



**aamri**

Association of Australian  
Medical Research Institutes

## SUBMISSION

# RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE MEDICAL RESEARCH FUTURE FUND (MRFF) MISSION FOR CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH ROADMAP

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# AAMRI Response to the consultation on the Medical Research Future Fund: Mission for Cardiovascular Health Roadmap

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## 1 About AAMRI

The Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) is the peak body for medical research institutes in Australia. Our 52 member institutes undertake over a third of government-funded medical research and work on a broad spectrum of human health issues. Their research ranges from fundamental biomedical discovery through to clinical and public health research and translation of research from bench to bedside. Together, they aim to drive innovation in healthcare to improve the lives and livelihoods of people in Australia and worldwide.

## 2 Responses to consultation questions

### 2.1 Scope

#### 2.1.1 Does the proposed scope of the Roadmap address the scope of cardiovascular disease that should be addressed in the context of the Mission?

The proposed scope is defined as “vascular health, heart health and stroke” which does capture the breadth of cardiovascular disease (CVD) that should be addressed by the Mission. These terms should encompass CVD that develops from both known and unknown causes, as this mission is an opportunity to increase our understanding of causes that are not well understood through research. CVD can be caused by diabetes, kidney disease, eye conditions, obesity, cancer and a variety of other health conditions and where appropriate research in these areas should be fundable through this mission.

As the primary goal of the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is to improve health outcomes through investment in research, the scope should state that the Mission is entirely focussed on this - improving CVD health outcomes through research. The current mention of developing a global biotech industry would be best moved to the Goals section.

### 2.2 Vision

*The Vision provides a statement on the goal of the Mission in terms of improving health outcomes.*

#### 2.2.1 Is the Vision statement appropriate for the investment being made towards the Mission?

The overarching sentiment of the vision statement is appropriate for the Mission, however, the current wording does not distinguish this investment as specifically for research. We recommend including a specific reference to “research” to recognise that this is the main

investment and driver for improving health outcomes for cardiovascular disease (CVD). Leaving the nature of the investment ambiguous could imply increasing clinical services and healthcare delivery to improve health outcomes. For example, the second sentence could be changed to: “This strategic investment IN CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RESEARCH will significantly lead to an improved step-change associated with the individual and broader community impacts of heart disease, stroke and vascular diseases for all Australians.”

### 2.2.2 Can the Vision be strengthened?

The vision could be strengthened by:

1. including specific reference to “research” as the major investment of the mission and driver for improving health outcomes for cardiovascular disease (also see response to question 5).
2. explicitly stating that “all Australians” refers to improving health for everyone irrespective of background, sex, age and any other social and economic factors. This change would help to emphasise the Mission’s aim to address inequalities in our understanding of CVD in different groups in the population (outlined in Underpinning Principles).
3. stating that the improved impacts of CVD research include better prevention, diagnostics and treatments.

## 2.3 Mission Statement

*The Mission statement provides a focus on how the overarching framework / platform of the roadmap will guide the Mission.*

### 2.3.1 Is the Mission statement appropriate for the vision and goals of the Mission?

The mission statement is appropriate for the goals of the Mission as it focuses on this large-scale investment as a unique opportunity to accelerate research outcomes by promoting and enabling a collaborative environment (“world-class ecosystem”).

### 2.3.2 Can the Mission statement be strengthened?

The mission statement could be strengthened by stating that investment in research leads to improved health outcomes for cardiovascular disease, which will link the mission statement to the vision of this Mission and the broader goals of the Medical Research Future Fund (to improve health outcomes through research).

## 2.4 Goals

*The goals highlight the aims for the Mission, most importantly what outcomes are the focus of the investment flagships.*

### 2.4.1 Are the key goals appropriately articulated?

AAMRI supports the first five (of eight) points in the Goals section of the Roadmap which are appropriately articulated. The final three goals in this section would be more appropriately titled as strategies that will be used to achieve the goals. These final three points will be crucial for achieving the goals of the Mission and should be included under a different heading such as “Strategy” that could follow the “Goals” section.

### 2.4.2 Should any of the goals be further strengthened in other areas of the Roadmap?

To appropriately reflect the Mission statement, the list of goals should be preceded by “Through our research system, the Mission aims to...” which would highlight that the Mission is investing in research. Without this, the first four goals described in the Roadmap could be interpreted as increasing current clinical services or healthcare delivery rather than investing in research.

