

Medical Research Future Fund Strategy and Priorities Consultation Webinar – Q&A Report

Purpose

This report provides a consolidated summary of the key questions raised through the Q&A function during the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Strategy and Priorities consultation [webinar](#). It includes responses to questions that the panel was unable to address, or was only able to partially address, during the webinar due to time limitations.

About the webinar

The webinar introduced the draft Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy 2026-2031 and draft Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2026-2028, explained the evidence base used to develop the drafts, and invited feedback through the public consultation process.

- The webinar attracted strong stakeholder interest, with 420 registrations and 338 attendees.
- A total of 61 questions were submitted through the Q&A function.

Summary of questions, key themes and consolidated response

Questions were grouped by theme to avoid repetition and to provide clear, accessible responses. Some questions were answered during the webinar and are reflected in the transcript. Other questions are addressed below through consolidated responses.

1. Development of the draft Strategy and Priorities and Alignment with Other Initiatives

Stakeholders asked how the draft Strategy and Priorities were developed, why particular benchmark institutions were selected, and how the MRFF work aligns with the National Health and Medical Research Strategy, Ambitious Australia, state and territory priorities, infrastructure planning and international collaboration. Stakeholders also provided suggestions for additional areas of focus or clarification within the draft Strategy and Priorities.

AMRAB presentation and discussion highlights

- The draft Strategy and Priorities were informed by analysis of the current MRFF investment portfolio, the broader national and international research funding landscape, and national and international research priorities.
- The landscape analysis considered NHMRC as the national comparator and CIHR and NIHR as international comparators, reflecting similarities in research priorities, research funding strategies and overall national health systems, while recognising differences in governance.
- The draft Strategy and Priorities have been developed to sit alongside, and be complementary to, the National Health and Medical Research Strategy. The MRFF has a distinct role as a priority-driven fund focused on accelerating translation,

addressing current and emerging health needs, and complementing broader research funding across the system.

- Questions about state and territory alignment, infrastructure roadmaps and coordination across funders will be considered through the consultation process. The draft Strategy and Priorities already emphasise partnerships, co-investment, national coordination and complementarity across the research ecosystem.

Consolidated response

The draft Strategy and Priorities were developed through an evidence-informed process that considered MRFF investment data, national and international benchmarking, recent reviews and consultations, and AMRAB's expert advice. AMRAB is seeking feedback on whether the draft settings appropriately target the areas where MRFF investment can add greatest value. The MRFF Strategy and Priorities are intended to guide future MRFF investment decisions, while complementing other national health and research strategies and funding sources.

2. Priority populations, equity and determinants of health

Stakeholders asked about how priority populations were identified and represented, including women, men, rural and remote communities, people with disability, people with rare diseases, people in custodial settings, older people, and communities affected by social, structural and environmental determinants of health.

AMRAB presentation and discussion highlights

- The webinar noted that priority populations were examined in MRFF investment analysis. The analysis found that 44% of MRFF investment, around \$833 million, was awarded to projects with a focus on priority populations under the current strategy period.
- MRFF investment was highest in projects focusing on children and adolescents, people in rural, regional and remote communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The draft Priorities proposed a list of priority populations for the duration that the MRFF Priorities 2026-28 are in force.
- The draft Strategy and Priorities also address determinants of health and wellbeing, including structural, social and environmental determinants, while keeping the priorities broad enough to remain responsive to different health needs over time.

Consolidated response

The draft Strategy and Priorities retain a strong focus on health equity, priority populations and the determinants of health. AMRAB welcomes feedback on whether the list and framing of priority populations is appropriate, including whether any important groups or issues should be strengthened. The final Strategy and Priorities will be informed by feedback received through the consultation process.

3. Translation, impact, commercialisation and research in real-world settings

Many questions focused on how the Strategy and Priorities will support research translation, implementation, commercialisation and impact in real-world settings. Stakeholders also raised health policy and systems research, implementation science, consumer and

community participation, MSAC/PBAC alignment, health technology assessment and how success will be measured.

