

**Draft National Health and Medical Research Strategy consultation
8 October 2025**

Consultation questions:

1. Vision

Does the proposed Vision establish the right aspirations for the future of health and medical research in Australia?

- If not, what would you suggest instead?

AusBiotech supports the aspiration of the proposed Vision to make Australia the healthiest nation. However, we are concerned that without a requisite focus on the tangible impact of Australian research, including its translation and commercialisation into health products that are equitably accessible for Australians, the proposed Vision in the draft Strategy will not be realised.

As such, we believe the Vision could be improved by expanding the focus to include the translation, development and commercialisation of innovation into health products for all Australians. There would also be value in making the Vision time bound.

An alternative Vision could be: “Australia: the healthiest nation for all, driven by excellence in research, underpinned by translation, development and commercialisation, by 2036.”

2. Values

Do you agree with the proposed Values?

- If not, what would you suggest instead?

AusBiotech supports the proposed Values. They could be improved with the following amendments:

- For Impact & Sustainability, we propose changing the language to: An environmentally sustainable health and medical research ecosystem that improves the health of all Australians, powers an efficient and high performing healthcare system, and delivers productivity benefits.
- For Quality & Integrity, we propose changing the language to: A health and medical research ecosystem that inspires public trust through its integrity and transparency, delivers high quality research, and is grounded in ethical conduct.
- For Equity, we propose changing this to Health Equity and changing the language to: A health and medical research ecosystem that results in equitable access to healthcare products and services for all Australians by being inclusive, embracing diversity, promoting the distribution of resources and maximising the knowledge and expertise of a diverse workforce.
- For Collaboration & Partnership, we propose changing the language to: A health and medical research ecosystem where collaboration and partnership achieve maximum health and economic impact for Australia, from discovery science through to translation, development and commercialisation, through public and private led research.

Further, we propose the addition of another Value, namely: “Excellence in Innovation. The long-term, inherently challenging but high reward nature of health and medical research is encouraged and accepted – and it is recognised by all stakeholders that breakthrough ideas require a mindset and culture of excellence in innovation.”

3. Goals

Do you agree with the proposed Goals?

- If not, what would you suggest instead?

AusBiotech supports the proposed Goals. They could be improved with the following amendments:

- Drive national prosperity and security. We propose changing the language to: Boost Australia's productivity, economy, sovereign capability, supply chain resilience and long-term security through investment in health and medical research across the innovation pipeline from early-stage research to clinical trials, translation, commercialisation, manufacturing and procurement.
- Lead the world in health outcomes. No change.
- Deliver equity – no one left behind. We propose changing the language to: Ensure every Australian, regardless of background or postcode, has equitable access to the outputs from health and medical research.
- Secure a resilient and a sustainable health system. Propose changing this to: Secure a responsive, adaptable, and sustainable health system. Propose changing the language to: Ensure Australia has a cost-effective, future ready health system that meets, responds, and adapts to population needs and economic conditions.
- Strengthen regional and global partnerships. Propose changing this to: Stronger regional and global partnerships. Propose changing the wording to: Elevate Australia as trusted and leading partner across diversified global health alliances and regional partnerships, such as the Indo-Pacific region.

Further, we propose the addition of another Goal, namely: Lead the world in health and medical research excellence. Position Australia as a world leader for health and medical research, by developing, attracting and retaining high-performing, entrepreneurial researchers and innovators.

4. Focus Areas

Do you agree with the proposed Focus Areas?

- If not, what would you suggest instead?

Do you agree with the proposed Actions associated with each of the Focus Areas?

- If not:
 - what would you suggest instead?
 - what areas of improvement would you identify?

AusBiotech supports the five proposed focus areas. For focus area #5, we propose changing the language to: Position Australia to be ready for future health needs and challenges.

For the proposed actions relating to focus area #1, Build a vibrant research system that delivers for the nation, we would propose adding: Set the Australian research system up for success – Ensure sustainable government investment and incentives are made available across the research and development pipeline to maximise onshore value for Australian innovation.

While it is pleasing to see focus area #4, Drive impact through research translation, innovation and commercial solutions acknowledge the importance of commercialising health and medical research in Australia, AusBiotech is concerned that this focus area does not sufficiently address these issues, particularly in the context of Australia's life sciences industry. It requires a coordinated, cross-portfolio approach and dedicated focus. We, therefore, call on the Review Committee to

recommend the establishment of an Australian Life Sciences Council and the creation of a whole of government, National Life Sciences Strategy.

