



Australian Medical Research Advisory Board Terms of Reference 2021-2026

Preamble

This document outlines the terms of reference for the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board between 17 September 2021 and 28 February 2026.

As part of the 2014-15 Budget the Australian Government announced a major injection to health and medical research funding through the establishment of the \$20 billion Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). The MRFF provides additional funding to address medical research priorities, drive innovation, improve delivery of health care, boost the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system, and contribute to economic growth. It is expected to transform the way health and medical research is conducted in Australia.

Legislation

The *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015* (the Act) establishes the MRFF to provide grants of financial assistance to support medical research and innovation, with the objective of improving the health and wellbeing of Australians.

The Act also establishes the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board (Advisory Board) to determine the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy (Strategy) and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities (Priorities). The Strategy is determined every 5 years and the Priorities every 2 years.

Members of the Advisory Board will collectively possess expertise and experience in health and medical research (including across workforce), policy relating to health systems, management or delivery of health services (including clinical expertise), medical innovation, financing and investment, commercialisation, philanthropy and consumer issues relating to health.

Logistical Arrangements

- Advisory Board meetings will be held on an as required basis and at the discretion of the Chair.
- If a member is unable to attend, then proxies will not be permitted.
- If required, arrangements will be made to seek agreement to items utilising out-of-sessions arrangements.

- Papers for meetings will be provided to Advisory Board members one week prior to the scheduled meeting.
- The Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing will be the Secretariat for the Advisory Board. For non-urgent inquiries the following email address can be utilised: MRFF@health.gov.au.

Membership

The Advisory Board consists of 8 members and 2 non-voting international advisors. Details of the Advisory Board's membership on 28 February 2026 are at Appendix A.

Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory Board Members

- Given the Strategy and Priorities are only required to be determined every 5 years and 2 years respectively this leaves some periods of limited requirements from the members.
- During the years the Strategy and Priorities are required to be developed, it is envisaged at least 3 meetings will be conducted to ensure adequate discussion and generation of the work products.
- In the years where the Strategy and Priorities are not required to be developed, it is envisaged only one meeting per annum will be held. This meeting will ensure members are kept abreast of current Australian Government issues and discuss progress of the MRFF.
- Advisory Board members will be informed of program level funding outcomes through the use of out-of-session papers.
- Advisory Board members cannot be recipients of MRFF grant funding during the period of their appointment.
 - This does not apply to existing MRFF grant agreements that span the period of their appointment.

International Advisors

- The Minister may decide, from time to time, to invite international health and medical research experts to participate in AMRAB meetings.
 - Their role would be to provide expert feedback and advice in the context of relevant activities occurring internationally, which can inform the strategic direction of activities across the MRFF.
- This will be in an advisory capacity with remuneration not provided.

Quorum

- Six members of the Advisory Board are required to be in attendance at any meeting for a quorum to be achieved.
- If the Chair is unavailable to attend a scheduled meeting, the Deputy Chair will assume this role.

Declarations of Interest

Advisory Board members must abide by the MRFF Declarations of Interest Policy Statement. The Statement, and supporting documents, enables members to be aware of their obligation to disclose any relevant interests that they may have, and to ensure that they effectively and consistently manage any conflicts of interest.

Terms of Reference

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board (Advisory Board) must carry out its functions in full compliance with the *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015* (the Act), including developing:

1. An Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy (Strategy) to provide guidance and advice on research investments to Government (in accordance with Clause 32D of the Act).
 - a) The Strategy is to provide guidance and advice to the Minister for Health on health and medical research that:
 - builds and retains a vibrant health and medical research sector in Australia (e.g., workforce, infrastructure and national coordination)
 - is strategic and contributes to the continued growth of Australian health and medical research, and delivers economic and fiscal benefits for Australia
 - enables the development and maintenance of a critical mass of health and medical research effort in Australia
 - encourages multi-sector collaboration, including with the private and philanthropy sectors and interaction with state and territory governments
 - promotes the translation and commercialisation of health and medical research
 - harnesses opportunities for multidisciplinary work across research portfolios, such as science, education, information technology and engineering
 - interacts with other government health policies and programs.
 2. The Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities (Priorities) in accordance with Section 32E of the Act, which will determine the focus for medical research and innovation funding (in accordance with Section 15A of the Act).
 - a) The Advisory Board must use the following criteria to develop the Priorities:
 - the burden of disease on the Australian community
 - how to deliver practical benefits from medical research and medical innovation to as many Australians as possible
 - how to ensure that financial assistance provides the greatest value for all Australians
 - how to ensure financial assistance provided complements and enhances other financial assistance provided for medical research and medical innovation

- any other relevant matter.

