Members of the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board met with much enthusiasm and common focus at Parliament House on 4 May 2016. Members acknowledged the honour of being invited to form the inaugural Board for the Medical Research Future Fund, and expressed their personal commitment to ensuring the success of the Fund.

Under the Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015, the Advisory Board is tasked with determining the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy (Strategy) and related Priorities. The Strategy is determined every five years and the Priorities every two years.

The Board members, chaired by Professor Ian Frazer AC, were joined by the Minister for Health, the Hon Sussan Ley MP. The Board and Minister discussed the current state of health and medical research in Australia, the role the Advisory Board will play in shaping the Strategy and Priorities, and the opportunity for the Medical Research Future Fund to positively influence research that will benefit the Australian health system, the community and the economy.

The Advisory Board then discussed their role in delivering the Strategy and Priorities to Government. These important documents are to be taken into account by Government in determining program funding. The first disbursements from the Fund will occur 2016-17, with almost $800 million projected to be available over the next four years (2016-17 to 2019-20).

Members also discussed possible approaches to consulting on the development of the Strategy and Priorities and agreed to a two stage process that aims to ensure extensive and transparent communication with the health and medical research sector, health system managers and consumers.

The first stage of the consultation process - a call for written submissions - will be released on 6 May 2016. A consultation paper (incorporating suggested building blocks for the Strategy) and a pro forma for articulating priorities, together with instructions for making a written submission, will be available on the Department of Health consultation hub. Written submissions will be accepted until 6 June 2016.

The Advisory Board is keen to hear views and ideas from those who deliver health services, the research community, and those who use, or stand to benefit from, health and medical research. These opinions are essential to ensure an appropriate focus for the Medical Research Future Fund Strategy, and the initial round of Priorities.

A second meeting of the Advisory Board is scheduled for late June to discuss the submissions received. Following this, the second stage of the consultation process will commence in July 2016, with targeted consultations likely to take place in most capital cities.

Members of the Advisory Board look forward to working with the community to shape the Strategy and identify the Priorities for the Medical Research Future Fund.

Any queries regarding the operations of the Advisory Board can be directed to MRFF@health.gov.au.