A National Life Sciences Strategy should consider supply chain resilience, national sovereignty, advanced manufacturing and procurement. Further, it should also seek to leverage Australia's existing comparative advantages, including our excellence, speed and cost-effectiveness in early-phase research and clinical trial delivery.

In relation to focus areas #2 and the action to “enable a vibrant clinical trials sector that improves patient outcomes and supports equitable access to clinical trials regardless of demography or geography” it will be critical to ensure the development of the National One Stop Shop (NOSS) for health and medical research amplifies Australia's existing strengths in clinical trials. It will be important that the implementation of the NOSS does not negatively impact start-up timelines, particularly for early phase trials conducted by the private sector. We welcome the Government's announcement of \$13.6 million in funding to progress the design of the NOSS. It will be important that ongoing investment is allocated to enable the delivery and ongoing support for the NOSS.

5. Enablers

Do you agree with the proposed Enablers?

- If not, what would you suggest instead?

Do you agree with the proposed Enabling Initiative associated with each of the Enablers?

- If not:
 - o what would you suggest instead?
 - o what areas for improvement would you identify?

AusBiotech supports the four proposed Enablers. For Data and advanced technology, we would propose this be expanded to include use of data driven insights to inform evidence-based decision-making. This should also include using AI and data for effective horizon scanning to predict future health trends and patient needs. As the life sciences industry increasingly embraces technologies like AI and machine learning, the value of mature data will only grow, providing new ways to accelerate drug discovery and commercialisation. For the UK, it has been estimated data has the potential to contribute to UK productivity growth by between 0.23% to 1.26% per year. A strategic, coordinated and intentional approach to data collection across relevant government agencies is critical to improving health outcomes via equitable access to health new health technologies.

We support the Workforce Enabling Initiative, namely the development of an Australian Health and Medical Research Workforce Plan. This could be improved by expanding it to include a focus on strengthening Australia's skills and capability in biotechnology development and commercialisation. To successfully commercialise a new product, life sciences companies need to address all parts of the product development and marketing life cycle.

We support the need for sustainable funding to be available across the health and medical research sector. This is where a National Life Sciences Strategy (as outlined in our response to Q.10 Strategy Impact) could play a valuable role in providing strategic coordination and prioritisation across the pipeline – from early phase research and clinical trials, through to translation, development and commercialisation.

6. Priority-ranking of Actions and Enabling Initiatives

Please review the Actions (page 15) and Enabling Initiatives (pages 39, 41, 43, 45) proposed in the draft National Strategy. Identify your top 3, in order of importance for you or the organisation you represent.

Please provide a brief explanation of why the selected Actions/Enabling Initiatives are priorities for you/your organisation, and the impact successful implementation could generate.

- National priority setting and evaluation
- Horizon scanning
- Collaborative platforms and networks
- Commonwealth research funding
- Clinical trials
- Consumer and community involvement
- Regional, rural and remote health and medical research
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of knowing, being and doing
- Translation and implementation of outcomes that address the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and workforce capacity and capability building
- Research translation **2**
- Industry integration and risk sharing **3**
- Manufacturing and marketing **1**
- Emerging Technology
- Environmental sustainability
- Global partnerships
- An Australian Health and Medical Research Workforce Plan
- Design innovative funding models
- Access to data, digital assets and advanced technology
- An Australian Health and Medical Research Infrastructure Roadmap

AusBiotech has chosen “manufacturing and marketing” as our number one priority because it specifically calls out the need to support commercialisation and sovereign capability by building local biotech and medtech capabilities. Having a clear commercialisation and manufacturing pathway from early research, will incentivise more R&D to be conducted in Australia. This in turn will facilitate an increase in local production and export of Australian products to global markets.

Globally, life sciences and biotechnology have become key pillars of major markets' industrial strategies – including the UK, USA, Canada, China, Singapore and South Korea. For Australia to maintain its competitive advantage in medical research and life sciences, strategic focus, prioritisation and action is urgently required.

AusBiotech has chosen “research translation” and “industry integration and risk sharing” as our second and third priorities respectively. We support these two actions because, as noted in the Draft Strategy:

- “Mechanisms that incentivise and support research translation, commercialisation and industry growth will deliver economic gains, a robust biotech and medtech sector and health system capability, resilience and future preparedness”.

- “Identifying and implementing programs to share risk and harmonise regulatory, approval and procurement pathways will help drive industry investment and growth. These programs will build sovereign capability in the production and manufacture of medical diagnostics, devices and pharmaceuticals”.

7. Governance

Do you agree with the proposed National Strategy Advisory Council?

