



Call for action on combating antibiotic resistance

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THE Office of the Chief Scientist for Australia has weighed into the antibiotic resistance debate, issuing a paper calling for urgent action.

The paper, *Meeting the Threat of Antibiotic Resistance: Building a New Frontline Defence*, warns Australians to expect the spread of drug-resistant bacteria to continue.

It highlights the imperative for

commercial investment into global research and development of new antibiotics as well as minimising misuse of antibiotics in animals, agriculture and humans.

The chief scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, said antibiotic resistance was an important scientific issue with “the potential to become one of the world’s biggest public health challenges”.

Australia’s chief medical officer, Professor Chris Baggoley, told *Medical Observer* it was important that the paper had been

produced by the chief scientist as it broadened the resources available to tackle the problem.

“We all need to play a role in dealing with it. It’s a matter for the public and doctors, policy makers, ministers and people in industry,” Professor Baggoley said.

The paper labelled it a “frightening irony” that medical interventions like chemotherapy, organ transplants, artificial devices and implants increased our vulnerability to infection with antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Research into new medications was singled out as a key solution to the threat, with the paper arguing that “the rise in bacterial resistance has coincided with a collapse in the antibiotic discovery pipeline”.

A combat strategy should also include using vaccines, developing better treatments and infection diagnosis tools, as well as global infection control through sanitation, hygiene and surveillance, the paper said.

Professor Baggoley said that

research and development could change prescribing habits.

He also highlighted initiatives like the hand hygiene campaign, regulatory approaches and public awareness campaigns as crucial to fighting antibiotic resistance.

“I think the community is slowly understanding and less demanding of antibiotics than they used to be,” he said.

While the paper urged prudent use of antibiotics, Professor Baggoley’s advice to GPs on the frontline was “if in doubt, use them”.