

## Research Australia's Submission

### Response to the National Health and Medical Research Strategy

Research Australia, as the national alliance and peak of health and medical research innovation, is pleased to have the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our members and the broader sector. The National Health and Medical Research Strategy offers a timely, much needed, and unique opportunity to reform and reimagine a whole of system that sets up a future Australia. One that is responsive, affordable, and sustainable. Research Australia has advocated for the Strategy since 2021, and we are committed to its success.

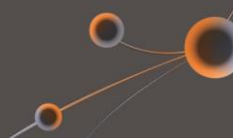
It is our view the National Health and Medical Research Strategy must

- Be developed by the sector for the sector;
- Be led by a long-term vision and a theory of change;
- Facilitate coordinated, sustainable investment in research;
- Strengthen the connection between research and healthcare;
- Support emerging innovative health industries;
- Embed collaboration across the sector through leadership, governance and systems; and
- Ensure accountability through embedding monitoring and evaluation of measures of success

We appreciate there will be a range of opportunities for input from the sector during the development of both the draft Strategy and final Strategy, however, Research Australia does have some concerns with regards to the Survey. In the main the Survey does not build on existing evidence from the sector on the systemic reforms required to enable a strong health and medical research innovation sector. There are also no questions related to the governance, accountability, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy (except for how regularly should it be reviewed). The picklist of focus areas provide a fundamental challenge in identifying priorities, as from our sector's perspective, all would be considered a priority.

Our responses to the Survey offer recommendations to address these concerns as part of the development of the Draft Strategy. Research Australia recommends and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to:

- The development of a long-term vision supported by a Theory of Change for the sector, across the whole pipeline;
- Identification of interconnected Priority Reforms with key action areas to enable systemic reform;
- Identification of leadership and governance structures in partnership with the sector to ensure accountability during the implementation of the Strategy;
- Identification of accountable and transparent processes to identify research priorities;
- Development of a Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework with outcome measures defined jointly by the sector and government; and
- Alignment with other relevant reforms, frameworks and policy agendas at a Commonwealth and jurisdictional level



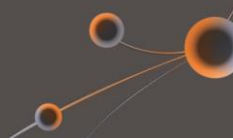
We are encouraged by the ongoing dialogue with the Chair, Ms Rosemary Huxtable PS OAM and look forward to continuing to work in partnership to ensure the Strategy strengthens the health and medical research innovation sector. A strong health and medical research sector enables greater health outcomes and productivity through better health; drives efficiencies across Australia's expensive health system; and delivers new revenue opportunities through the export of health innovations.

For further information about our submission, please contact [talia.avrahamzon@researchaustralia.org.au](mailto:talia.avrahamzon@researchaustralia.org.au), Head of Policy and Advocacy.



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28 February 2025



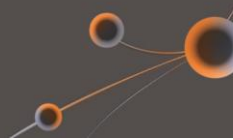
Survey Questions	
<p><b>In considering the following list of focus areas, please indicate the top three that should be considered in developing a National Health and Medical Research Strategy</b></p>	Health and Medical Research Workforce
	Funding across the research pipeline
	Collaboration across jurisdictions/organisations and individual researchers
	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)

This list provides a diverse list of focus areas, all of which could be considered critical and should be addressed in the National Strategy. There are many critical gaps in the list including collaboration across the sectors and pipeline, and gender equity, just to name a few. However, each focus area listed could be interpreted a range of ways a respondent could consider these focus areas are already included. In addition, the way they are listed reflects a mix of priorities, processes, activities and reforms. They also don't fully align with existing evidence of what the sector considers to be the priorities for the Strategy.

In order to prevent a pick list of priorities, our recommendation for the National Strategy is to firstly develop a Theory of Change, and then to identify the key Priority Reforms needed to achieve an overarching vision. Research Australia has undertaken extensive consultations and reviews to support this.

In 2020-21 Research Australia undertook national consultations that identified the need for a National Strategy. Further to this, since the pandemic, Research Australia has closely examined how we tackle the challenges and opportunities of the sector. There have been over 550 recommendations proposed by the 20 health and medical research reviews conducted nationally in the last 15 years. Some of these recommendations have been partially or fully implemented, many have not. Consistent themes can be identified across these recommendations:

- Driving greater efficiencies and improvements in health and medical research funding;
- Developing a research informed health system;
- Improving the relationship between research and industry and increasing the capacity for research commercialisation; and



- Concerns about the research workforce<sup>1</sup>.

The most consistent recommendation across almost all the reviews has been to improve the funding structure of health and medical research. These recommendations do not just propose increasing funding but rather suggest improving the structure of health and medical research funding to be more streamlined and efficient. Over half of the 20 reviews also recommend establishing a national health and medical research strategy and governing body to help drive these efficiencies and improvements in funding.

In 2024, Research Australia undertook further consultation with its members and have identified the following key priorities for the sector across the pipeline that we view as the overarching Priority Reforms:

- **Whole of systems approach to health and medical research**
- **Smarter Investment in health and medical research**
- **A diverse and supported health and medical research Workforce**
- **Advancing Primary Prevention**

**Underpinning these priorities are equitable health outcomes; collaboration; systems integration; AI, data and digital health governance and leadership.**

A significant gap in the list is prevention. Advancing research into prevention is critical, it includes understanding social determinants and commercial determinants (as well as other determinants, such as cultural) of health and wellbeing and how to address health equity and reduce the burden of disease on individuals, the healthcare systems and the economy.

