



Australian Medical Research Advisory Board Terms of Reference 2026-2031

Preamble

The Australian Government Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is a long-term investment committed by the government to support Australian health and medical research and medical innovation. The MRFF aims to transform health and medical research and innovation to improve lives, build the economy and contribute to health system sustainability.

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board (AMRAB) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective use of MRFF resources by providing strategic advice that aligns with national health needs and priorities.

Legislation

The MRFF was established on 26 August 2015 under the [MRFF Act 2015](#) (MRFF Act) to provide grants of financial assistance to support medical research and medical innovation.

Purpose and Scope

The MRFF Act sets up the independent AMRAB to advise the Health Minister on prioritising spending from the MRFF.

Membership

The AMRAB consist of 8 members including the CEO of the National Health Medical Research Council (NHMRC) as the ex-officio member. Members of the AMRAB are appointed for a tenure of up to 5 years. Appointments are made by the Health Minister, ensuring that the board comprises individuals with the necessary expertise and experience to guide the MRFF's strategic direction.

Members of the AMRAB must 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.

International Advisors

The AMRAB may also consist of 2 non-voting international advisors who have been elected for the period of 2026 to 2031.

Roles and responsibilities of Advisory Board Members

- Contribute to the development and implementation of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy (Strategy) and the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities (Priorities) by providing independent, expert advice.
- Provide expert advice on MRFF issues as directed by the Health Minister, either in meetings or through out-of-session papers.
- Engage in consultations with stakeholders, including the research community, healthcare providers, and the public, to ensure that MRFF investments focus on the best areas for future research.
- Seek advice from the joint NHMRC-MRFF Advisory Committees to support its core functions.
- Prepare for and actively participate in meetings by reviewing meeting agendas, papers and related materials in advance.
- Actively contribute to MRFF governance by serving on at least one Grant Assessment Committee or advisory panel, ensuring alignment between strategic oversight and grant decision-making.
- AMRAB 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).
- Maintain confidentiality in line with the [MRFF Declaration of Interest Policy Statement](#).

Roles and responsibilities of Chair

- Set meeting agendas in consultation with the secretariat.
- Facilitate meetings and ensure productive discussions.
- Represent AMRAB in public forums and engagements.
- Oversee the development and publication of the Strategy and Priorities.
- Guide the AMRAB in managing conflict of interest.

Roles and responsibilities of Deputy Chair

- Assist the Chair in leading AMRAB's strategic initiatives.
- Support the facilitation of meetings and ensuring effective member participation.
- Represent AMRAB in public forums and engagements.
- Take on specific tasks or projects as delegated by the Chair.

Roles and responsibilities of International Advisors

- Provide expert advice and global perspectives on health and medical research policy and emerging trends, enhancing the scope of AMRAB's deliberations.
- Inform the development of the Strategy and Priorities through providing international perspectives and insights.
- Provide input on AMRAB's strategic documents as required, including reviews of policy changes, global trends, and funding models.
- Participate in a voluntary and advisory capacity to support AMRAB and Health and Medical Research Office (HMRO) activities.
- This will be in an advisory capacity with remuneration not provided.

Core Functions

Section 32C of the MRFF Act sets out the functions of the AMRAB. The main function is to determine the Strategy every 5 years and the Priorities every 2 years, in accordance with Division 3 of the MRFF Act. Additionally, the functions include to advise the Health Minister about other matters that the Health Minister refers to the AMRAB.

The functions are outlined in detail below.

Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy

In accordance with Section 32D of the MRFF Act, the AMRAB must determine the Strategy. The Strategy is to provide guidance and advice to the Health Minister 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.

Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities

In accordance with Section 32E of the MRFF Act, the AMRAB must determine the Priorities which set the focus for medical research and innovation funding (in accordance with Section 15A of the MRFF Act).

The AMRAB 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; and
- any other relevant matter.

In determining the Strategies and Priorities, the AMRAB:

- a) will take a whole of government approach to its deliberations, taking into consideration Commonwealth reforms, including but not limited to the National Health and Medical Research Strategy
- b) 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 MRFF Act).

Other matters

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

For the period 2026-31, the Health Minister requests that the AMRAB:

- work with MRFF Mission Expert Advisory Panels to support the development, implementation and evaluation of Mission specific Roadmaps and Implementation Plans
- report on the Australian Government's financial assistance to support the Priorities every 2 years
- support the development of the National Health and Medical Research Strategy.

Meetings

AMRAB meetings will be held in 2 formats: joint NHMRC Council/AMRAB meetings and separate AMRAB-only meetings.

The joint meetings, held 3 times a year, aim to support improved alignment and coordination between the MRFF and the NHMRC's Medical Research Endowment Account. The joint meetings will be co-chaired by the AMRAB Chair and the NHMRC Council Chair, and conducted in a hybrid format, with in-person attendance preferred and virtual participation available to ensure accessibility. Travel arrangements for in-person attendance will be managed in accordance with the department travel policies. Members are encouraged to refer to the AMRAB Handbook for detailed guidance on travel arrangements, details are available in the AMRAB Handbook.

In addition to the joint meetings, AMRAB-only meetings may be convened on an as-required basis at the discretion of the AMRAB Chair. These meeting will be held online only.

If a member is unable to attend, proxies will not be permitted. Meeting papers will be provided to AMRAB members one week prior to the scheduled meetings.

Additional AMRAB meetings may be held on an as-required basis at the discretion of the AMRAB Chair.

Where necessary, advice may be sought using out-of-session arrangements. Members are encouraged to refer to the AMRAB Handbook for details on these arrangements.

Secretariat Support

The HMRO within the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is the Secretariat for the AMRAB. The AMRAB Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day support of the AMRAB, including scheduling meetings, preparing agendas and meeting briefs, minute taking, scheduling and supporting stakeholder engagement. It also acts as the primary communication channel for AMRAB members and may seek advice from members as required to support the MRFF operations.

For joint NHMRC Council/AMRAB meetings, the AMRAB Secretariat will work in collaboration with the NHMRC Council Secretariat to manage administrative tasks, including agendas, briefs, minute taking, and scheduling. Detailed minutes and action items will be documented for each meeting and distributed to AMRAB members.

The AMRAB Secretariat can be contacted via AMRABsecretariat@health.gov.au.

For non-urgent inquiries, the following email address can be utilised: MRFF@health.gov.au.

Quorum

- A quorum requires the Chair or the Deputy Chair and at least 3 other members.
- If the Chair is unavailable to attend a scheduled meeting, the Deputy Chair will assume this role.

Remuneration

AMRAB members are entitled to remuneration in accordance with the [Remuneration Tribunal \(Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part-time Public Office\) Determination 2025](#).

Declarations of Interest

AMRAB 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.

Supporting documents

The AMRAB handbook provides a comprehensive guide, detailing the AMRAB's functions, members' responsibilities, meeting procedures and entitlements.

The [MRFF Act](#) provides the primary legislative framework governing the MRFF and AMRAB's statutory roles and responsibilities.