AMRAB presentation and discussion highlights

- The webinar emphasised that a central goal of the MRFF is translation, impact and health system sustainability.
- The draft strategic objectives include end-to-end translation of discoveries and innovation into real-world impact, including sovereign capability and measurable health and economic benefits.
- During the live Q&A, AMRAB indicated that translation should be assessed by impact, including on priority populations, unmet health needs, and potential commercial and practical utility, with impact on people as a primary driver.
- The webinar also noted that complementarity between MRFF and NHMRC funding activities is intended to support research from discovery through to translation and impact, and that the MRFF is a priority-driven initiative that focuses on funding health and medical research to improve patient care and innovation.

Consolidated response

The draft Strategy and Priorities are designed to strengthen translation and impact by supporting research that can inform policy, practice, health system improvement, commercialisation where appropriate, and benefits for people in Australia. AMRAB welcomes feedback about implementation science, health services research, health technology assessment and alignment with decision-making bodies which will be helpful in the design of future grant opportunities.

4. Workforce development and reviewer capability for emerging research areas

Stakeholders asked how the Strategy will support the workforce needed to deliver translation and impact, including health economists, statisticians, bioinformaticians, implementation scientists, health services researchers, reviewer capability and potential fellowship-style opportunities.

AMRAB presentation and discussion highlights

- The webinar presentation identified a skilled, sustainable, inclusive and future-ready health and medical research workforce as both a draft strategic objective and a draft priority.
- During the live Q&A, AMRAB recognised the importance of broader roles to effective translation.

Consolidated response

The draft Strategy and Priorities recognise that Australia needs a skilled, sustainable and future-ready research workforce to deliver translation, implementation and innovation. This includes researchers and specialist roles across disciplines, such as health economics, statistics, bioinformatics, implementation science and health services research. AMRAB welcomes feedback on gaps in workforce capability, reviewer skills and potential funding mechanisms through the consultation process.

5. Funding implementation, evaluation and future investment

Stakeholders asked how the final Strategy and Priorities may influence grant guidelines, the relationship with Missions, the 10-year Investment Plan, funding continuity, rural research funding, and how specific research areas may be reflected in future funding opportunities.

Stakeholders raised a broad range of specific research areas and suggestions, including New Approach Methodologies, health policy and systems research, community and consumer participation, infrastructure, prevention beyond the health care system, advanced therapeutics definitions, AI and integrated digital health, energy-limiting and post-infection conditions, and international or regional comparisons.

AMRAB presentation and discussion highlights

- The webinar explained that the Strategy sets the MRFF's long-term direction over a five-year period, while priorities identify shorter-term areas for focused investment and are updated every two years.
- The webinar also noted that MRFF Strategy and Priorities are taken into account in funding decisions and in the five-yearly evaluation of whether the MRFF is fulfilling its overarching strategy.
- In relation to success measures, HMRO noted during the live Q&A that the MRFF assesses its performance and long-term impact of MRFF-funded research, including their alignment to MRFF Priorities. More information can be found on the Department's [website](#).
- AMRAB noted that the draft Strategy and Priorities are intentionally broad and high level to remain responsive to changing needs and emerging issues.
- AMRAB also noted that mapping priorities and strategic objectives into grant call design is important to improving impact over time.

Consolidated response

Once finalised, the Strategy and Priorities will guide future MRFF investment decisions and will be considered in the development of grant opportunities. MRFF Missions are one of several funding mechanisms used to implement the objectives of the MRFF. Missions bring together key researchers, health professionals, stakeholders, industry partners and patients to tackle significant health challenges in Australia. Detailed funding arrangements, including whether a future opportunity focuses on a specific population or issue, are considered through grant design and government decision-making processes. The MRFF will continue to evaluate how funded research aligns with the Strategy and Priorities and contributes to impact.

AMRAB welcomes suggestions about how the draft Strategy and Priorities could better describe or clarify particular research areas. The final Strategy and Priorities will remain strategic documents, rather than detailed grant guidelines, but consultation feedback will help AMRAB refine language, clarify scope and identify important areas for consideration in future funding design.

What happens next

- Stakeholders are encouraged to review the webinar recording, transcript alongside this Q&A report and submit feedback through the [consultation survey](#) by 16 August 2026.
- A targeted roundtable will complement the open public consultation. Participants have been invited through existing advisory and governance bodies, including the [Joint NHMRC-MRFF Committees](#). However, all stakeholders are encouraged to contribute by completing the [consultation survey](#).
- Feedback from the webinar, survey and targeted engagement will inform AMRAB's final advice to the Australian Government.