profiling (CGP) available to all cancer patients within five years. To support this goal, we recommend targeted funding for the following key enablers:

1. **Transition Genomic Research Programs, Such as PrOSPeCT, into Mainstream Clinical Practice**: Integrate successful research initiatives into standard care to provide patients with cutting-edge genomic-based treatments.
2. **Examine the Feasibility of a UK-Style National Test Directory (NTD) for Australia**: Assess the potential benefits of implementing a centralised genomic test directory to standardise testing protocols and ensure equitable access across the nation.
3. **Address Barriers to Consistent Access to Genomic Testing Across All States and Territories** by **embedding Funding for Genomic-Based Care into the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA)**: Secure sustainable financial support for genomic services by incorporating them into existing healthcare funding frameworks.
   Identify and mitigate disparities in testing availability to ensure uniform access for all Australians, regardless of location.

Background and Rationale

The integration of genomics into mainstream healthcare is pivotal for delivering precision medicine, improving patient outcomes, and fostering innovation within Australia's life sciences sector.

1. **Universal access to Comprehensive Genomic Profiling (CGP) within 5 years.** Comprehensive Genomic Profiling (CGP) enables the identification of specific genetic mutations driving individual cancers, facilitating tailored treatment strategies that improve efficacy and reduce unnecessary interventions. Studies indicate that patients receiving personalised therapy experience improved quality of life and generate cost savings for the healthcare system.
   The Australian Government's recent investment of $143.4 million to extend two precision medicine programs—ZERO Childhood Cancer and the Precision Oncology Screening Platform Enabling Clinical Trials (PrOSPeCT)—is a commendable step towards maintaining access to personalised oncology clinical trials. The ZERO program has supported over 2,000 children by analysing tumours at a molecular level to recommend effective treatments, while PrOSPeCT has provided free genomic profiling to patients with advanced cancers, matching therapies for more than two-thirds of the 5,000 patients profiled.
   Despite these advancements, challenges persist in making genomic-based care a standard component of clinical practice. Access to genomic testing varies across regions, and the lack of standardised protocols can lead to inconsistencies in patient care. Transitioning successful research programs like PrOSPeCT into routine clinical settings is essential for broadening the reach of genomic medicine. This integration would allow more patients to benefit from personalised treatments, moving beyond the research context into everyday healthcare.

2. A National Test Directory for Equitable Access

A National Genomic Test Directory, modelled on the UK system, would provide a structured and standardised approach to genomic testing, ensuring equitable access, clinical consistency, and an efficient pathway for the adoption of new technologies. This initiative would also support the broader goal of universal adoption of CGP as a routine part of cancer care and rare disease diagnosis.

The Need for a National Genomic Test Directory Currently, access to genomic testing in Australia is fragmented, with significant disparities based on geography, funding models, and clinician awareness. The absence of a national framework results in inefficiencies, delays in diagnosis, and barriers to equitable access. A centralised test directory would address these challenges by providing a clear, evidence-based structure that defines which genomic tests are available, the indications for their use, and pathways for reimbursement and clinical implementation.

Key Benefits A National Genomic Test Directory would streamline access to genomic testing, ensuring that patients receive the right test at the right time, regardless of their location or treating institution. It would standardise test eligibility criteria, reducing inconsistencies across states and healthcare providers. This structure would also facilitate a more transparent and efficient reimbursement process, enabling new genomic technologies, such as CGP, to be integrated into routine care more rapidly.

From a healthcare system perspective, the directory would support more timely and accurate diagnoses, particularly for cancer and rare diseases, leading to improved treatment selection and better health outcomes. For industry and research, a standardised national approach would create a more predictable and efficient pathway for the introduction of innovative genomic tests, enhancing Australia's position as a global leader in precision medicine. Additionally, it would provide a foundation for real-world data collection, helping inform future policy decisions and research initiatives.

Key Recommendation: Government Evaluation and Funding for an NTD Feasibility Study The first critical step in establishing a National Genomic Test Directory is for the government to fund an evaluation of its effectiveness. This evaluation should assess the potential impact on patient outcomes, healthcare system efficiency, and industry growth. By examining international models, particularly the UK's National Genomic Test Directory, the study would provide the necessary evidence to guide policy development and investment decisions.

We call for establishment of a multi-stakeholder working group to design an Australian National Test Directory, drawing on learnings from the UK model while adapting to Australia's federal health system structure.

Implementation Pathway Following the government-funded evaluation, the development of a National Genomic Test Directory should be led by a collaborative effort between government, industry, and healthcare stakeholders. Initial steps would include mapping existing genomic testing frameworks, engaging with key stakeholders to define clinical and reimbursement criteria, and establishing a governance structure for regular updates and reviews. Pilot programs in select jurisdictions could provide valuable insights before a national rollout.

3. **Address Barriers to Consistent Access to Genomic Testing Across All States and Territories by Embedding Funding for Genomic-Based Care into the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA):**

Ensuring equitable access to genomic testing across all states and territories is crucial for healthcare equity. Disparities in availability lead to unequal treatment outcomes, undermining the overall effectiveness of genomic medicine initiatives. Addressing these barriers requires

coordinated action across government, healthcare providers, and industry to harmonise access and implementation nationwide.

A key mechanism to delivering consistency is by embedding funding for genomic-based care into the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA). We call on a redress to specifically nominate genomics in the NHRA as vital for the sustainability and consistency of these services. Incorporating genomic testing and related treatments into existing funding frameworks would ensure that these services are financially supported in the long term, facilitating widespread adoption and integration into standard care practices.

The NHRA provides an opportunity to integrate joint Commonwealth-State funding for genomics, ensuring sustainable investment and coordinated service delivery. Genomic medicine, like imaging services, requires national-level coordination to support infrastructure, workforce development, and equitable access.

Key Actions:

- Advocate for explicit recognition of genomics in the NHRA funding framework.
- Develop a governance model that supports both centralised genomic centres and local service provision.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor and ensure funding consistency across jurisdictions.

Conclusion

Australia is at a critical juncture in the adoption of genomic medicine. The government's recent investment in Genomics Australia and precision oncology programs is commendable. We must move beyond research and pilot initiatives to make genomics a standard of care in routine clinical practice to benefit the health outcomes, quality of life and our health system and economy

Investing in genomics as a standard of care will lead to significant long-term cost savings for the Australian healthcare system. By reducing unnecessary treatments, improving diagnostic accuracy, and shifting towards prevention, genomics can alleviate pressure on hospitals, lower system-wide costs, and enhance patient outcomes.

Investing in Comprehensive Genomic Profiling (CGP) and broader genomic integration will drive cost efficiency, reduce unnecessary treatments, and improve patient outcomes. Precision medicine ensures the right treatment, at the right time, for the right patient, delivering long-term savings to the healthcare system and reducing pressure on hospitals.

Beyond healthcare, establishing Australia as a global leader in genomics will strengthen our biotechnology sector, attract investment, and support economic growth. Genomics also offers a transformative opportunity to improve equity in healthcare, particularly for regional and underserved populations.

By prioritising genomics investment and embedding it into mainstream healthcare, the Australian Government can secure a more sustainable, efficient, and equitable healthcare system—delivering lasting benefits to patients, the economy, and the future of Australian medicine.

About InGeNA

The Industry Genomics Network Alliance (InGeNA) is Australia's peak body for genomics and personalised healthcare. We bring together leaders across diagnostics, therapeutics, software, data, and analytics to advance the adoption of genomics in Australia's health system. Our mission is to drive equitable access, integrate genomics sustainably, and ensure that all Australians benefit from precision medicine.

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