



**Submission to the**

**Australian Medical Research Advisory Board's consultation for the  
development of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation  
Strategy for the disbursement of the Medical Research Future Fund**

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## AHHA submission regarding strategic considerations for the Medical Research Future Fund

There is a unique opportunity for the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to set itself apart from other Australian health research funding bodies such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) or the Australian Research Council (ARC). The MRFF should bring a wider focus to its research priorities and support research into whole-of-system outcomes and solutions. The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) urges the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board to consider the importance of health policy and services research and to prioritise research that contributes to system-level reforms.

In both 2014 and 2015 only 4.25% of total NHMRC grants were allocated to health services research. The scope of research programs the MRFF should actively support needs to go beyond traditional partitioning of research funds and should instead recognise the fundamental importance of health policy and services research to ensure the healthcare system will meet the emerging health needs of the Australian population and to also investigate the realisation of system efficiencies through alternative models of care, effective deployment of medical and other technologies and a more flexible health workforce.

Examples of where the health system would benefit from investment by the MRFF in a number of key research areas include:

- System integration
- Chronic disease
- Health workforce
- Technology
- End of life care

For more on these priorities, see *AHHA submission regarding research priorities for the Medical Research Future Fund*.

The AHHA also believes that it is vital that disbursement of MRFF funding be carried out with transparency and in an independent, peer-reviewed manner. Potential funding of recipient groups should also be expanded beyond traditional university and other designated research centres to include consideration of a broader range of organisations such as community groups and associations with worthy research proposals. By broadening access to the MRFF, the Advisory Group will be presented with a wider range of potentially innovative, novel and local perspectives.

The Advisory Group has been presented with an opportunity to expand the scope of health research conducted in Australia. With an endowment that will grow to \$20 billion enabling a projected \$1 billion in disbursements each year, the Medical Research Future Fund has a unique opportunity to improve the scope of health policy and services research in Australia, and in particular, to provide greater support for a critical area of health research that has a significant impact on people's health outcomes and the efficiency with which health resources are utilised.

## Recommendations

Specific recommendations by the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association to the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board:

**Recommendation 1:**

That the Medical Research Future Fund explicitly support health policy and services research proposals.

**Recommendation 2:**

That selection and funding of research proposals be independent, peer-reviewed and carried out with transparency.

**Recommendation 3:**

A broader range of organisations such as community groups and associations with worthy research proposals be eligible to submit research proposals for consideration by the Medical Research Future Fund.

**Recommendation 4:**

That the Advisory Group consider prioritise research proposals that investigate system integration, chronic disease, health workforce, the effective use of technology and end of life care issues.