



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**



Western Australian  
Future Health Research  
& Innovation Fund

Western Australian Future Health  
Research and Innovation Fund

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# Annual Report

## 2024–2025







## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Health acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. It acknowledges the wisdom of the Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pays respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

## Use of the term Aboriginal

Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context and Indigenous may be referred to in the international context. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.

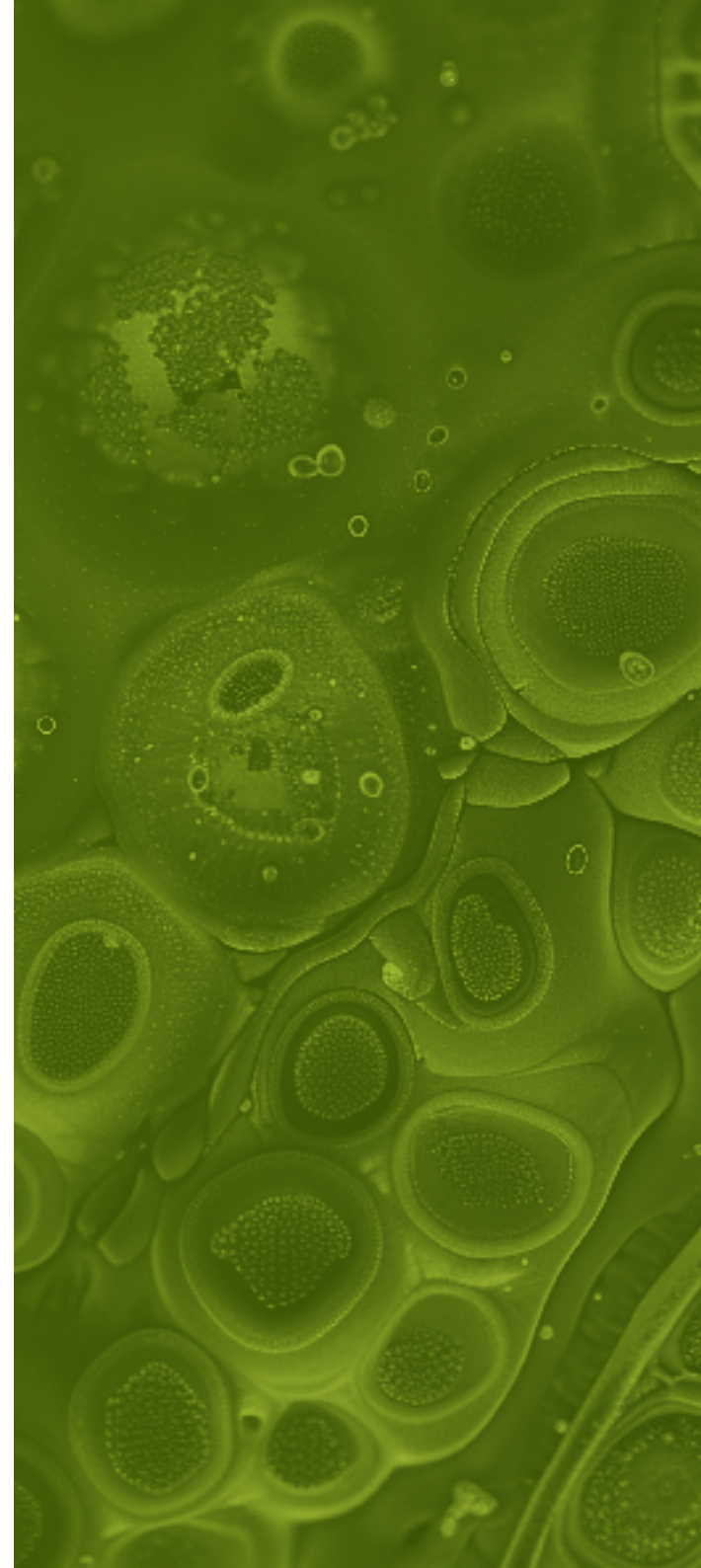
# Statement of submission

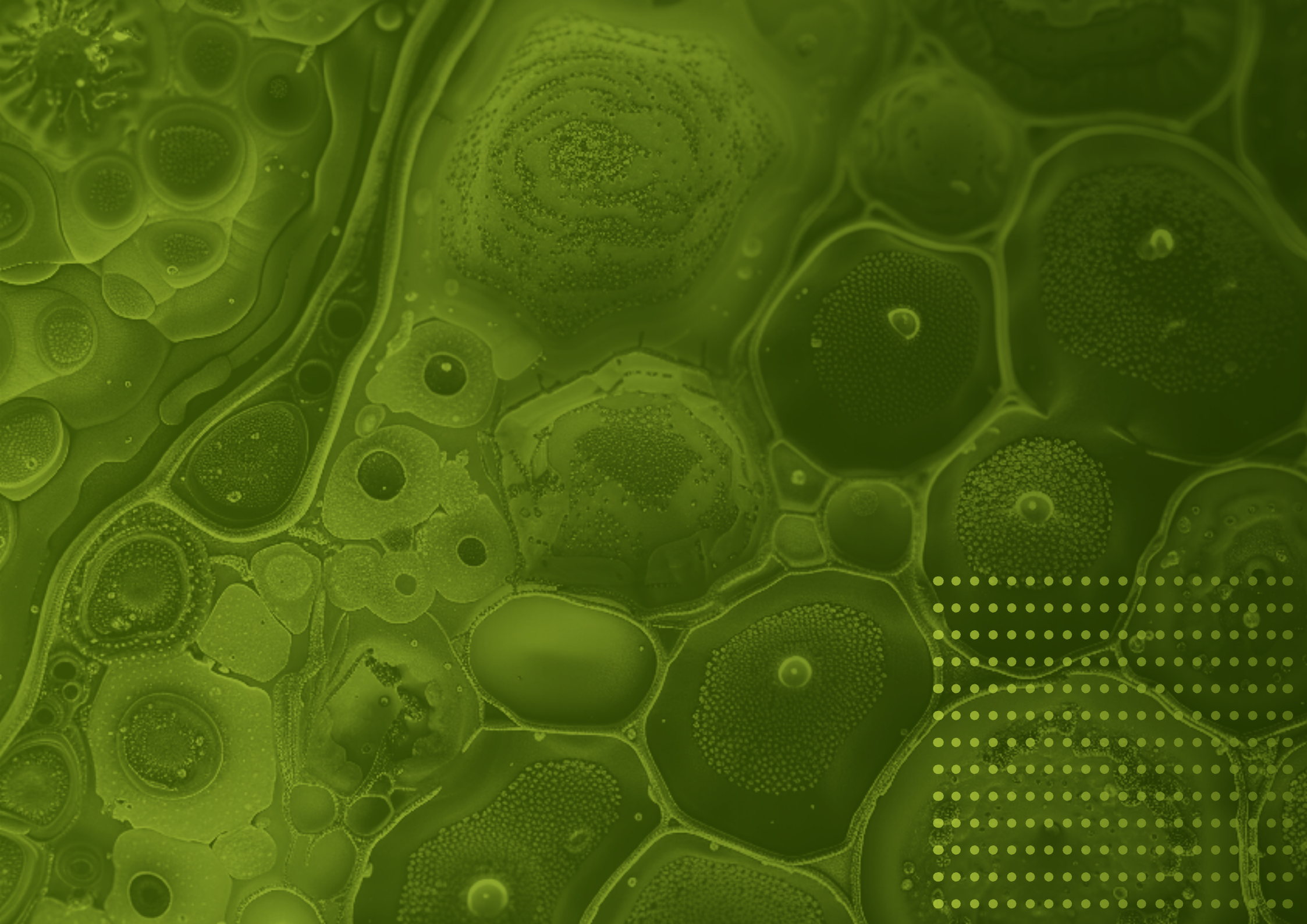
**Hon Stephen Dawson MLC**  
Minister for Medical Research

Dear Minister,

I submit for your information and submission to Parliament the annual report for the Western Australian Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund for the financial year 2024–25. This report supplements the Department of Health Annual Report 2024–25, which includes details of how money standing to the credit of the Future Health Research and Innovation Account was applied during the financial year, in accordance with section 4E (6) of the *Western Australian Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Act (FHRI Fund Act) 2012*.

**Mr John Van Der Wielen**  
Chairperson  
Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Advisory Council





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# Chairperson's foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Western Australian (WA) Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund Annual Report for 2024–25. This marks my first Annual Report since reappointment as FHRI Fund Advisory Council (Advisory Council) Chairperson by the Minister for Medical Research, the Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, on 15 September 2025.

