

POLICY SUBMISSION

27 FEBRUARY 2026

MRFF RESEARCH MISSION PROGRAM – SURVEY

Science & Technology Australia thanks the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for the opportunity to respond to the MRFF Research Mission Program Survey.

Science & Technology Australia is the peak body for the nation's science and technology sectors, representing nearly 150 member organisations and more than 235,000 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.

A significant challenge facing the entire research sector is ensuring sufficient funding to deliver programs, initiatives and projects effectively – Australia's entire research system is feeling the strain of available funding streams not keeping pace with the ever-increasing costs of doing research.

The Medical Research Future Fund was established in 2014, with express purpose to support health and medical research. The object of the *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015* states:

The object of this Act is to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians by establishing the Medical Research Future Fund to provide grants of financial assistance to support medical research and medical innovation.

The creation of the MRFF was a welcome and effective boost for Australian health and medical research, with the fund having supported a wealth of quality research for the benefit of the nation.

However, a complexity of the MRFF is that the fund does not cover indirect costs of research, such as the cost of electricity and building maintenance for research institutions carrying out MRFF-funded research. Ultimately, this has placed significant strain on other funding streams, namely the university Research Block Grants.

The 3rd 10-year MRFF Investment Plan sets a target for funding disbursements at \$650 million per year. While setting this determined disbursement rate delivers a clear and predictable level of funding certainty, \$650 million is significantly less than the amount the Future Fund Board of Guardians determined could be made available for MRFF grants:

Financial year	Maximum available for MRFF grants
2023–24	\$870 million
2024–25	\$973 million
2025–26	\$1,055 million
2026–27	\$1,100 million

Reference: [Medical Research Future Fund | Department of Finance](#)

Additionally, unlike other grant programs, the total MRFF disbursement amount does not even increase by indexation each year. Given annual increases in wages and research consumables – e.g. power, electricity, chemicals etc. This means that, in real terms, the available funds for research decreases every year.

MRFF funding should be boosted by bringing total MRFF funding closer to the maximum amount determined by the Future Fund Board of Guardians each year, with increased ability to support the indirect costs of research. This would deliver a major – and much needed – boost to Australia’s health and medical research sector, and place it on a more sustainable footing. It would also enable the MRFF Missions Program to deliver deeper support to priority research areas. Leaving these funds sitting in the account while the research system continues to struggle with increasing costs, declining grant success rates and plummeting workforce morale runs directly counter to the MRFF Act’s purpose. Disbursing additional funds would ensure the MRFF is better able to meet its legislated objective to support Australian health and medical research.

Another key challenge for Australia research is the lack of continuity and support for research as it progresses from discovery phase through to translation/commercialisation or clinical implementations. Early stage successful projects often must compete for new funding to progress, risking entering the ‘valley of death’ before industry is ready to support further project development.

The MRFF Missions program could consider improved approaches to deliver continuous support for successful projects as they progress along the research pipeline.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if Science & Technology Australia can be of any further assistance.

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