In undertaking these activities, the Advisory Board:

1. Will take a whole of government approach to its deliberations, taking into consideration a number of Commonwealth reforms, including but not limited to the National Strategy for Medical Research and Public Health Research developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Government's Science and Research Priorities and the National Innovation and Science Agenda.
2. Must consult widely, including one or more organisations that represent consumers who benefit from health and medical research innovation (in accordance with Clause 32EA of the Act).

The Advisory Board will provide advice on matters referred to it by the Health Minister.

1. For the period 2021-26, the Minister for Health requests that the Advisory Board:
 - work with MRFF Mission Expert Advisory Panels to support the development, implementation and evaluation of Mission specific Roadmaps and Implementation Plans
 - conduct an annual consultation with the sector in order to provide advice on the following issues:
 - consumer and clinician involvement in research
 - health and medical research workforce development
 - research quality.

Appendix A: Membership as at 28 February 2026

Member	Background and experience
<p>Professor Kathryn North AC (Chair, appointed September 2025)¹</p>	<p>Professor North is the Director of Murdoch Children’s Research Institute (MCRI) and the David Danks Professor of Child Health Research at The University of Melbourne. She has experience in high level research strategy and leadership through MRFF expert advisory panels, the NHMRC Research Committee, research institutes and international scientific advisory committees.</p> <p>Kathryn was Lead Investigator of Australian Genomics (2016-2025) and served as Co-Chair of the Expert Advisory Group of Genomics Australia (2023-2025). She is Vice-Chair of the Global Alliance for Genomics and Health (2014-).</p>
<p>Professor Caroline Homer AO (Deputy Chair)</p>	<p>Professor Homer is the Deputy Director for Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the Burnet Institute and Emeritus Professor of Midwifery at the University of Technology Sydney. She was the Chair and National President of the Australian College of Midwives from 2014 to 2018. She is now Chair of the Council of National Health and Medical Research Council.</p>
<p>Professor Tom Calma AO</p>	<p>Professor Calma is the Chancellor of the University of Canberra and Professor of Practice (Indigenous Engagement) at the University of Sydney.</p>
<p>Professor Denise Doolan</p>	<p>Professor Doolan is the Director of Research at the University of Queensland Institute for Molecular Bioscience.</p>
<p>Mr Yasser El-Ansary</p>	<p>Mr El-Ansary is the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of FINSIA (the Financial Services Institute of Australasia), which is the peak professional body for the financial services and investment industry in Australia and New Zealand. He was the Chief Executive of the Australian Investment Council from November 2013 to April 2022.</p>

¹ Professor Ian Frazer AC served as Chair of AMRAB from 17 September 2021 until his retirement in February 2025. Following Professor Frazer’s retirement, Professor Caroline Homer AO served as the Acting Chair of AMRAB until Professor Kathryn North AC’s appointment as Chair in September 2025.

Member	Background and experience
Professor Douglas Hilton AO	Professor Hilton is the CEO of CSIRO and immediate past Director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. He was former president of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institute
Ms Imelda Lynch	Ms Lynch is the Chair of ACH Group, and Director of Bellberry Limited and the Adelaide Football Club. She also provides clinical governance expertise to the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network. Ms Lynch is former Director of the Macular Disease Foundation of Australia and past CEO of the National Heart Foundation for South Australia and the Northern Territory.
Professor Steve Wesselingh (Ex-Officio Member)	Professor Wesselingh is the CEO of the National Health and Medical Research Council.
International advisors	
Professor Shitij Kapur	Professor Kapur is a clinician-scientist with expertise in psychiatry, neuroscience and brain imaging. He is the President and Principal of King's College in London in the United Kingdom.
Professor Anna Ranta	Professor Ranta is the Clinical Co-Director of the National Stroke Clot Retrieval Service Improvement Programme of the New Zealand Ministry of Health. She is also a Professor of Neurology and Head of the Department of Medicine at the University of Otago.
Members identified any declarations of interest during their tenure. We published these on our website . No conflicts of interest required action beyond 'register', as defined in the MRFF declarations of interest policy statement .	