I wish to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Ms Rebecca Tomkinson, who provided exemplary leadership as Chairperson over 2024–25. Her vision and dedication have been instrumental in cementing the strategic and operational future of the FHRI Fund. The FHRI Fund continues to drive world-leading health and medical research and innovation, and in 2024–25 awarded \$68 million across 150 grants. This was accompanied by over \$24 million in co-investment secured by grant recipients and demonstrates the catalytic impact of the FHRI Fund.

In 2024–25 the Advisory Council welcomed 2 new members: innovation expert Dr Marcus Tan and regional health expert Professor Angus Turner, further broadening the Council's expertise and strengthening its equity and innovation agenda. New standing Research and Innovation Expert Committees were established in addition to the standing Aboriginal Health Expert Committee, underlining a commitment to inclusive, multidisciplinary engagement, sector-wide representation and robust advice to inform FHRI Fund activities.

During 2024–25, the comprehensive independent evaluation and performance review held at the 4-year point of the FHRI Fund was concluded, measuring progress against legislative objectives and the strategic and operational performance of the FHRI Fund Scheme and the Advisory Council. These efforts ensure the FHRI Fund remains a secure and impactful driver of health system improvements, wellbeing, research and innovation excellence, and economic prosperity. Strategy development for the FHRI Fund 2025–30 also

progressed, guided by a dedicated steering committee, extensive consultation, and Expert Committee advice. This work draws directly on the evaluation findings, which are informing both ongoing and future initiatives to maximise impact. A new grant management system was also introduced to streamline FHRI Fund applications, reporting and monitoring. The Advisory Council provided representation on the steering committee for the WA Clinical Trials Roadmap – this is now released and sets priorities for improving clinical trial quality and capacity across WA.

Throughout the year, FHRI Fund Open Days in Perth, Albany, Fremantle, and Busselton provided valuable platforms for knowledge exchange, networking, and celebrating new programs and recipients. These metropolitan and regional events showcased innovations in health technology and clinical trials while strengthening collaboration. Going forward, Open Days will continue to mark key announcements and encourage sector-wide connection and engagement.

## Looking ahead

The launch in July 2025 of the FHRI Fund Strategy 2025–30 ushers in a new era, shifting from broad capacity-building to more targeted and strategic investment. The strategy pivots on 3 themes: connect and collaborate, accelerate and translate, and foundational confidence. The flagship WA Spotlight Program will provide sustained, sector-wide investment to tackle significant WA health challenges, starting with rheumatic heart disease in Aboriginal communities. The Advisory Council is committed to guiding rigorous program design and prioritisation, ensuring the FHRI Fund's investments deliver transformative outcomes.

Focus will now turn to implementing the strategy in ways that achieve measurable and enduring results. An outcomes measurement framework will guide tracking of progress, while governance arrangements will be revised to ensure transparency, accountability and strategic alignment. The Advisory Council remains committed to strengthening collaboration with researchers, innovators, health services and communities, and to ensuring funding

streams adapt to emerging needs and opportunities. This next phase will cement the FHRI Fund as not only a driver of world-class health and medical research, but also a catalyst for translation, commercialisation and improved health outcomes.

The FHRI Fund has supported over 750 researchers and innovators in the 5 years since its inception, either through direct grants or support to improve their applications for national funding programs, and many of these talented researchers have gone on to make outstanding progress towards improving health outcomes for the WA community. Just a few of these stories are highlighted in this report, and I'm confident the year ahead will be filled with similar successes.

My sincere thanks go to Ms Rebecca Tomkinson, fellow Advisory Council members, Expert Committee members and stakeholders across the WA health and medical research and innovation community for their dedication and expertise throughout the year. The Advisory Council remains unwavering in its

commitment to engagement, transparency and impact, supporting researchers and innovators to confront WA's most pressing health challenges. Together, we will continue to position WA as a global leader in health and medical research and innovation, while driving collaboration, discovery, and improved health outcomes for our community.

### **Mr John Van Der Wielen**

Incoming Chairperson (September 2025)  
FHRI Fund Advisory Council





# 2024–25 at a glance

Focus on 2024–25



463

applications  
received



150

grants  
awarded



\$68.1

million  
awarded



15

programs  
launched



4

co-funding  
partnerships

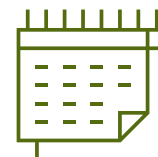


22

grant review  
panels



137 review panelists, including  
16 health consumers



3 Advisory Council meetings  
5 Strategy Steering Committee meetings  
4 open days

For more information about grant review panellists visit the [FHRI Fund website](#)

FHRI Fund support 2020–25

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**\$262** million total funding awarded

