

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AUSTRALIA

POLICY SUBMISSION

28 FEBRUARY 2025

Health and Medical Research Strategy Survey 1

Science & Technology Australia thanks the Health and Medical Research Strategy for the opportunity to respond to Survey 1.

Science & Technology Australia is the peak body for the nation's science and technology sectors, representing 140 member organisations and more than 225,000 scientists and technologists. We connect science and technology with governments, business and the community to advance science's role in solving some of humanity's greatest challenges.

Included below are responses to questions that will contribute directly to the Health and Medical Research Strategy.

In considering the following list of focus areas, please indicate the top three that should be considered in developing a National Health and Medical Research Strategy?

- Health and Medical Research Workforce** **2**
- Funding across the research pipeline** **3**
- Collaboration across jurisdictions/organisations and individual
- Avoiding duplication of research
- Regional, rural and remote health
- Burden of disease
- Data access and sharing facilitation
- Community need
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health
- Health inequity
- Supporting and increasing collaboration
- Early-mid career researchers
- Commercialisation and translation of research outcomes
- Other (please specify)** **1**

There are no three topics in this list that can be dominant in the Strategy's focus. All are necessary to address Australia's health and medical research sector and population needs.

Each of the above topics working together is crucial to ensuring a strong health and medical research capability, which, in turn, is crucial to health and wellbeing of Australians. Failure to recognise the complex interplay of all these factors will result in a poor strategy that fails to meet the nation's needs.

A critical omission from the above list is research infrastructure. This is the lifeblood for some of our most advanced research. The MRFF funds medical research infrastructure, as does the NCRIS administered through the Education portfolio. Failure to recognise and support the critical facilities funded under these schemes will undermine Australia's health and medical research capability, as well as our ability to deliver high quality research and transform it into accessible health outcomes.

The list also omits explicit consideration of the discovery research that drives the knowledge underpinning the development of new treatments and therapies.

How often should a National Health and Medical Research Strategy be reviewed?

- Once every 3 years
- Once every 5 years**
- Other: please specify below

Five years is an adequate frequency of time to update the Strategy as it allows for implementation to be assessed and inform the next Strategy. This will also ensure the Strategy's policies persist beyond single election cycles.

When a draft National Health and Medical Research Strategy is released to the sector for review and feedback, what is your preferred method of consultation?

- Webinar/s, including Q and A sessions
- Written submission opportunity**
- Survey Roundtable discussion**
- Other: please specify below

What is the most important benefit which should be achieved through the National Health and Medical Research Strategy?

The Strategy must foster a system that supports the essential discovery research, right through to medical trials, clinical application, policy translation, and product development. This would include robust and secure funding for each step of this pathway – with clear articulation for work from NHMRC funding through the MRFF (and any other government funding programs).

The Strategy must also consider Australia's unique priorities, and where the system can best leverage international partnerships.

Is there anything you would like to raise that is not otherwise captured by these questions?

Australia's Health and Medical Strategy is inextricably linked to the nation's broader R&D system. As such, the Strategy cannot be developed in isolation and there must be a considered effort to ensure coherence between funding systems (i.e. the delineation between ARC and NHMRC priorities) as well as coordination between state and territory governments and philanthropic organisations supporting health and medical research.

We commend the National Strategy for connecting with the Strategic Examination of R&D however it is not enough and we would urge greater, in-depth collaboration directly with the sector. STA is well placed to act as a conduit for this conversation as the peak body for the STEM sector and can organise a roundtable of key stakeholders through its membership and network to reflect this integrated environment.

Professor Sharath Sriram
President
Science & Technology Australia

Ryan Winn
Chief Executive Officer
Science & Technology Australia



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