To complement the Goals, the bullet points in the Strategy section (described in the response to question 9) should be preceded by “The Mission goals will be addressed by:” and wording of each point modified accordingly (eg “To invest strategically...” becomes “investing strategically in...”).

## 2.5 Underpinning Principles

*Key principles will guide the focus and implementation of the Mission. They should be referred to at each stage of investment and keep the Mission on track.*

### 2.5.1 Are the key underpinning principles appropriately articulated?

AAMRI would like to state our support for the following points articulated in the Underpinning Principles:

- Recognising that not all causes of CVD are known by stating that “much remains unsolved”. We recommend highlighting the need for mechanistic studies to address the gaps in understanding causes and risk factors, particularly for previously neglected patient groups where these are not well understood. Studies of mechanism should be included in the Roadmap document.
- Stating the importance of investing in research across the pipeline - discovery, translational and implementation science - to address the unsolved problems in CVD.

- Recognising that research talent is essential to the success of the mission and should be prioritised for investment. We recommend including that the Mission will invest in ways to support researchers at all career stages.
- Recognising the important role of consumers and carers as partners in research
- Recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be partners in health research
- Recognising the need for equality in CVD care. This principle could be strengthened by referring to the need for research to address the health of all people equally alongside the need for equal access to best practice care.
- Highlighting that the large-scale investment opportunity of this Mission can strategically support cross-disciplinary research teams to find the most innovative solutions to unsolved CVD problems

### 2.5.2 Should any of the principles be further strengthened in other areas of the Roadmap?

It is unclear what level of support or priority for investment there will be for researchers in this Mission. As well-supported researchers at all career stages are essential to the Mission's success, we recommend recognising support for researchers as a high priority investment elsewhere in the Roadmap such as the Investment Considerations or new Strategy section (suggested in the response to question 9).

The need for research at all stages in the pipeline – discovery (basic), translational and implementation science – could be emphasised elsewhere in the Roadmap. Given the well-known improvements in health outcomes for CVD in recent decades, there is an incorrect perception that all causes of CVD are known and there may not be a need for early stage discovery science in this field. Emphasising the need for all stages of the pipeline elsewhere in the Roadmap would highlight the Mission's goal to address "unsolved" areas of CVD and inequalities in CVD care.

## 2.6 Investment Flagships and considerations

*Six key flagships for investment have been determined for the Mission.*

### 2.6.1 Do the six key flagship areas appropriately capture key priorities for the sector?

AAMRI supports the six flagships described for the Mission as they capture key priorities for CVD research and represent an opportunity for balanced investment across the research pipeline. We note that the first three flagships – Drug discovery, Bioengineering and Precision Medicine – recognise the need for investment in early-stage discovery (basic) science to better understand unknown risk factors, causes and better treatments, particularly for groups that have been neglected in previous studies. To complement these, we note that the last three flagships – Data, Clinical trials and Implementation and Policy – will address immediate clinical needs through translational, implementation and clinical approaches.

### 2.6.2 Are there any further areas of action that need to be referenced under each flagship?

The flagship name “Data” is very broad and would benefit from a more informative title to reflect the work that will be supported. A title such as “Data Science” or “Clinical Data Science” could better represent this flagship.

### 2.6.3 Do the investment considerations capture the key focus areas each investment flagship should factor in?

The investment considerations capture key areas for the flagships when taken together with the underpinning principles, indicated above as guides for investment and implementation of the Mission.

AAMRI supports the investment considerations outlined in the Roadmap, particularly:

- Support for research excellence through competitive, transparent peer review processes.
- Enhancing support across the research pipeline including the recognition that cross-disciplinary teams will be needed to tackle the biggest challenges in CVD research
- Tackling inequalities in healthcare, but this could be strengthened by referring to tackling inequalities through health research as well as healthcare.
- Support for researchers in point 2 (people and urgent capacity building) and point 7 (building capacity and sustainability in the CV research sector)
- The need for synergy with other funding and recognising the potential for leveraging funding from other sources.

We note that the investment considerations specifically highlight the need for innovative approaches to address secondary prevention. As it is unclear why primary prevention is not mentioned, we suggest including a justification for the focus on secondary prevention or to modify the statement to include primary prevention as well.