

# **Medical Research Future Fund**

## **Consultation for the development of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and related Priorities**

### **Call for Submissions**

May 2016

## Introduction

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board (Advisory Board) has recently been appointed under the auspices of the *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015* (MRFF Act). The MRFF Act establishes the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to provide grants of financial assistance to support health and medical research and innovation. These grants will aim to translate research findings into clinical practice, with the objective of improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

To guide the funding disbursements from the MRFF, the Advisory Board must determine the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy (Strategy) and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities (Priorities) through a consultation process.

This paper outlines the purpose of the MRFF and invites feedback in the form of written submissions from organisations with expertise in medical research or medical innovation, as well as organisations that represent consumers who benefit from medical research or medical innovation, and any other interested organisations or individuals.

## Background

As part of the 2014-15 Budget, the Australian Government announced the establishment of the \$20 billion MRFF as a dedicated vehicle for investment in medical research. It is the single largest boost in health and medical research funding in Australia's history, the net earnings of which will serve as a permanent and sustainable revenue stream. The MRFF is expected to disburse around \$1 billion a year in the future and will provide long term, stable funding for medical research. Research will be strategically funded in order to address national priorities in a more cohesive and coordinated way than under previous approaches. The funding will aim to:

- address medical research priorities;
- drive innovation;
- improve delivery of health care;
- boost the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system; and
- contribute to economic growth.

Through the MRFF there will be a greater focus on effective research translation to improve healthcare delivery and embed evidence into clinical practice.

The MRFF will operate within an interlinked whole-of-government research agenda. Key areas of current work include the work of the Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) and the existing work of the major research funders such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC). The recently launched National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) represents a new and important player in the whole-of-government research agenda.

State and territory governments also play an essential role in the funding of hospitals and ideally for translation of research into clinical outcomes. It is important that arrangements are put in

place to ensure strategic alignment between the Commonwealth Government research agenda and state and territory government investments to ensure the MRFF is complementary and aligns with program implementation already underway.

The funding disbursed from the MRFF will be guided by the Strategy and Priorities developed by the Advisory Board and submitted to Government. The Government will use these important documents to determine the best possible mechanisms for disbursing MRFF funds. Funding bodies with the most suitable administrative mechanisms or expertise for the particular type of research endeavour will be engaged to allocate the funds. This may mean for example, funding is allocated to the NHMRC to utilise its peer review and grant management capabilities, or a Commonwealth entity (such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the ARC), or to state governments and institutions through the Council of Australian Government's reform fund, and/or any other mechanism as deemed appropriate by Government. This allows flexibility, while at the same time leveraging the very substantial capabilities of existing organisations and governments in current research endeavours.

## Legislation

### *Strategy and Priorities*

The Strategy and Priorities will ensure a coherent and consistent approach is adopted when disbursing MRFF funding into the health and medical research sector.

The Strategy is determined every five years and the Priorities every two years. In developing the Strategy, the Advisory Board will take into consideration other health and medical research strategies (such as the work of the CSC, NHMRC, ARC and NISA) to ensure a coordinated funding approach. The Priorities will guide Government decision making on program level funding.

Criteria for identifying the Priorities are set out in the legislation and are to include consideration of:

- the burden of disease on the Australian community;
- how to deliver practical benefits from medical research and medical innovation to as many Australians as possible;
- how to ensure that financial assistance provides the greatest value for all Australians;
- how to ensure that financial assistance complements and enhances other financial assistance provided for medical research and medical innovation; and
- any other relevant matter.

Before determining the Strategy and Priorities, the Advisory Board must consult with organisations with expertise in medical research or medical innovation, and organisations that represent consumers who benefit from medical research, medical innovation, and any other person or organisation.

The Strategy and Priorities are required to be in place before the provision of program funding to support health and medical research and innovation, with the objective of improving the health and wellbeing of Australians.

## Consultation Opportunity

The Advisory Board is keen to hear views and ideas from the research community and those who deliver, use or stand to benefit from health services and health and medical research. Your opinions are essential to ensure an appropriate focus for the Medical Research Future Fund Strategy, and the initial round of Priorities.