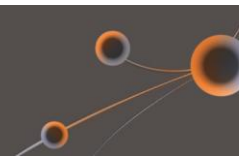
*Research Australia recommends and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to:*

- *The development of a long-term vision supported by a Theory of Change for the sector, across the whole pipeline;*
- *Identification of interconnected Priority Reforms with key action areas to enable systemic reform;*
- *Identification of accountable and transparent processes to identify research priorities*

<b>How often should a National Health and Medical Research Strategy be reviewed?</b>	Once every 3 years
	Once every 5 years

Whilst it is critical to ensure a review process for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy, Research Australia recommends the starting point to be ‘what is the timeframe of the Strategy?’.

<sup>1</sup> Research Australia. [Consultation Paper Post pandemic opportunities for health medical research innovation](#) (2021)



Research Australia recommends the Strategy to have a long term vision, supported by a Theory of Change. The Theory of Change should set out the key priority reforms needed to achieve the vision, which we suggest should be beyond the timeframe of the Strategy. Research Australia suggests the timeframe of the Strategy should be at least 10 years, in line with other key government strategies. Following on from identifying the Strategy’s timeframe, the review process can then be identified. The Strategy should also take into account and align with other related review process (such as the MRFF Strategies and Priorities processes) to ensure efficiencies and effective engagement, collaboration, and consultation with the sector.

It is critical that the National Strategy develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework as part of the development of the Strategy to ensure accountability is embedded as a fundamental cornerstone of its implementation. The M&E Framework should be informed by the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, as well as ensure measures of success are aligned to the National Strategy’s Theory of Change and jointly determined by the sector and government. As such, a governance structure to support the implementation of the Strategy should be identified during the development of the National Strategy.

The M&E Framework should also identify gaps in available data and implement strategies to address such gaps. For example, Australia does not have effective methodology for monitoring and evaluating measures to support innovation, to enable us to understand what works and what doesn’t (Industry Innovation and Science Australia, 2023, Barriers to collaboration and commercialisation, p 42). As such, the National Strategy and its M&E Framework should then identify investments that not only will provide the data for the monitoring and evaluation the Strategy, but also support activity on health and medical research sector, as well as contribute to the whole research and innovation pipeline and systems improvement.

*Research Australia recommends and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to:*

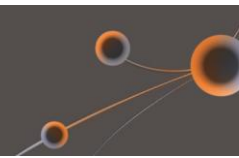
- *Development of a Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*
- *Identification of leadership and governance structures in partnership with the sector to ensure accountability during the implementation of the Strategy*

<b>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?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Webinars</li> <li>&gt; Written Submission opportunity</li> <li>&gt; Survey</li> <li>&gt; Roundtable discussion</li> <li>&gt; Other</li> </ul>
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Research Australia welcomes all these processes, and the opportunity to develop shared engagement and consultation processes approaches with our members.

<b>What is the most important benefit which should be achieved through the National Health and Medical Research Strategy?</b>	
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The National Health and Medical Strategy will strengthen the health and medical research innovation sector. A strong health and medical research sector enables greater productivity through better health; drives efficiencies across Australia’s expensive health system and delivers new revenue opportunities through the export of health innovations.



In order to achieve this, Research Australia recommends the development and implementation of the Strategy to have the following actions:

- Be developed by the sector for the sector;
- Be led by a long-term vision and a theory of change;
- Facilitate coordinated, sustainable investment in research;
- Strengthen the connection between research and healthcare;
- Support emerging innovative health industries;
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Developing the National Health and Medical Research Strategy provides an opportunity to bring a whole of pipeline and whole of government approach to health and medical research and innovation – in its development as well as the final product. The National Health and Medical Research Strategy represents a real opportunity to develop clear national priorities in consultation and engagement with the entire pipeline. Research Australia reiterates the necessity that the Strategy must include a strong focus on innovation and industry. Just as the Strategic Examination of R&D, currently underway, must have a dedicated focus on health and medical research innovation.

The National Strategy offers an opportunity to be cross-portfolio and jurisdictions, and bigger than any single funding body. This will enable greater collaboration between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments in better aligning funding for medical research and investment in existing and emerging health industries, to foster seamless integration of research and healthcare.

The National Strategy should also identify and align with other strategies that either enable better health outcomes, or enable the strengthening of the health and medical research innovation sector. Some existing strategies the National Health and Medical Research Strategy needs to align with and influence include (but not limited to):

- National One Stop Shop
- National Centre for Disease Control
- Universities Accord
- Research Commercialisation Plan and associated programs
- National Preventative Health Strategy
- National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability
- Australia's Disability Strategy
- Closing the Gap National Agreement

*Research Australia recommends and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to:*

- *Alignment with other relevant reforms, frameworks and policy agendas at a Commonwealth and jurisdictional level*

Any other input?

Research Australia's previous consultations and reports offer further information:

- [Research Australia 2020-2021 National Consultation: Post Pandemic Opportunities for Health and Medical Research and Innovation](#)
- [Research Australia 2025-26 Pre-budget submission](#)

