

Medical Research Future Fund

Dr Alan Finkel AO
Chief Scientist
GPO Box 9839
CANBERRA ACT 2601

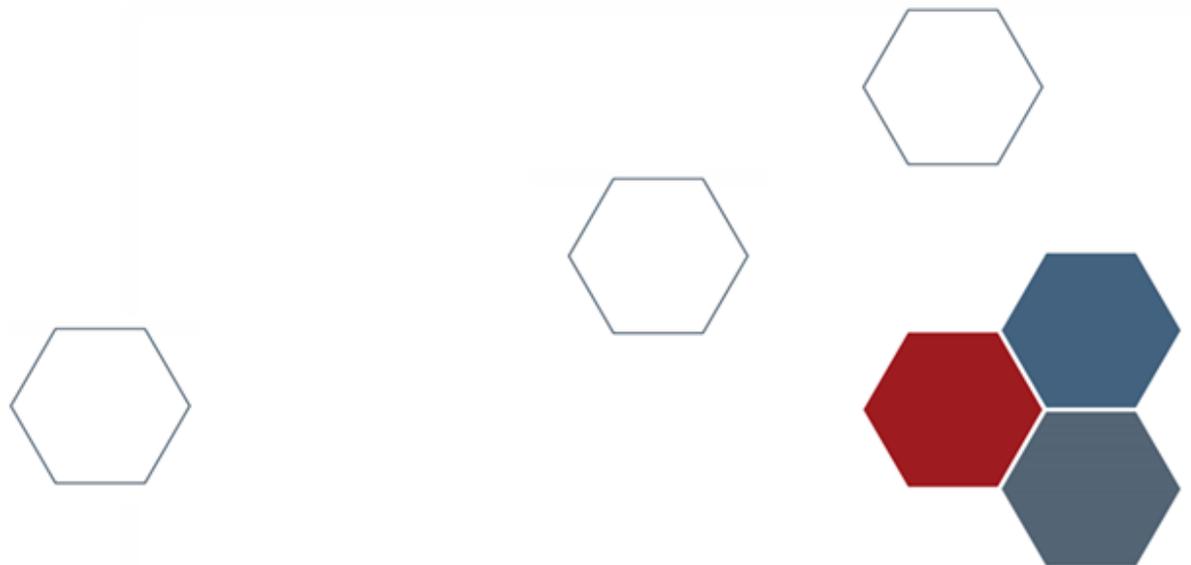
Dear Alan

The Australian Medical Research Advisory Board (Advisory Board) has recently been consulting on the development of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and related Priorities for the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). We are aiming to submit the Strategy and Priorities to Government in October 2016, with Ministerial and Cabinet decisions on the disbursements for 2016-17 to follow.

I thought it may be useful to share some of the Advisory Board's findings with the 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap Expert Working Group to assist in developing a whole-of-Government approach for the future of health and medical research infrastructure in Australia.

Infrastructure has been a prominent theme of the MRFF consultations. Submissions and subsequent consultations called for the MRFF to support both hard and soft infrastructure, recognising that funding for infrastructure support is challenging in the current fiscal environment. There was also recognition that the benefits of new funds for research through the MRFF would not be fully realised unless there was recognition of the additional infrastructure needs and costs arising from this funding.

With respect to commercialisation, provision of infrastructure was noted as being important to allow a pipeline approach to the movement of knowledge from discovery towards clinical impact. Building infrastructure through platform development was argued to be a robust investment capable of supporting innovative research in the future. Collaborative platforms and shared infrastructure access would be one way to create efficiency in utility with existing and future research infrastructure. Specific domains identified in which gains can be realised included: collected health data (big data); healthcare quality; patient directed health care; telehealth; health promotion; clinical trial networks; medicinal chemistry manufacturing; and genomics/bioinformatics.



It is likely that priority areas for funding from the MRFF will be significantly dependent on Australia's existing and future research infrastructure capacity, particularly in the areas of:

- big data and large scale data handling, to facilitate linkage of clinical data sets with each other and with –omics information, and public health data including PBS and MBS data;
- advanced clinical imaging technology;
- biopharmaceuticals and vaccines manufacturing, safety testing, and packaging;
- access to facilities relevant to targeted drug design and repurposing including drug libraries, pathogen libraries and the Synchrotron;
- access to GMP standard radiopharmaceuticals; and
- appropriate transgenic/genome modified animal production and breeding facilities.

The Advisory Board is of the view that the MRFF could not be viewed as a sustainable source of ongoing research infrastructure funding, although it is acknowledged that some contribution could complement the Roadmap.

I look forward to working with you to progress this important work and ensure complementarity across policy agendas.

Yours sincerely



Professor Ian Frazer AC
Chair
Australian Medical Research Advisory Board
September 2016

