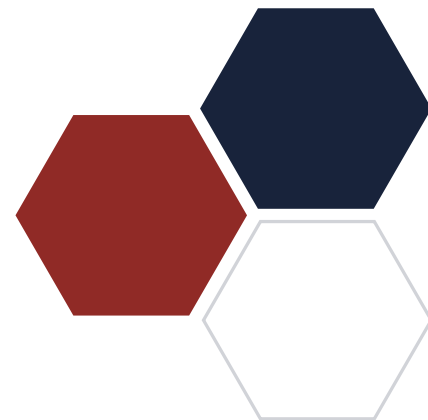




Australian Government

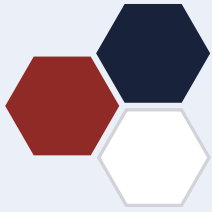
Department of Health



# Medical Research Future Fund

Cardiovascular Health Mission  
International review  
of the Roadmap and  
Implementation Plan

**12 November 2020**



# Introduction

## Our mission

To accelerate Australian-led research to advance cardiovascular health through the creation of a world-class sustainable ecosystem underpinned by excellence, collaboration, innovation, consumer engagement and commercialisation, and embedded in the health care system.

## Our goal

To make transformative improvements in cardiovascular health and stroke for all Australians.

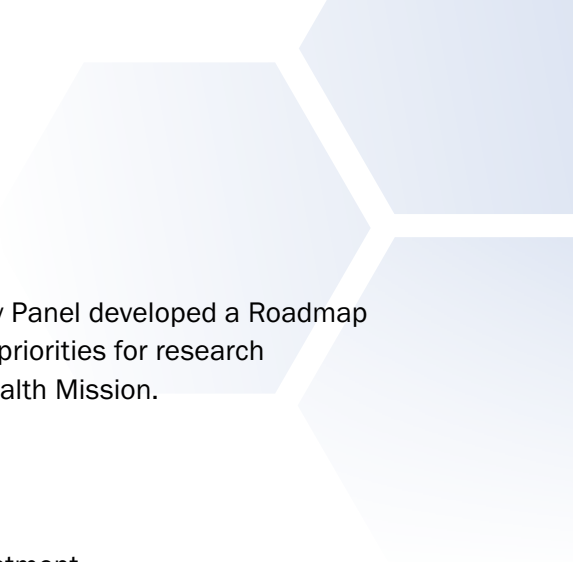
The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is a \$20 billion long-term investment supporting Australian health and medical research. The MRFF aims to transform health and medical research and innovation to improve lives, build the economy and contribute to health system sustainability.

The Cardiovascular Health Mission will provide AUD\$220 million over 10 years under the MRFF to make transformative improvements in cardiovascular health and stroke for all Australians.

## Cardiovascular Health Mission Expert Advisory Panel

A Cardiovascular Health Mission Expert Advisory Panel was established to advise the Australian Minister for Health on the strategic priorities for research investment through the Cardiovascular Health Mission.

The Cardiovascular Health Expert Advisory Panel's role is to define evidence and knowledge gaps that should be addressed through mission research funding to help transform health care and health outcomes for individuals and communities. This role includes defining key research questions that — if answered — will deliver meaningful change to patients through the translation of research.



The Cardiovascular Health Expert Advisory Panel developed a Roadmap and Implementation Plan to advise about priorities for research investment through the Cardiovascular Health Mission.

The Roadmap includes:

- the mission statement and goal
- possible themes and priorities for investment

The Implementation Plan includes:

- 3 aims that outline how the Cardiovascular Health Mission will benefit Australians
- priorities for investment in the short, medium and long term
- opportunities for leveraging additional investment
- activities needed to support the Cardiovascular Health Mission's outcomes and facilitate their implementation

Cardiovascular Health Expert Advisory Panel members will consult and engage with other researchers, industry, and consumer and patient groups, and participate in media and public activities to build awareness of, and facilitate interaction with, the mission and with other MRFF-funded research.

## Cardiovascular Health Mission International Review Panel

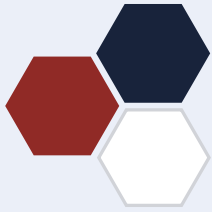
The Cardiovascular Health Mission International Review Panel's role was to provide expert feedback and experiential advice in the context of relevant activities occurring internationally, which can inform the strategic direction of the Cardiovascular Health Mission's Roadmap and Implementation Plan.

The Cardiovascular Health Panel members were asked to:

- a. Advise on the applicability of the Cardiovascular Health Mission's goal to the international context; specifically, whether the goal duplicates or contributes to international research activities
- b. Advise on the likely effectiveness of the research priorities (including their sequencing) to achieve the goal
- c. Provide learnings from international research activities in the field
- d. Identify opportunities for leveraging and complementing international research activities to achieve the goal
- e. Advise on the appropriateness of the proposed measures for evaluating progress towards meeting the goal

The Cardiovascular Health Panel comprised 6 members representing expertise in a variety of clinical and scientific research areas:

- Prof Dame Caroline Watkins — Professor of Stroke and Older People's Care, University of Central Lancashire; Chair of UK Stroke Forum, UK
- Dr Joseph Hill — Professor of Internal Medicine and Molecular Biology, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center; Editor-in-Chief, *Circulation*, American Heart Association journal, US
- Prof Barbara Casadei — British Heart Foundation Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine; Immediate President, European Society of Cardiology, UK
- Prof John Danesh — British Heart Foundation Professor of Epidemiology and Medicine; Head, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Cambridge, UK
- A/Prof Anna Ranta — Head of Department, Medicine, University of Otago; Consultant Neurologist; Central Region Stroke Lead, NZ
- Prof Tetsuji Miura — Professor and Chair of the Department of Cardiovascular, Renal and Metabolic Medicine, Sapporo Medical University, Japan



# Consultation discussion

The Cardiovascular Health Panel met on Thursday 12 November 2020 to discuss the Cardiovascular Health Mission's Roadmap and Implementation Plan.

