



## Executive Committee (EC)

### Topic Nomination Form

<b>Topic Name:</b>	Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Policy statement– Department of Health employee participation in research activities funded by the MRFF
<b>Theme:</b>	Governance: Risk Management and assurance Portfolio matters such as policy/program items
<b>Outcome:</b>	Outcomes  1. Agreement that the policy statement be adopted by the Department of Health so that staff are provided with clarity on the circumstances under which they can participate in research activities funded by the MRFF.
<b>Description:</b>	<p><i>The extent to which employees can participate in activities funded by the MRFF.</i></p> <p>HRMO presents for consideration a policy statement clarifying the way in which employees can participate in activities that may be funded by the MRFF, specifically when that participation may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest or other probity issues.</p> <p>This policy is required to reinforce public confidence in the Department's commitment to the highest standards of probity, professionalism, integrity, and ethical conduct in its administration of the MRFF. This statement complements the Health and Medical Research Office's Conflict of Interest Policy.</p> <p>The policy proposes limiting employee involvement in applications for funding to the MRFF however allows participation in implementation of MRFF funded research projects, eg to provide policy and program context and input. In short, it proposes limiting involvement pre-award and enabling involvement post-award.</p> <p>The MRFF provides grant funding to support Australian health and medical research (\$627.5 million in 2021-22). This funding is administered through HMRO, supported by the NHMRC, Business Grants Hub and Cancer Australia.</p>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	TBD: 2022 dates not yet available
<b>Time Required:</b>	15 minutes
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Paul McBride, Acting Deputy Secretary Strategic Evidence and Research Group
<b>Presenter:</b>	Dr Masha Somi

**Australian Government****Department of Health**

	CEO - Health and Medical Research Office Health Economics and Research Division s22
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	s22 Director – Strategy and Governance section Health and Medical Research Office s22

Once you have completed this form, please email it to the Secretariat team s22

Please note: once your topic is confirmed if you wish to defer or delay an item, written approval must be provided.

This document has been released under  
the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)  
by the Department of Health and Aged Care

s22

**From:** s22  
**Sent:** Monday, 7 March 2022 10:16 PM  
**To:** s22  
**Subject:** Fwd: FW: Executive Committee | Topic Nominations 8 March 2022 [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Attachments:** Executive Committee Agenda Paper -HMRO- staff participation in MRFF research activities (Dep Sec approved) (002).docx; Attachment A -Departmental staff participation in MRFF research activities-policy statement -(Dep Sec approved).DOCX; Attachment B-MRFF Declaration of Interests and Confidentiality Policy March 2021.DOCX; DEP SEC ENDORSED AND SIGNED Executive Committee Nomination Form - HMRO-Staff participation in MRFF research activities.PDF

FYI

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** SOMI, Masha <Masha.Somi@health.gov.au>  
**Date:** 7 March 2022 at 10:14:19 pm AEDT  
**Subject:** FW: Executive Committee | Topic Nominations 8 March 2022 [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**To:** GOULD, Phillip <Phillip.GOULD@Health.gov.au>  
**Cc:** s22 @Health.gov.au, s22  
s22 @health.gov, s22 @health.gov.au, s22  
s22 @Health.gov.au, s22

Phillip

I have prepared some TPs for us to work through tomorrow at EC.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best, Masha

- HMRO has been working to develop policies to support implementation of the MRFF.
  - Some eggs include declarations of interests for Departmental staff and advisory groups and different aspects of grant administration.
- This policy is focused on providing clarity for Departmental staff regarding how to engage with MRFF grants.
  - The reason we think a policy is required is that Health plays such an active role in the design and implementation of MRFF grants, including in making decisions about the areas of research to be funded as well as which grants will be funded.
  - HMRO regularly works with relevant Branches and Divisions when developing Grant Opportunities, which raises the potential for a policy officer to support the design of a Grant Opportunity then become an applicant in the competitive process.
- Some examples of staff being approached to be involved in MRFF grants include being asked to be:
  - a project partner and provide a letter of support
  - a Chief Investigator

