

Medical Research Future Fund



Next Generation Clinical Researchers

INVESTMENT

The Australian Government will invest **\$8 million** to ensure the supply of high quality next generation research talent through boosting the scale of existing National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) fellowship schemes.

KEY ELEMENTS

- **Career Development Fellowships (CDF) Scheme** – enables early to mid-career investigators to establish themselves as independent, self-directed researchers with a focus on capacity building in the clinical, population health, biomedical and bioinformatics fields.
- **Translating Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowships Scheme** – provides support for health professionals to translate evidence into healthcare and public health improvements.
- **Practitioner Fellowships (PF) Scheme** – bridges the gap between the acquisition of new knowledge from research and its implementation into practice among clinical, public health and health service professionals.

RATIONALE

- Health and medical research depends largely on workforce talent.
- Early to mid-career researchers are a cohort known to be at risk of career shift and are key to sector productivity and sustainability.
- Better connections between clinicians, health service management and industry with academia creates essential collaborations for innovation.
- NHMRC fellowships are highly prestigious and competitive, and identify excellent talent potential.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Increased engagement of research-focussed clinicians in problem-solving and the translation of research into clinical practice and commercial potential.
- Clinician researcher career establishment and diversified career pathways.
- Improved health and medical research sector retention and capacity.
- Reinforcement of Australia's position as a health and medical research innovator.

MEDICAL RESEARCH FUTURE FUND

The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) demonstrates the Government's strong commitment to research and innovation. The MRFF provides a long term sustainable source of funding for endeavours that aim to improve health outcomes, quality of life and health system sustainability.

The MRFF will double direct Australian Government funding for health and medical research.

The MRFF is a dedicated vehicle for priority investment in health and medical research.

The MRFF, established under the *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015*, provides grants of financial assistance to support health and medical research and innovation in improving the health and wellbeing of Australians. It operates as an endowment fund with the capital preserved in perpetuity. At maturity, the MRFF will reach \$20 billion.

The first disbursements from the MRFF focus on translating research into real health benefits, breakthrough investments in new technologies and challenges, and enhancing Australia's reputation for research excellence and leadership.

Over \$65 million will be injected into a range of programs that cut across the research pipeline – fuelling new discoveries and the translation and commercialisation of great Australian ideas.





KEY FACTS

- Strengthening Australia's competitive edge in global innovation requires nurturing the skills of scientists and health professionals.
- 'People support' in the form of fellowships fosters the next generation of change agents and leaders in healthcare.
- Building clinical researcher capacity is critical to asking and answering the right questions related to effective care interventions, and improving health system safety, quality and efficiency.
- Normal practice is that clinical professionals have to choose between a life as a researcher or practitioner – this creates a divide between the research and the patient.
- Results from a 2016 national survey indicate 83 per cent considered leaving research for another career, the majority of these being mid-career researchers.
- Career progression barriers can include: grant application efforts; career interruptions; limited mentoring; lack of capacity in newly emerging disciplines and non-clinical research; and lack of track record.
- Fellowships provide dedicated time and resources so that successful applicants can focus on developing the skills needed to position them and their ideas for success.
- Healthcare innovations of the future will be products of trans-disciplinary and multi-sector collaborations –bringing together the life sciences with engineering and industry to push the boundaries of what is possible.

IMPLEMENTATION

- NHMRC will administer the investment utilising existing fellowship schemes peer review and administration processes.
- Funding will increase the number of fellowships available across the CDF, TRIP and PF schemes.
- Fellowship awards will be announced from early 2017-18.

ADVISORY BOARD

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board, established in accordance with the *MRFF Act*, is responsible for consulting on and developing a five-yearly Strategy that sets out the vision, aims and objectives for the MRFF and an accompanying two-yearly list of Priorities. The Government must consider the Strategy and Priorities in making MRFF investment decisions.

STRATEGY 2016-2021

VISION: A health system fully informed by quality health and medical research.

Identifies key strategic investment platforms that set to position Australia to meet future healthcare challenges:

- Strategic and international horizons
- Data and infrastructure
- Health services and systems research
- Capacity and collaboration
- Trials and translation
- Commercialisation

PRIORITIES 2016-2018

The first MRFF disbursements address identified Priorities under each strategic platform, are a mix of strategic investments, and use a range of administrative mechanisms to maximise impact. More disbursements will occur in 2017-18.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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