



Attachment 1. Draft Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy 2026-2031 – For Consultation

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Vision

Transforming health through research excellence and lasting impact

Statement of Intent

This Vision positions the MRFF to deliver world-leading health research focussed on outcomes that improve lives and strengthen health systems. The Strategic Objectives will support the translation of high-quality research into sustained improvements in health outcomes and health equity. There will be a particular emphasis on prevention and implementation.

A coordinated approach will span prevention, AI, digital health, precision medicine, advanced therapeutics, climate resilience, and mental health. This will enable learning health systems that respond and adapt to population health needs. The approach is designed to complement funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and other funders. It will also strengthen and build on relationships with communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, health services, and industry.

Under this Strategy, MRFF-funded research will deliver enduring impact, global leadership, and healthier futures for all. It will do this by building workforce capability, embedding research in practice, and strengthening sovereign capability and translation pathways.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the MRFF are to deliver:

- A research-rich, data-enabled learning health system that continuously improves quality, efficiency, cultural safety, and equity
- Transformation of health care through AI and digital health advances that integrate preventive health, diagnostics and therapeutics across the care continuum
- End-to-end translation of discoveries and innovation into real-world impact - building sovereign capability and delivering measurable health and economic benefits
- Thriving health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through research that is community-governed and directed
- A health and medical research sector and health system positioned to understand and respond to determinants of health and wellbeing including emerging and future challenges of climate and environment change
- A skilled, sustainable, inclusive and future-ready health and medical research workforce that accelerates innovation, translation and system capability



Cross-cutting principles (Description in Appendix 1)

The following principles recognise the unique role of the MRFF within the health and medical research system in Australia and are intended to be embedded across all the strategic objectives outlined above and to guide the activities and initiatives funded by the MRFF.

To the greatest extent possible, these Principles will inform the identification of the MRFF's Priorities and serve as the foundation upon which all grant opportunities are designed to realise the Strategic Objectives of the MRFF for 2026 - 2031.

- Health equity
- Translation and implementation
- Sustained consumer and community involvement
- Prevention and early-intervention
- Systems-based and scalability
- Partnerships and co-investments.

Shared enablers (Description in Appendix 2)

The shared enablers describe the common capabilities, infrastructure, coordination mechanisms and workforce needed to deliver the strategic objectives and strengthen the impact of MRFF-funded activity across the strategy. They operate across all strategic objectives, providing the practical, system-wide foundations for measurable, equitable and enduring improvements in health and wellbeing from 2026 to 2031.

These shared enablers will guide the development of MRFF investment and help ensure funded research is coordinated, implemented and sustained across the health and medical research system.

- Coordinated & complementary MRFF and NHMRC investment
- Connected research workforce across academia, health services and lived experience
- Integrated national research ecosystem
- Innovative trials design and methodologies
- Advanced and emerging research technologies.



Appendix 1: Description and rationale for the cross-cutting principles

Cross-cutting principles	Why it's important
Health equity	• Enables health and medical research to deliver fair and inclusive benefits for all people in Australia, regardless of ancestry, background, identity, socioeconomic status, or location. • A research system that embeds equity across priority setting, design, workforce, and resource distribution, ensures diverse perspectives are reflected and supported. • Involves addressing structural barriers, including supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research that is community governed and directed and ensuring culturally safe approaches that translate evidence into improved health wellbeing outcomes. • Strengthens trust, relevance, and impact by enabling meaningful partnerships with, and genuine involvement of consumers and communities, particularly those historically under-served. • Ensures equitable access to innovative high-value care, including emerging technologies, data, and infrastructure, so that advances in health and medical research benefit all communities. • A health equity approach to MRFF-funded research will: ○ target investment to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for priority populations ○ embed equity considerations across the research lifecycle, from design to translation ○ improve access to data, technologies, and services across diverse populations and settings ○ strengthen involvement, representation and participation in research to enhance impact and relevance ○ deliver more equitable health outcomes and improved population health
Translation and implementation	• Describes how research progresses from discoveries into real-world applications and services. • Bridges the “know-do gap”, by progressing discoveries from laboratories and trials to improve health outcomes, prevent or address ill-health, inform policy, and increase health resilience. • Demonstrates stewardship of public funds by reducing waste and delivering high-quality and high-value health products and services. • Appropriate translation and implementation planning, including clear pathways, are crucial to: ○ deliver measurable outcomes (for example adoption, scalability, economics, quality of life gained) ○ improve the cultural safety and protect the intellectual property of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determined health solutions



