



Dr Masha Somi
Chief Executive Officer
Health and Medical Research Office
Australian Government Department of Health

Dear Dr Somi

I am writing to you in your capacity as delegate under sections 15A, 26 and 27 of the *Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015* (the Act) with authority to debit amounts from the MRFF Special Account and set out and enter into written agreements with grant recipients.

A Grant Assessment Committee (GACs) for applications submitted to the MRFF Novel Coronavirus Vaccine Development grant opportunity met on 1 April 2020. [s 47E](#)

A ranked list of meritorious applications is enclosed along with an indicative funding recommendation.

The top ranked application comes to a total of \$1,965,398. Funding the top two highest ranked applications would come to a combined total of [s 47E](#).

A research integrity check has been undertaken on all of the Australian-based Chief and Associate Investigators named on applications in the attached list. We can confirm that these individuals have not, to NHMRC's knowledge, been the subject of recent findings of research misconduct or breaches of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, or recent unresolved formal notifications to NHMRC on research misconduct matters. Once the successful grants have been identified you may wish to ask NHMRC to undertake this check again to ensure any recent findings or notifications can be identified prior to any announcement being made.

You are now requested to advise us of the successful applicants for the MRFF Novel Coronavirus Vaccine Development grant opportunity. NHMRC proposes to notify all applicants and Administering Institutions of their outcomes, under embargo, prior to public announcement.

Consistent with the agreement between our organisations on Postaward management of MRFF grants, the Department will manage the public announcement and media activities. NHMRC will make the formal offer of funding under the MRFF Head Agreement. To enable schedules to be prepared for the successful grants, we also await the Department's advice on:

- the payment schedule, and
- whether there is any specific grant reporting or reporting detail required that is not covered in the Head Agreement or Grant Guidelines.

I would also like to provide you with feedback from the assessment process.

The MRFF Novel Coronavirus Vaccine Development grant opportunity was an urgent response for research, which placed considerable time pressure on applicants and expert assessors. The expedited timeline impacted the operation of the GACs with two international assessors resigning from the committee due to competing priorities.

Government restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 outbreak, including working from home policies, likely contributed to the instability of the videoconferencing technology at the GAC meeting. To maintain the connection of all GAC members the meeting reverted to an audio format, which was the planned fallback.

s 47E

We will continue to monitor the application of this criterion across MRFF GACs and provide feedback where required to assist in your ongoing evaluation of the MRFF Programs.

s 47E

The potential for conflicts of interest for GAC members who have commercial interests and/or are employed by companies that are working in the Coronavirus vaccine area was discussed. Members were assured that all GAC members had disclosed interests and declared conflicts of interest against each application. Members with high conflicts of interest declared against an application, identified prior to or at the meeting, did not participate in the discussion or scoring of those applications at the meeting.



Thank you again for the opportunity to assist the Department with this grant opportunity.

Yours sincerely

[authorised for electronic transmission]

s 47F

Research Translation Branch

3 April 2020

Enc.:

1. MRFF Novel Coronavirus Vaccine Development grant opportunity outcomes.
2. Full application documentation for applications considered by the grant assessment committee.

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UNDER THE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (Cth)