- If not, what would you suggest instead?

AusBiotech supports the need for an overarching advisory council to provide the necessary governance for the implementation of the National Strategy. As noted in the Draft Strategy, it will be imperative that the Council seeks to complement the outcomes of the SERD, and where it makes sense to do so, draw on existing arrangements, such as the Health Minister’s Meeting.

Notwithstanding our support for a governance council specific to this strategy, we also believe there is an urgent need for a dedicated Australian Life Sciences Council to be established. The Council would have cross-government representation and would lead the development and delivery of a whole-of-government National Life Sciences Strategy. Noting that no less than nine different Federal Departments currently oversee areas of policy that impact the Life Sciences sector, we believe a National Strategy is necessary to enable whole of government coordination, unlock the full potential of our industry and ensure it delivers against national health, economic and national security priorities in Australia’s interests.

8. Metrics

What key indicators do you consider should be used to measure the success and impact of the National Strategy?

Over what time periods should these be measured?

The National Strategy should be measured against its ability to deliver innovations that address national health priorities and meet the evolving health needs of Australians, as well as the contribution of medical research to increase knowledge, improve society, boost health outcomes and stimulate productivity, economic growth and diversification. Further, the success of the Strategy should be judged by its ability to foster an ecosystem that prioritises translation, development and commercialisation of Australian IP. Finally, agreed metrics should be co-designed by government, industry, patient advocacy groups, healthcare professionals and academics to ensure they are aligned with public expectations.

To avoid review-fatigue and election cycles, and to provide a level of certainty for industry, we suggest a five-yearly review of the National Strategy against key performance metrics. However, this would need to be balanced with the need for strategy agility, given the pace of health and medical advances, changes in geopolitical contexts, ageing demographics, changing health needs in response to climate change, and the continued rise of complex and chronic disease. AusBiotech proposes that there be a mechanism built into the governance of the Strategy that enables it to be able to respond to significant shifts in context or need.

9. Other considerations

Are there other challenges, opportunities or trends that the National Strategy should address?

It will be important for the National Strategy to complement the outputs from the Strategic Examination of R&D (SERD) so that health and medical research contribute to an integrated, dynamic and impactful Australian R&D system that includes sovereign capability and manufacturing.

Noting the rapidly shifting geopolitical environment, and evolving trade dynamics, a cross-portfolio approach, with Ministerial input, is needed to address the complex issues Australia is facing to ensure we keep pace with our peers globally. As such, policy settings for Australia's R&D system, including health and medical research, should consider a whole of pipeline approach and minimise fragmentation over the nine different government departments the life sciences sector is currently spread across.

Unlocking the full potential of Australia's health and life sciences capability requires a coordinated, national, whole-of-government focus on biotech, medtech and digital health that captures the true breadth of the opportunities and issues across industry, health, foreign affairs, education, defence and trade, as well as state and territory considerations. We, therefore, call on the Review Committee to recommend the establishment of an Australian Life Sciences Council and National Life Sciences Strategy to achieve these objectives.

10. Strategy impact

How might the National Strategy influence the activities and decision-making at your organisation or in your community?

What would be required for it to have a positive impact?

As Australia's leading national and global advocate for life sciences, AusBiotech welcomes the focus area #4 that calls out the need to "drive impact through research translation, innovation and commercial solutions". We especially support the intent of the draft Strategy to support "commercialisation and sovereign capability by building local biotech and medtech manufacturing and industry marketing capabilities and research-industry partnerships for national and international markets."

Currently, responsibility for the life sciences sector pipeline sits across nine different Federal Government portfolios, with no coordination. As previously proposed by AusBiotech, Medicines Australia, MTPConnect and other stakeholders, we urge the review committee to recommend the establishment of an Australian Life Sciences Council, with cross government representation. The National Council would lead the development and delivery of a National Life Sciences Strategy to provide strategic guidance, coordination and maximise the impact for Australia's life sciences sector.

11. Example projects

Do you have suggestions for projects that highlight best practice in the areas highlighted in the Values, Goals, Focus Areas and Enablers in the National Strategy?

Please provide links to published information, or contact details where available.



Where life science leaders thrive

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ausbiotech_ausbiotech-spotlight-biotech-activity-7328263867338240000-Xs1g?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAApTER8Bkld1a1ZPmj7M46--hcGeGp2gaZ8

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ausbiotech_biotech-microbiome-lifesciences-activity-7373955367216574464-2--D?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAApTER8Bkld1a1ZPmj7M46--hcGeGp2gaZ8