Cross-cutting principles	Why it's important
	○ increase the likelihood of MRFF-funded research being translated into policy and practice ○ reduce risks to support commercial viability, accelerating time-to-impact and increasing the likelihood of scalability and sustainability ○ attract partnerships and co-investments from the public and private sectors ○ increase public trust through visible and tangible health outcomes ○ ensure MRFF-funded research delivers a return on investment and provides good value for money.
Sustained consumer and community involvement	• Ensures that research, including prioritisation, design, delivery, and evaluation, occurs in equal partnership with the people who use and provide them and is: ○ fit-for-purpose ○ can be adopted and maintained over time (sustainability) ○ can be expanded across settings and populations equitably and at a high quality (scalability). • Involving consumers and communities in research centers the voices of people most affected (including groups historically under-served), improving equity and legitimacy, applicability and the quality of decisions of MRFF-funded research. • Enables experience-informed health products, services and applications arising from MRFF-funded research to continue delivering their intended outcomes safely, appropriately, equitably, and efficiently after initial funding or trial periods end. This is achieved by ensuring research appropriately embeds new approaches in routine systems, is resourced appropriately, and can adapt to changing environment without losing core functions. • Evidence-informed sustainability by design (where appropriate) will: ○ ensure that the diversity of lived experience voices is embedded at all stages of research (including priority setting, measurements, delivery, education, evaluation and refinements of health products, services and applications) so they continue to deliver equitable, high-quality outcomes over time ○ emphasise that consumer and community involvement is essential in MRFF-funded research ○ improves safety, quality, relevance, applicability, and lasting impact of MRFF-funded research, leading to the best possible research and health outcomes for improving the health and wellbeing of people in Australia.
Prevention and early-intervention	• Proactively reduces the risks of ill-health by acting on the early signs and symptoms so that illnesses are prevented where possible or addressed early (if possible), minimising harm, cost, and inequity.



Cross-cutting principles	Why it's important
	• Prevention and early-intervention are the highest-leverage investments in health and medical research. They save lives now, bend the cost curve later, reduce inequities, and make communities more resilient. • Preventive health (including primordial and primary prevention) and early-intervention research can close gaps for priority populations, including young people and First Nations peoples, where the preventable burden is higher and access barriers are modifiable. • Improving preventive health and early interventions tools, services and strategies will: ○ accelerate implementation models that can scale quickly through policy or service redesign, reducing time-to-impact ○ reduce future health-system liabilities by decreasing avoidable hospitalisations, preventable long-term care, and strengthening the resilience and fiscal sustainability of health care delivery ○ shift population health risk and reduce deaths and disability, leading to more healthy and productive years across the life course ○ deliver a high return on investment for MRFF-funded research, and low cost per quality-adjusted life years (QALY) relative to late-stage care, resulting in more impact per dollar.
Systems based and scalability	• Describes approaches that examine and intervene in the whole health system, recognising the interdependencies of its constituent parts to produce durable, equitable, cost-effective and high-value care that can be expanded, adapted, and maintained (sustainability) across diverse settings and populations. • Systems-based approaches to MRFF-funded research enable transparent evaluation and continuous improvement across the research to practice pipeline by helping to identify and mitigate unintended consequences and patient safety risks. • Ensures scalability is planned from the start, reducing research waste and duplication, and allowing proven solutions to scale to whole regions or nationwide more rapidly. • A systems-based and scalability approach to health and medical research will: ○ promote equity-by design in research that helps identify and remove structural barriers to high-value and equitable care ○ increase the preparedness and resilience of health services, including its workforce, supply chain, and data systems - to adapt to evolving health needs or emergencies ○ embed implementation and sustainability approaches into the design of health care and service delivery, reducing the gap between research and practice



Cross-cutting principles	Why it's important
	○ move beyond single-point approaches and incremental improvements, producing more efficient, sustainable and scalable outcomes that deliver a better return on investment.
Partnerships and co-investments	• Describes structured collaborations between researchers, health services, consumers, policy-makers, industry and/or philanthropy to co-design, test, share risk, and match funding with the MRFF to accelerate research translation and implement evidence into health products, services, practice or policies. ○ Partnerships: structured collaborations between researchers, health services, consumers, policy-makers, industry, and philanthropy, to design, test, implement and evaluate solutions in real-world settings ○ Co-investment: matched funding and shared risk across MRFF and other funders to increase scale and speed of translation into products, practice and policy. • Matching investment from other Commonwealth programs, states/territories, industry and philanthropy stretches limited resources and aligns priorities across researchers, clinicians, policy-makers, consumers, and industry to address national priority problems through co-design and co-creation. • Improves the relevance, suitability, and quality of research outcomes, delivering better value for money, faster access to better care, and greater real-world impact from MRFF investment. • A structured approach to partnerships and co-investment across MRFF-funded research can: ○ encourage crowd-in philanthropic and/or private capital to de-risk early steps, strengthen governance and speed up proof-of-concept, scale-up and implementation ○ reduce time between discoveries to products, services and practice through embedded partnerships, better connections to health technology assessment processes, and providing commercial and/or implementation mentoring to researchers ○ embed researchers in health services to co-design, test and implement evidence in routine care, improving uptake and system performance ○ coordinate funding strategies with philanthropies to close gaps in the research translation pipeline and bridge translational bottlenecks. ○ increase accountability and reduce duplication by aligning priorities and enabling nation-wide coordination of research investments and capabilities.

