



Australian Government
Department of Health

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Ministerial Submission – Standard
MS19-001103 Version (1)
Date sent to MO:13/09/19

To: Minister Hunt

Subject: POLICY APPROVAL AND EXPENDITURE APPROVAL FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH FUTURE FUND (MRFF) - EMERGING PRIORITIES AND CONSUMER DRIVEN RESEARCH (EPCDR) INVESTMENT PLAN (2019-20 TO 2023-24)

Critical date: 20 September 2019 to enable 2019-20 Grant Opportunities to progress in a timely manner.

Recommendations:

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3. Approve from the following options your preference for use of unallocated EPCDR funds:

- a) a mix of closed, non-competitive ad-hoc and open and contestable grant opportunities with each opportunity identified by you (ie the current approach)
- b) a perpetually open Grant Opportunity (similar to the International Clinical Trials Collaboration), to be assessed twice a year with a set of priorities for research agreed by you in advance of the Grant Opportunity opening
- c) a combination of option a) and option b) above whereby 50% of funds are allocated to a mix grant opportunities identified by you and 50% of funds are allocated to a perpetually open Grant Opportunity

3. Option a)

Approved/Not approved/Please discuss

Option b)

Approved/Not approved/Please discuss

Option c)

Approved/Not approved/Please discuss

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4. Note that the Departmental delegate will exercise the relevant approvals under the *Public Governance and Performance Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act) and the *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015*.

4. Noted

Signature:



Date:

14/10/19

Media Release required?

Comments:

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Issues:

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3. For currently unallocated EPCDR funds three options are identified for your consideration:
- option a) a mix of closed, non-competitive ad-hoc and open and contestable grant opportunities with each opportunity identified by you – this would continue current arrangements for this Initiative
 - option b) a perpetually open Grant Opportunity (similar to the International Clinical Trials Collaboration), to be assessed twice a year with a set of priorities for research agreed by you in advance of the Grant Opportunity opening – this would streamline future arrangements, increase transparency and provide stakeholders with a regular schedule to support applications
 - option c) a combination of option a) and option b) above whereby 50% of funds are allocated to a mix grant opportunities identified by you and 50% of funds are allocated to a perpetually open Grant Opportunity.

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4. The Department recommends option b) as it would enable greater transparency and opportunity for a variety of stakeholders to submit applications to be assessed and peer reviewed with grants awarded on merit. This option would be the least resource intensive and most cost effective option for the Department.
 - Option c would increase transparency in funding allocation for this initiatives at the same time as providing you discretion to allocate funds to emerging priorities and consumer initiative activities.

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8. The appropriate Departmental delegate will exercise the relevant approvals to commit relevant money under Section 23(3) of the PGPA Act.

Background:

The EPCDR Initiative is designed to support high quality research that improves patient care, translation of new discoveries and encourages joint collaboration of consumers and researchers in undertaking research in emerging priority areas. By doing so it will nurture the development of new treatments and cures, providing hope to many Australians with debilitating conditions. This Initiative builds on the Accelerated Research Initiative which was designed to stimulate targeted research in areas of identified unmet need or research effort.

The MRFF EPCDR Investment Plan 2019-20 to 2023-24 addresses four of the six strategic platforms of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy (Strategic and International Horizons, Health Services and Systems, Capacity and Collaboration and Trials and Translation) and areas of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2018-2020 related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Ageing and Aged Care, Consumer-driven research, Drug Repurposing, and Translational Research Infrastructure.

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Sensitivities:

Accelerated Research investments (now called EPCDR) have received criticism in the past for a lack of contestability. This sensitivity can be mitigated by highlighting that the EPCDR Initiative now consists of multiple open and closed grant rounds with a focus on collaboration between consumers and researchers in addressing unmet need and emerging priorities. Recipients are also asked to comply with the Government endorsed *MRFF Funding Principles* where appropriate.

Consultations:

Population Health and Sport Division, Health Grants and Network Division, and Grants Hubs.

Communication/Media Activities:

You have already announced the majority of projects under the EPCDR Investment Plan and the Department is in discussion with your Office about further announcements.

Impact on Rural and Regional Australians:

Rural and remote living Australians will benefit both directly through potential participation in research funded and indirectly via access to the result of research, primarily new approaches to tackling debilitating health conditions.

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