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Senator Zed Seselja
Chair, Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

7 August 2015

Dear Senator Seselja,

RE: Question on Notice, Inquiry into the Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015 and the Medical Research Future Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2015

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee hearing in relation to the inquiry into the Medical Research Future Fund Bill 2015 and the Medical Research Future Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2015 held on the 4th of August in Melbourne. Thank you also for the opportunity to respond on notice to the Committee's request for our opinion of the definition of medical innovation provided by the MRFF Action Group in their written submission to the inquiry. The proposed MRFF Action Group definition reads as follows:

“medical innovation means the application, commercialisation and translation of medical research into new or better ways to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and the community.”

In response, whilst we fully support the MRFF Action Group's concern that the term 'treatments' is too narrow, the proposed rewording of the definition infers that the process of commercialisation is integral to the translation of knowledge gained from medical research. This is obviously not the case, best illustrated by considering clinical and health services research, or comparative effectiveness research assessing new versus existing healthcare interventions -both an equally important component of 'medical innovation'.

ACTA does not disagree that supporting a diverse, innovative and profitable commercial sector should be one of the aims of the MRFF, but we strongly urge the Committee to ensure that the legislation guiding a strategic and balanced disbursement of public funds from the MRFF is underpinned by definitions of activities that serve the stated aims of the fund to “*demonstrate greater value and returns [from medical research] to the Australian people*”.

It is vital that the objectives of the fund remain to support medical innovation (however defined) **and** medical research, by setting strategies and creating funding streams that will improve the health outcomes and wellbeing of Australians in a timely manner and increase the productivity of the health system.

Professor John Zalberg OAM
on behalf of the Australian Clinical Trials Alliance