Appendix 2: Descriptions of the shared enablers

Shared Enablers	Description
Coordinated & complementary MRFF and NHMRC investments	The Australian Government provides direct support for health and medical research through the complementary Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The MRFF provides opportunity to strategically fund research and address national priorities through its focus on priority-driven research, particularly research translation, commercialisation and implementation science. The NHMRC funds grant applications across any area of research relevant to human health. NHMRC funding primarily supports investigator-led schemes, taking account the applicant's expertise to build capacity and advance health and medical knowledge. Coordinated and complementary research between government funders, including MRFF, NHMRC and the Biomedical Translation Fund, will reduce duplication, address research and health gaps, lower system complexity and workforce burden, preserve distinct roles and responsibilities across the research continuity, and improve translation of research into better health outcomes and sustainability of the Australian health system. Together, coordinated and complementary research investment can support the full research pipeline - from discovery and capability-building through to translation, implementation, and scale-up - through a coordinated and complementary approach.
Connected research workforce across academia, health services and lived experience	A strong, diverse, and collaborative research workforce, informed by lived experience, provides the capability, expertise, and experience needed to translate research discoveries into real-world impact. Effective collaboration between researchers, consumers and the health services delivery workforce will: • break down silos between evidence generation and service delivery • accelerate the translation of safe, appropriate, and sustainable care into practice and policy • encourage innovation through interdisciplinary and intersectional perspectives • enhance capability building and shared expertise across the research to practice continuum.



Shared Enablers	Description
Integrated national research ecosystem	Health and medical challenges are complex and cannot be addressed effectively through fragmented or isolated research efforts. An integrated national research ecosystem approach is important to create the conditions needed for research to be coordinated, efficient, equitable, and impactful at scale. An integrated national research ecosystem approach will: • promote alignment of research priorities at a national level and ensure research delivers better health outcomes for all people in Australia • strengthen collaborations and partnerships across individual research organisation/institution, government and non-government organisations and industry • reduce duplication by aligning research investments, expertise, and infrastructure to national priorities and resources are directed to areas of greatest need • increase interoperability of shared resources and data to accelerate translation of discovery to impact in areas of national need • enable a coordinated response to health emergencies and rapidly mobilise expertise and infrastructure to generate evidence that informs care and policy.
Innovative trials design and methodologies	Innovative trial designs and methodologies accelerate the generation of robust evidence, improve efficiency and value for money, and produce findings that are more applicable to evolving real-world health system delivery. These methods build national capability, strengthens collaboration, and increase the likelihood that research delivers high value outcomes for people in Australia. Innovative trials design and methodologies will: • support equitable and intersectional approaches to care delivery by increasing participation and relevance across diverse populations and settings, helping ensure that care is safe, appropriate and sustainable • shorten timelines by allowing pre-planned adaptations to trials design and methodologies, testing multiple interventions simultaneously or supporting faster evidence-based decisions and ongoing refinement • increase efficiency through shared resources, registries, data, and infrastructure to generate evidence on the clinical benefits and cost effectiveness of health interventions that can inform practice and policy



Shared Enablers	Description
	- enable adaptive and decentralised trials design that reduce participant burden, support participation across multiple sites, and increase inclusion of under-represented communities. This will help ensure that care is inclusive, equitable, sustainable over the long term and that benefits are shared across diverse communities - enhance translation by generating evidence to inform practice and policies and strengthen preparedness through rapid and adaptive responses to emerging threats.
Advanced and emerging research technologies	Appropriate, well-governed and ethical use of advanced and emerging research technologies can: - accelerate discovery - improve the precision and real-world relevance of health products and services - strengthen data capability, interoperability and quality - accelerate scalable translation of discoveries into practice and policy. These technologies include artificial intelligence and data science approaches, health informatics, and other technological innovations such as quantum technologies, precision medicine and other data-driven or research-enabling technologies. When supported by robust governance, workforce capability, and interoperability, these technologies increase the impact and value of research investment and help deliver better health outcomes. This is critical to realising the benefits of more digitally and technologically integrated research and health care ecosystems that deliver on the best possible health outcomes for all people in Australia.