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**753** total recipients

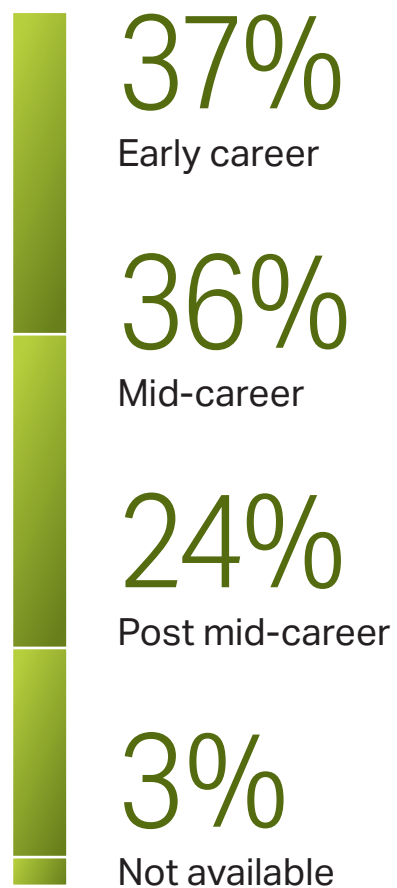
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**73** total responsible entities funded

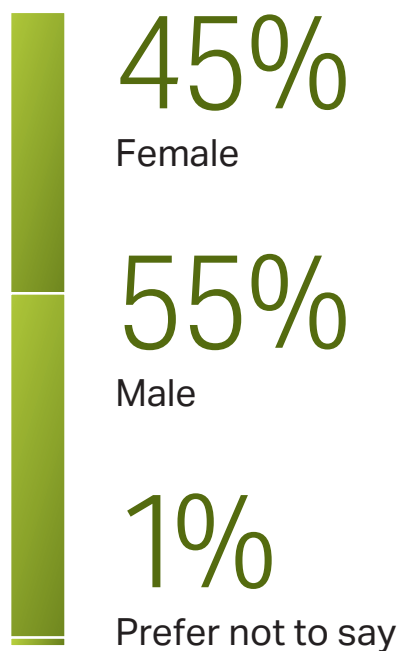


## Successful applications

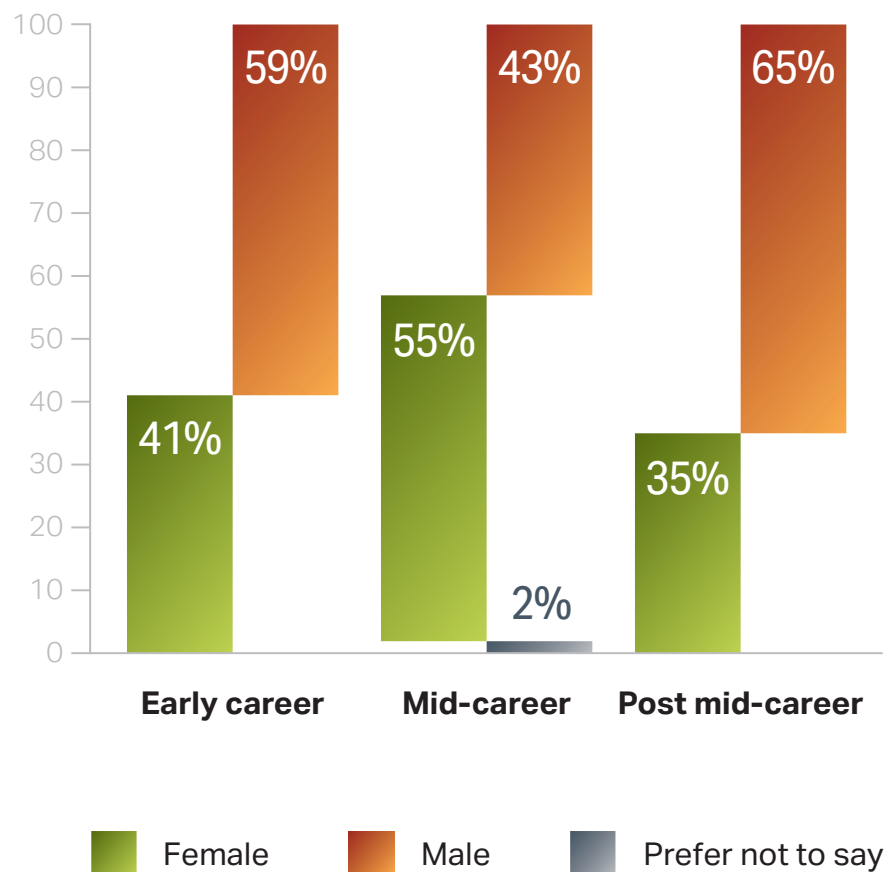
### Career stage\*



### Gender\*

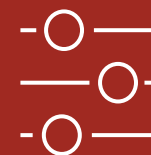


### Gender by career stage\*



\*relevant to data type

**Note:** % may not add up to 100% due to rounding



## Themes and priority goals

### Awarded funds by FHRI Fund Theme



65%

focused on platforms

19%

focused on partners

16%

focused on people

### Grants by FHRI Fund Theme



43%

focused on people

41%

focused on platforms

16%

focused on partners

For more information about themes and priority goals, visit the [FHRI Fund website](#)



Funding awarded to top 3 priority goals

**\$25 million**

**8**

**Goal 8:** Target high-performing researchers in WA to maintain and/or advance the State's position as a leader in health and medical research.

**\$10 million**

**7**

**Goal 7:** Enhance clinical trial capacity and expertise to improve the quality of clinical trials in WA and make the State more attractive to funders of clinical trials (grant funding and commercial sponsors).

**\$9.2 million**

**1**

**Goal 1:** Support the development of early and mid-career researchers, helping them to achieve an independent and self-sustaining career.

## Broad research areas



**22**

grants focused on clinical medicine and science



**17**

grants focused on basic science



**20**

grants focused on public health



**5**

grants focused on health services

Based on the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Broad Research Areas, the NHMRC's research classification for which data has been collected across all grant rounds and schemes since the 1980s.



Number of grants by program and amount awarded in 2024–25



**\$3.28 million**

**4 x** National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) Partner Program

**\$3.28 million**

**3 x** Research and Innovation Capacity and Capability Building



**\$25.00 million**

**20 x** Research Infrastructure Support

**\$2.95 million**

**6 x** Targeted Call Health Systems Solutions



**\$2.39 million**

**4 x** Translation Fellowships – Burden of Disease and Genomics



**\$2.00 million**

**9 x** WA Cohort Studies – Operational Support Program

**\$4.80 million**

**25 x** WA Near Miss Awards (WANMA) Emerging Leaders



**\$2.00 million**

**20 x** WANMA Ideas Grants

To see the full list of initiatives funded over the past year, visit the [FHRI Fund website](#)