There have been many reviews of the Health and Medical Research Sector in recent years (including McKeon 2013<sup>1</sup>, Grant 2004<sup>2</sup> and Wills 1999<sup>3</sup>) – in this consultation, the Advisory Board is looking to uncover fresh ideas, while acknowledging what has already been highlighted in these reviews.

The Advisory Board has mapped out building blocks for the Strategy (refer to Figure 1 below), which outline current challenges, aims and objectives, mandatory requirements and key interactions among stakeholders and policy agendas that need to be considered to ensure appropriate recommendations for the Strategy and Priorities. These building blocks, which are not meant to be all-encompassing, are provided as a reference to support those wishing to provide targeted input on the Strategy and may be helpful in formulating suggested Priorities for consideration.

The Advisory Board will be accepting written submissions from **6 May 2016 until 6 June 2016**. There will be no extensions beyond the closing date. Submissions can be made through the Department of Health's [consultation hub](#) and may take one of two forms either:

- STRATEGY inputs via a free-form submission; AND/OR
- PRIORITY submissions using the pro forma

**IMPORTANT: Both submission formats must not be longer than three pages (a pro forma is available to use) and utilise minimum size 11 font.**

**Submissions over three pages may not be considered.**

Regardless of whether a submission addresses the Strategy or suggests Priorities it should identify the following with reference to Figure 1 below:

- A gap - a specific health or health system issue which could be resolved by a new approach and achieve one or more of the MRFF objectives. Please describe the challenge that needs to be addressed rather than propose a funding mechanism.
- How this gap should be addressed, with a focus on a proposed pathway forward or solution.

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<sup>1</sup> McKeon S (Chair), 2013. Strategic review of health and medical research. Final report. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Grant J (Chair), 2004. Sustaining the virtuous cycle for a healthy, competitive Australia. Investment review of health and medical research. Executive summary. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Wills PJ (Chair), 1999. The virtuous cycle: working together for health and medical research. Health and medical research strategic review. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

- A comment on how your submission fits within the suggested Strategy building blocks.
- An outline of measures of success, explaining what success would look like, and when and how this could be measured.

Please be conscious that the Advisory Board, together with the broader health and medical community, are well aware of the major burden of disease in Australia and submissions should not revisit this information. Submissions that are focused on strategic and practical solutions will carry more merit.

The Advisory Board will meet to discuss submissions in late June 2016, and will communicate on next steps in the consultation process subsequently. These next steps are likely to involve targeted consultation in most capital cities.

### ***Contact Information***

The Medical Research Future Fund secretariat can be contacted at [MRFF@health.gov.au](mailto:MRFF@health.gov.au).

**FIGURE 1. BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STRATEGY**

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

Facilitate the translation of research into health outcomes	Research universally embedded across the health system	Maximise productivity within the health and research system	Reduce barriers to collaboration	Support research and innovation from concept to delivery	Enhance and sustain research enabling technologies, infrastructure and workforce	Continuous improvement and efficiency in healthcare delivery
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**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

An excellent and responsive health and medical research system that improves lives.

Preventions and cures of tomorrow	Leveraging and enhancing collaboration and integration	A balanced and appropriately skilled workforce
Economic benefits	A translation pathway that maximises opportunities for success	A research engaged workforce
Sustainable, high-quality, cost-effective health care	Healthcare policy and delivery have a strong evidence base	Contemporary infrastructure that meets research needs

**MANDATORY CONSIDERATIONS**

Burden of disease on the Australian community	How to deliver practical benefits from medical research and medical innovation to as many Australians as possible	How to ensure that financial assistance provides the greatest value for all Australians	How to ensure that disbursements complement and enhance other assistance provided to the sector
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**KEY INTERACTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

National Health and Medical Research Council	Industry, philanthropy, the taxation system and other grants	National Innovation and Science Agenda	National Science and Research Priorities	State and territory health and medical research initiatives	The health system - medical workforce, hospitals	Commonwealth Health Portfolio priorities	Health and medical researchers	Consumers
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