- involved in a project steering committee or group to support it's implementation
- We've split the framework into two:
  - Pre-award, especially for competitive grants – we're asking that staff not be involved in any processes before a grant is awarded
  - Post-award – we'd encourage staff to be involved in grant processes to help ensure the projects produce outcomes that are of relevance to policy and program needs.
- As a comparison, NHMRCs 2019 policy states that NHMRC staff may not apply for NHMRC funding.
- We have shared the policy with NHMRC, BGH and Cancer Australia – all are comfortable however BGH has asked us to make minor amendments to the words to indicate that they will comply with the principles set out in the policy, rather than the policy itself.
- Should EC agree to the propose policy, we'd finalise the policy and distribute it through networks.

---

s22

This document has been released under  
the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)  
by the Department of Health and Aged Care



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Policy statement: Department of Health participation in research activities funded by the MRFF

Date of Meeting: 8 March 2022

Agenda Item No.: [Agenda item number]

Branch/Division: Health and Medical Research Office, HERD

Sponsor: Paul McBride

#### OUTCOME

##### Outcomes

1. Agreement that the policy statement be adopted by the Department of Health so that staff are provided with clarity on the circumstances under which they can participate in research activities funded by the MRFF.
2. Note the policy statement will be shared with Health's Portfolio Agencies for their information.
3. If not agreed, guidance on next steps for the policy statement and further consideration by the Executive Committee.

##### Relevance to Executive Committee

The Department engages with the Australian research sector in the implementation and operation of the MRFF. The Health and Medical Research Office (HMRO) has developed a policy statement (Attachment A) to apply to all staff in the Department of Health, to support the integrity of MRFF granting activities. HMRO seeks Executive Committee agreement to the policy and the extent of its application across the Department of Health.

#### ISSUE

The draft MRFF Policy statement: *Department of Health employee participation in research activities funded by the MRFF* (Attachment A) seeks to assist employees of the Department of Health (the Department) understand:

- the extent to which their obligations as employees of the Department of Health allow or do not allow them to participate in activities funded by the MRFF
- the circumstances in which participation is allowed
- the processes to be followed with regards to seeking approval to participate in activities funded by the MRFF.

This policy aims to balance the need to promote public confidence in the procedural integrity of the MRFF in order to mitigate any potential reputational risks to the Department or the Minister with maintaining the Department's ability to collaborate with the health and medical research sector to achieve the MRFF's strategic priorities. The policy proposes limiting staff involvement in applications to the MRFF (ie pre-award) and allowing staff involvement in research programs funded through the MRFF (ie post-award).

This policy statement complements other Departmental policies and broader APS obligations on officials regarding the carrying out duties. In addition, staff in the HMRO are already subject to a MRFF Declaration of Interests and Confidentiality Policy (Attachment B) already outlines staff obligations in regard to MRFF funded research activities.



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Department of Health, MRFF and research

The MRFF provides grant funding to support Australian health and medical research (\$627.5 million in 2021-22). This funding is administered through HMRO, supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Business Grants Hub, and Cancer Australia.

HMRO manages and administers the MRFF, and collaborates with other Divisions on MRFF policy matters. Research questions and MRFF grant opportunities can arise from activities undertaken by the Department (Responses to Parliamentary Committees or Advisory Committees such as MSAC). HMRO and the Department more generally partner with organisations to share information and resources, including where such activity relates to health and medical research supported by the MRFF. This includes, for example, activities undertaken through the Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian National University (ANU), and support for access to Australian Government health and welfare data.

### Health's Portfolio Agencies and the MRFF

- The NHMRC and Cancer Australia (CA) are involved in the administration of MRFF grants.
- Under the *MRFF Act 2015*, corporate Commonwealth entities (CCE) are eligible to apply for funding from the MRFF. There are a number of CCEs within the Health portfolio including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Digital Health Agency.

This policy statement will complement Departmental processes already in place to monitor risks relating to the MRFF, for example through the MRFF Declaration of Interests and Confidentiality Policy (**Attachment B**).