# Highlights: Grants awarded in 2024–25

## National funding success for WA researchers

In 2024–25, 4 WA health and medical researchers and innovators transformed FHRI Fund support into national funding success, winning millions in competitive grants. This success was supported by the FHRI Fund Major Research and Innovation Application Support (MRIAS) program (formerly the Major Research Application Support (MRAS) program).

The MRIAS Program provides in-principle commitments of up to \$1 million to help strengthen WA health and medical research and innovation applications to prestigious national and international funding programs.

- Associate Professor Juliana Hamzah (Atherid Therapeutics) received a \$1 million FHRI Fund commitment that helped secure a \$750,000 grant from the MTPConnect’s Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Drugs and Devices investment opportunity. A/Prof Hamzah’s team is developing a first of its kind drug to clear cholesterol and fat plaques from artery walls, a major breakthrough for cardiovascular disease treatment.
- Professor David Preen (University of Western Australia (UWA) researcher and Chair in Public Health) secured a \$1 million FHRI Fund commitment that leveraged a \$1.5 million grant through the 2024 NHMRC Partnerships Projects program for his project investigating health service use and longer-term health outcomes for people living with mental ill health.

- Dr Amy Page (UWA) received a \$1 million FHRI Fund commitment and went on to win a further \$1.98 million from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Early to Mid-Career Researchers grant opportunity for her project, which aims to assist older people taking multiple prescription medications work with practitioners to better manage their treatment.
- Dr Myles Murphy (Edith Cowan University) received a \$600,000 FHRI Fund commitment, which led to success in winning an NHMRC Partnerships Project grant of \$1.1 million for his team’s work on co-designing an injury prevention program for police recruits.

To date, MRIAS and MRAS have committed \$9.4 million to 43 WA researchers and innovators. Of the 22 outcomes reported so far, 10 recipients have translated the FHRI Fund commitments into an additional \$13.4 million of competitive national research and innovation funding, and \$21 million of additional partner funding for WA.

