



## Pharma veterans guide next generation of researchers and entrepreneurs

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Pharmaceutical sector leaders and experts joined government and NGO representatives to share their collective wisdom with young researchers, entrepreneurs and industry professionals at The Bridge Program's Residential Training Program last week. The Bridge Program was launched in 2017 to boost the commercial output of Australian pharmaceutical research by providing face-to-face and online training in research translation and the commercialisation of medicines. Run by Queensland University of Technology, it involves a consortium of 15 pharmaceutical companies, universities and industry associations, and selects 100 participants from across Australia annually. The three-day Residential Training Program, now in its second year, involved workshops, case studies, networking opportunities and presentations from national and international guests, including CEO of Innovation and Science Australia, Charlie Day, Amgen's VP of Global Health Economics, Martin Zagari, and Member for Bennelong John Alexander MP, to name a few. Mr Zagari presented on the value of medicines in healthcare and society, which he said was being challenged by a shift in focus from value to cost. He said fixating on initial investment costs was misleading, as almost all investments in medicines became cost neutral and most became cost saving, yielding enormous value. "In the US, every dollar spent on medicines for congenital heart failure returned \$3-\$10 in savings," he said. "Every 1% reduction in cancer mortality would deliver \$500 billion in savings globally. We need to consider what the cost of not improving treatments will be." Mundipharma's Director of Corporate Affairs, Meriana Baxter, chaired a session that tasked cross-functional teams with delivering a mock pitch to industry executives role-playing as venture capital investors. The "investors" were impressed with what the teams achieved in a short timeframe, but provided detailed advice on how they could cut through more effectively. My Linh Kha, Executive Director and General Manager of Amgen Australia and New Zealand, spoke of the promise of the medical discoveries that may be made by the attendees, and the benefits they may have on patients in the future. "I am so proud of the collective knowledge and experience that can be leveraged through this program," Ms Kha said. "I wish an opportunity like this existed when I began my career, and I am sure we'll be seeing the impact of this effort for years and decades to come." Mr Alexander closed the program with a reflection on his time representing his electorate and the home of "Pill Hill". "I'm so lucky to have had the opportunity to meet so many in this industry," Mr Alexander said. "You are all motivated by the common goal of improving quality of life, extending life and addressing illness." The program's final event for 2018 will be held at Queensland University of Technology on 13 December with keynote speaker Professor Ian Frazer, who co-invented the technology enabling human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccines. More information on The Bridge Program can be found here: [research.qut.edu.au/bridge/](http://research.qut.edu.au/bridge/), including a full agenda for the Residential Training Program. The Bridge Program collaborators include Mundipharma, MTPConnect, AbbVie, Amgen, The Australian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association Limited (AVCAL), Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Celgene, CSL, Janssen-Cilag, Macquarie University, Medical Research Commercialisation Fund, Medicines Australia, MSD, Novartis and Pfizer.

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