

Sector submission to the National Consultation on the Roadmap and Implementation Plan for the MRFF Indigenous Health Research Fund, April 2021

Through the Indigenous Health Research Fund (IHRF), the Australian Government has committed \$160 million to improve the health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people over 10 years from 2019–20 to 2028–29, funded under the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

Questions -

1. What is your name?

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2. What is your email address?

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3. What is your organisation?

Vision 2020 Australia

4. Residential state or territory

Victoria

5. Are these priority areas for investment identified in the Implementation Plan the most effective way for delivering on the Missions goals and aims? (300 words)

Yes.

Vision 2020 Australia and its members support the inclusion of blindness prevention and the focus on multidisciplinary, collaborative and multijurisdictional research that will address the divide in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.

Across Australia, too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still experience avoidable vision loss and blindness, and those who have lost vision often find it difficult to access the support and services they need.

For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are three times as likely as non-Indigenous people to be blind or have low vision, and on average wait 63% longer for cataract surgery.

To close the gap in eye health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it is vital that research in blindness prevention continues to be a priority. There is significant work to be done to build indigenous research capacity in this area, so ensuring that MRFF settings provide capacity for this to be developed – as well as funding Aboriginal and Torres Strait led research – is essential.

6. Are there existing research activities which could be utilised to contribute to the Mission Roadmap and/or Implementation Plan aims and priority areas for investment. How can these be leveraged? (200 words)

Yes.

Strong eyes. Strong communities – a five year plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health and Vision has been agreed in principle by all governments as the plan to end avoidable blindness by 2025, through investment in a number of priority activities that have been designed to build on the strengths of what has been done to date and what has been learned.

7. Are the ‘Evaluation approach and measures’ appropriate for assessing and monitoring progress towards the mission’s goal and aims? (200 words)

Yes.

Vision 2020 Australia agrees that any research relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health must show how it has been led, co-designed, informed and determined by engagement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities. It is essential that issues of data sovereignty are also considered.