

National Health Literacy Strategy Framework Consultation

In October 2022, The Commonwealth Department of Health released a [draft National Health Literacy Strategy](#) for consultation. The new Health Literacy strategy is being developed under the [National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030](#). As such the Literacy Strategy is intended to provide the public with the skills and abilities to maintain their own health and wellbeing as well as improve interactions with the health system.

Research Australia's submission

Responses to the consultation were sought by electronic survey. Research Australia's submission was lodged on 8 November. The survey questions and responses are reproduced below.

Vision

All Australians are enabled to make informed decisions about their health.

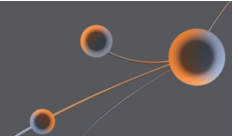
Research Australia indicated its support for the Strategy's vision.

Key Principles

The following Key Principles are identified in draft Strategy:

- Apply an equity lens
- Address cultural and linguistic diversity
- Be people and community centred
- Address needs across the life-course
- Be evidenced-based
- Be practical and implementable

Research Australia expressed support for the Principles and welcomed recognition of the need for the Strategy to be evidence based and 'the need for further investment in interventional and translational health literacy research'. The research is needed to understand what is working, where gaps continue to exist, and to ensure the strategy continues to be based on the latest best evidence. Research Australia recommends the strategy incorporate a funded research agenda to achieve and maintain these components.



Aims

The following Key Principles are identified in draft Strategy:

Aim 1: Systems, policies and practices within and across sectors support an effective health literacy environment

Aim 2: All Australians can access health information that is easy to understand, trustworthy and culturally appropriate

Aim 3: All Australians have the skills to find and use reliable health information across the varied media they use

Research Australia expressed its support for the Strategy's Aims:

In response to a request for example of actions that could be taken to support the aims, we responded that Research Australia's polling has demonstrated that trust in Government websites as a source of reliable health information has increased during the course of the COVID pandemic. ([Research Australia Annual Public Poll 2022](#)). The Government should take the opportunity to build on this trust by widely promoting a range of health literacy resources from and on Government websites. This can include links for Government websites to trusted resources on other websites.

Leaders and Partners

The draft Strategy identifies the following key leaders and partners:

- Governments
- Other organisations
- Workplaces, education institutions and service providers
- People and communities

In response, Research Australia noted that the importance of research is recognised in the requirement for the Strategy to be evidence based, but they are absent from the above list. Researchers have a role as partners in providing effective health literacy resources and evaluating the ongoing effectiveness of the Strategy, and where and how it can be improved.

Other observations and advice

Older Australians are not identified as a particular target demographic and yet they are the cohort that has most contact with our health system and is most in need of aspects of health literacy as they relate to navigating the health system, understanding their options for treatment, and actions they can take to remain well. Research Australia recommends including older people as a specific target demographic. Specific considerations for this age group include interactions between the health and aged care systems, including residential and in home aged care services.