Following consideration of the policy statement by the Executive Committee, the CEO of HMRO will write to Division heads and heads of NHMRC, Business Grants Hub (in the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources), and Cancer Australia (with reference to the Australian Brain Cancer Mission only) informing them of this policy statement and a mechanism to review the policy if there are unintended consequences. The document will be provided to the Health's Portfolio Agency heads for their information.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Proposed Department staff participation in Medical Research Future Fund Policy Statement

Attachment B – MRFF Declaration of Interests and Confidentiality Policy



s22

---

**From:** SOMI, Masha  
**Sent:** Friday, 18 March 2022 7:50 PM  
**To:** Alan.singh; Dinos, Angela; Claire Howlett; 'Paul Jackson'  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** Action: New Department Policy statement 'Participation by Department of Health employees in research activities funded by the Medical Research Future Fund' [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Alan, Angela, Claire, Paul

I wanted to share the final [Medical Research Future Fund \(MRFF\) Policy statement –Participation by Department of Health employees in research activities funded by the MRFF](#), which was recently endorsed by the Department's Executive Committee.

You will see your organisation is mentioned and that we have incorporated any feedback that has been provided on our earlier drafts.

The purpose of the policy is to assist impacted employees understand:

- the extent to which their obligations as employees of the Department of Health allow or do not allow them to participate in activities funded by the MRFF
- the circumstances in which participation is allowed
- the processes to be followed with regards to seeking approval to participate in activities funded by the MRFF, if required.

In summary, the policy will limit staff involvement in applications to the MRFF (what we call pre-award) and allow staff involvement in research programs funded through the MRFF (i.e post-award).

The policy statement has been published on the Health website so researchers have an understanding of the Department's position and so you and your staff have a common place refer any requests for information or clarification regarding the policy.

Please contact s22 or me if you would like more information.

Best, Masha

s22

**From:** SOMI, Masha  
**Sent:** Friday, 18 March 2022 7:45 PM  
**To:** GOULD, Phillip  
**Cc:** s22  
**Subject:** Action - New Department Policy statement 'Participation by Department of Health employees in research activities funded by the Medical Research Future Fund' [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Phillip

The '[Medical Research Future Fund \(MRFF\) Policy statement –Participation by Department of Health employees in research activities funded by the MRFF](#)' has been published.

Below is a proposed email to all the Heads of Divisions to start to communicate this policy statement. Inclusion of this published policy in a Team Health message is in train.

I will write to:

- National Health and Medical Research Council
- Business Grants Hub
- Cancer Australia

Best, Masha

**Phillip's email to Departmental Executives (FASs)**

To: All FAS; DL PortfolioAgencyHeads  
 CC: HERD inputs, HMRO inputs, Masha Somi  
 Subject: New Department Policy statement 'Participation by Department of Health employees in research activities funded by the Medical Research Future Fund'

Dear Colleagues

I am emailing to share the [Medical Research Future Fund \(MRFF\) Policy statement –Participation by Department of Health employees in research activities funded by the MRFF](#), endorsed at the Executive Committee meeting on 8 March 2022.

This policy statement is for Department of Health staff however impacts staff from the National Health and Medical Research Council, Cancer Australia and Business Grants Hub. While it does not cover other portfolio agencies, the Department's executive and I wished to provide it to all agency CEOs for information.

The policy statement aims to balance the need to promote public confidence in the procedural integrity of the MRFF with maintaining the Department's ability to collaborate with the health and medical research sector. In particular, it will assist impacted staff to understand:

- the extent to which their obligations as employees of the Department of Health allow or do not allow them to participate in activities funded by the MRFF
- the circumstances in which participation is allowed
- the processes to be followed with regards to seeking approval to participate in activities funded by the MRFF, if required.



In summary, the policy will limit staff involvement in applications to the MRFF (what we call pre-award) and allow staff involvement in research programs funded through the MRFF (i.e post-award).

The policy statement has been published on the Health website at the request of the Executive Committee so researchers have an understanding of the Department's position and so you and your staff have a common place refer any requests for information or clarification regarding the policy.

Please contact [@SOMI, Masha](#), CEO of Health and Medical Research Office, if you want more information on implementing this policy statement.

Regards  
Phillip

This document has been released under  
the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)  
by the Department of Health and Aged Care