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Submitted to **Medical Research Future Fund consultation to inform the third Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020-2022**
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Introduction

1 Full name

Full Name:

Rebecca Haddock

2 Submission type

Organisation affiliated

3 Organisation type

Non-government

4 Organisation sub-type

Other

5 Residential state or territory

Australian Capital Territory

6 Do the current Priorities remain relevant in the contemporary environment for continuation for a further 12 months?

250 word limit:

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) recognises the significance, and relevance of, the current Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and priorities.

Nevertheless, it is critical that outcomes from any priorities supported through the MRFF be characterised by:

- Improved patient care, access, satisfaction, safety and quality of life;
- Reduced burden of disease and improved population health;
- System efficiencies being achieved;
- Improved productivity and responsiveness of the health workforce; and
- The demonstrated capacity of the sector to adapt to a changing health system environment.

This will result in better patient experience and health outcomes, improved access to timely health services and reduced costs either directly through out-of-pocket expenses or reduced government expenditure.

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association welcomes the opportunity to discuss our submission with you further.

7 Should any of the Priorities be emphasised or de-emphasised for the next 12 month period?

If you answered YES, please indicate what specific priorities and why? (max 250 words):

The implications of the current pandemic, and the preceding bushfire disaster, on public health and on the healthcare system have yet to be felt in their entirety. The impact of these events on both public health and the economy demonstrates the immense reliance of our health system to respond effectively.

To date, investment in research through the MRFF Priorities have largely focussed on clinical and epidemiological research. However, research that focuses on health policy, health economics and more directly on the structure and function of the health system is urgently needed.

Appropriate commitment and tangible resourcing for the Priority research areas, Comparative Effectiveness Research and Primary Care Research will be critical in ensuring that the evidence base needed to respond to the current health crisis, as well as future and ongoing challenges, is strong, nationally consistent, and suitable for both service planning and future research efforts.

If you answered NO, please indicate what specific priorities and why? (max 250):

8 Are there any unaddressed gaps in knowledge, capacity and effort across the healthcare continuum and research pipeline that would warrant changes to the Priorities?

If you identified a gap, please explain how it should be addressed in the 2020-2022 MRFF Priorities (max 250 words):

There is a pressing need to effectively prioritise tangible support for health systems research that identifies patterns within the health system, its policies and structures for better management of systems shock (COVID-19 pandemic), natural disasters (bushfires), and slow longitudinal challenges (chronic disease, increasing health systems costs) in an economic, rigorous manner that incorporates the complexity of the problems we face.

This will require the development and implementation of a health systems evaluation and resilience framework that can be used to:

- Identify the direct and indirect effects of COVID on health service delivery and health; governance, including specific implications for health service providers and healthcare workers.
- Evaluate the cost-effectiveness and impact of various health system and service measures, innovations and strategies introduced during the COVID pandemic (including for example, telehealth funding mechanisms, national real-time data on ICU capacity, enhanced regional leadership roles of PHNs and use of private hospital capacity to supplement public hospital capacity);
- Evaluate the preparedness of the health system and communities to respond swiftly to adverse health related events; and
- Plan for post-recovery and health system resilience to situation- related crises, including mental health.

Health systems research is the enabler of a resilient, efficient and effective health system and should be effectually prioritised over the next 12 months. For health services to meet people's needs into the future. The stronger the evidence base, the better equipped the system will be.

If you identified a second gap please explain how it needs to be addressed in the 2020-2022 MRFF Priorities (max 250 words):

The MRFF must prioritise the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and health services research that builds evidence and supports the translation of evidence into policy and practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health gains. This will require the support for research that:

- Benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities;
- Leads to the creation of new knowledge that can be translated into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health gains;
- Responds to the needs, and work in partnership with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and communities;
- Promotes the development of research systems that support the translation of evidence into policy and practice;
- Includes data collection for analysis of the effectiveness of health systems and services;
- Builds a contemporary evidence base which includes traditional healing and cultural models of care;
- Addresses institutional racism in health services, systems and research;
- Includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research leadership and the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

9 Is there an opportunity to consolidate the Priorities for the remaining twelve months of the Strategy?

Max 250 words:

Consolidating research priorities offers the MRFF funding scalability, systems efficiencies, lower administrative costs, and significant potential to increase research and health outcomes power.

However, in order for such an opportunity to provide meaningful value to Australia's health and medical research sector, the significant challenges associated with current MRFF research funding processes must first be addressed.

This includes:

- The need for increased transparency in decision making processes,
- Changes to grant mechanisms that effectively fosters trust amongst collaborative stakeholder relationships,
- Improving value creation and systems accountability,
- Consolidating not just MRFF priorities, but also the broader Australian roadmap for health and medical research funding and reform,
- Greater consideration of leadership changes and the needs of emerging leaders, and
- Greater focus on research outcomes that are aimed at improving the structure and function of the health system.

10 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the Priorities for 2020-2022?

Max 250 words:

COVID-19 has created new opportunities to reconstruct the health and medical research landscape in ways that were not possible during ordinary times. This new reality has seen the unprecedented acceleration and transformation of Australian research, to which the MRFF has made a significant contribution.

However, the impact of the pandemic on many essential programs of work already in situ, has highlighted the essential need to support the research pipeline in its entirety, from basic discovery to translation - and including the Australian health and medical research workforce.

Addressing these challenges will require long-term reframing of the current research funding systems architecture, including the MRFF, in a manner that is transparent and accountable.

Ensuring that investment through the MRFF strengthens Australia's capacity to conduct world leading research, supported by a productive and world class workforce, will be necessary for a resilient and responsive health system that can innovatively respond to current health challenges, as well as those that are ongoing, well into the future.

11 Do you consent to components of your submission being made publicly available?

Yes