All participants at the meeting were required to declare any conflicts of interest and relevant collaborations. None of the declared interests were considered material to the meeting.

## Key points

- The Cardiovascular Health Panel felt the plan was logical and was well-aligned with international focus
- Emphasising health equity in the Implementation Plan would help researchers make this a more integral part of their projects
- Stroke should be more clearly separated from cardiovascular disease; otherwise it will not be addressed sufficiently
- Training the clinical workforce so that they become more engaged with research and clinical studies will help to ensure that the research is successful and translates to better health care
- By funding people who can provide core infrastructure, the value of funding is maximised because other investigators can use the infrastructure
- Other countries are running large studies already, and it may be beneficial to provide funding towards smaller studies that can complement this international research
- Cardiovascular health research is changing – identifying cardiovascular health issues that are likely to be at the forefront of clinical care in the future, rather than focusing on current problems, will help to futureproof the Cardiovascular Health Mission and ensure that health outcomes are achieved in 10 years
- Research could be prioritised by focusing on implementation, as well as prevention, post-event care and rehabilitation



The Cardiovascular Health Panel agreed with the overall plan and its logical approach. The panel noted that many of the goals align with international plans and strategies, but acknowledged that the MRFF is a new way of funding medical research in Australia. The panel queried whether the plan would benefit from a more focused approach and that it may currently be too broad, potentially making it difficult to achieve all of its stated goals.

## Emphasise health equity in grant opportunities

The Cardiovascular Health Panel noted that addressing health inequalities is an important component of international research, suggesting that this could be featured more prominently in the Cardiovascular Health Mission's Implementation Plan. The panel believed this will help bring inequalities in outcomes to the forefront of researchers' minds. This is pertinent for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, which have a disproportionately high risk of cardiovascular disease.

## Separate stroke from cardiovascular disease

The panel noted that stroke appears to have been simply added on to a cardiovascular disease research program. The panel emphasised that stroke should be considered separately, as research projects tend to overlook it if it is 'tagged on'.

The panel noted there is an opportunity to include the Stroke Society Australasia as a collaborator in the Cardiovascular Health Mission Implementation Plan.

## Ensure the clinical workforce is ready

The Cardiovascular Health Panel highlighted the importance of planning for the future. The clinical workforce — including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals — need to be aware of the importance of research, and their opportunities to engage with clinical studies and research training need to be increased. This is a way to enable capability and capacity building for the future.

## Fund the right people

The Cardiovascular Health Panel noted that funding could focus on core infrastructure and collaborations. By funding people who can provide this core infrastructure, the value of the funding would be maximised because other investigators can work collaboratively to use the infrastructure.

## Tag onto other research projects

The Cardiovascular Health Panel noted other similar projects currently ongoing around the world – such as the Netherlands and the UK – and advised that, to avoid duplication, it would be worthwhile to encourage Australian groups to collaborate with international studies, rather than repeating similar projects. The panel suggested that, by providing grants to research groups to enable participation in bigger studies, it could help to achieve the outcomes outlined in the Cardiovascular Health Mission's research priorities.

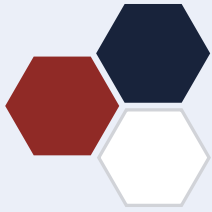
## Focus on future cardiovascular health and stroke issues

The Cardiovascular Health Panel noted the changing focus of cardiovascular disease and stroke over the past 20–30 years, and advised it could be helpful for MRFF projects to identify and focus on future potential cardiovascular health issues. For example, 25 years ago, research focused on acute coronary syndrome. This focus has since moved to heart failure. The panel believed that, in 10–20 years, improving cardiovascular health will be driven by addressing chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiorenal syndrome, cardiometabolic stress and inflammatory stress. In addition, people are surviving longer, so ageing-related dementia and its effect on cardiovascular health may be target research areas.

Implementation research should be a part of the MRFF program. The Cardiovascular Health Panel noted that some cultures do not view 'research' and 'proof' the same way research scientists do. Understanding and acknowledging these beliefs can help embed clinical changes so health outcomes can be realised.

The panel also highlighted that research should consider post-event care, primary and secondary prevention, and rehabilitation. Because more people are surviving cardiac and stroke events, maintaining quality of life is becoming more important.

Focusing on these research areas can also help prioritise projects in what is a very broad Cardiovascular Health Mission.



# Recommendations

- Emphasise health equity in the Implementation Plan to help researchers make this a more integral part of their projects
- Separate stroke from cardiovascular disease to ensure improvements in health outcomes for people who have survived a stroke
- Train the clinical workforce so that they become more engaged with research and clinical studies, to help ensure that the research translates to better health care
- Maximise the value of funding by providing grants to researchers who can provide core infrastructure
- Tag onto other large international projects to complement these studies and maximise funding
- Identify cardiovascular health issues that are likely to be at the forefront of clinical care in the future, and focus on these in grant opportunities