

# Career Pathways could let us 'Lead World' in Science

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**A LEADING genetic scientist has backed calls for Australia to increase its research focus or risk falling behind in the scientific pursuits of the 21st century.**

Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute director Nadia Rosenthal supported the call from Nobel laureate Brian Schmidt for Australia to elevate the sciences to encourage youth to see research as a career path.

Professor Rosenthal, who is US-born and Harvard-educated as is Professor Schmidt, said Australia had some clear advantages as a research base but could do more to attract and retain the best minds.

"If you were able to redirect scientific funding into well-defined pathways to lure youth into a scientific career and bring people from overseas, you would really see a change in the capacity for Australia to lead the world in science," she said.

"An increasing sector of the Australian youth is eschewing the hard sciences and going elsewhere, and not choosing science as a career path.

"The availability of new and exciting techniques and data makes science a particularly exciting place to be at this point, but faced with an uncertain future of research funding and more lucrative prospects in, say, banking or marketing, many would-be scientists just don't choose science or they leave the Australian academic environment to go elsewhere because of the lack of a well-defined career path for young scientists."

Professor Schmidt issued his warning last week after attending a high-level meeting, hosted by Governor-General Quentin Bryce and moderated by former Treasury secretary Ken Henry, on the risks facing Australia's scientific development.

Professor Rosenthal said the European model of a nine-year fixed-funding contract for scientists, compared with three or five years in Australia, was a key factor in helping to retain young researchers.

"By giving them these packages we see a tangible shift not only in the quantity of their research but in the quality," she said.

Professor Rosenthal specialises in age-related diseases and cell regeneration, and will address the Creative Innovation conference in Melbourne in November on the social and medical costs emerging from the global ageing population, an area where research progress has been "woefully slow".

She outlined Australia's strong moral support for medical research and relatively liberal legislation on stem cells and animal trials as advantages that had helped to keep Australia attractive to scientists.