## Understanding cancer patient experiences with accessing exercise

The health benefits of physical activity are well known, including for disease prevention and improved quality of life. For people with cancer, exercise can counteract the adverse side effects of treatment. Yet, of the 170,000 Australians diagnosed with cancer each year, only 13 per cent are referred to exercise specialists. This is despite national recommendations that clinicians inform patients about the benefits of physical activity and refer them to a specialist.

Edith Cowan University postdoctoral research fellow Dr Mary Kennedy is working to change this by finding ways to integrate exercise in clinical care pathways.

Through the FHRI Fund Consumer and Community Involvement (CCI) Support Program, Dr Kennedy was awarded \$24,922 to support her project *A picture is worth a thousand words: Understanding the experience of accessing exercise oncology care during cancer treatment for people in urban vs. regional locations of Western Australia.*

People in Perth and the Great Southern region who have undergone cancer treatment will be invited to share their perspectives of accessing exercise during treatment through photography and community conversations. The project seeks to explore the issues that affect access to cancer exercise services in regional areas. Dr Kennedy will work closely with a fitness professional who also has lived experience of cancer.

The CCI Support Program aimed to support consumer and community involvement in research and innovation activities. The program recognises that the personal experiences of health consumers, patients and their carers improves the quality, relevance and acceptability of health research and innovation activities and the potential for implementation of outcomes.

In 2024–25, 12 projects received a combined total of \$273,000 through the CCI Support program to embed consumer and community involvement in their research and innovation activities.



Stakeholder consultation meeting to set priorities for supportive cancer care services. (Source: Dr M Kennedy)



Consumer group meeting for discussion of research goals. (Source: Dr M Kennedy)

## Growing a world-class health and medical research ecosystem in WA

WA continues to strengthen its position as a global leader in health and medical research and innovation with a \$25 million injection into research infrastructure from the FHRI Fund in 2024–25.

For the second year running, the FHRI Fund divided \$25 million among 20 leading medical research institutes, universities and public hospitals via the Research Infrastructure Support (RIS) program. The program provides an important foundation to support the growth of the sector and enhance WA's reputation as a leader in health and medical research and innovation. Funding will expand access and availability of existing dedicated research facilities, services and equipment and cover operating costs, consumables, and the cost of shared research support staff.

The RIS program will inject a total of \$100 million into the WA health and medical research and innovation sector over 4 years to sustain and grow WA's world-class research and innovation infrastructure, capabilities and expertise, building research and innovation excellence and creating real impact for the WA community.

2024–25 RIS recipient, Linear Clinical Research, is channeling this support into the delivery of important clinical trials in WA, including through its new Advanced Clinical Trials Centre. Linear has a reputation for delivering world-class early phase clinical trials in Perth. Its centres contribute to the advancement of global medicines and technologies while helping patients access breakthrough treatments.



Patient receiving treatment at the Advanced Clinical Trial Centre.  
(Source: Linear Clinical Research)



Lab technician. (Source: Linear Clinical Research)



## Supporting innovation through the WA Venture Capital Initiative

In 2024–25, the FHRI Fund committed \$15 million to co-invest with 3 top venture capital firms through the health and medical life sciences stream of the new and ground-breaking WA Venture Capital Initiative (WAVCI).

WAVCI is an initiative designed to stimulate innovation, job creation, and economic growth in WA by attracting venture capital investment into early-stage start-ups and scale-ups. The initiative comprises 2 streams: one supported by the FHRI Fund, focusing on health and medical life sciences, and the other supported by the Industry Attraction Fund, targeting other priority sectors under the Diversify WA framework, managed by the Department of Energy and Economic Diversification.

Under WAVCI, appointed venture capital firms are required to contribute a minimum co-investment of 125 per cent of the WA Government's contribution, generating new non-government investment to grow and retain entrepreneurial talent and health innovation start-ups in WA.

Following an open and competitive tender process, a cross-government Venture Capital Advisory Committee supported the following 3 venture capital firms to deliver investment into Western Australia's health and medical life sciences sector:

- Artesian Venture Partners Pty Ltd
- Brandon Capital Partners Pty Ltd
- Health Translation Group Limited

These firms bring expertise, national and international networks, and a strong track record of supporting high-potential health and medical innovations. Their involvement will support growth of innovation start-ups and scale-ups as well as strengthen the innovation ecosystem in WA.

## Reimagining regional and remote health care – The Challenge winner

After months of stellar innovation efforts, Lions Outback Vision was announced as the winner of Pilbara healthcare initiative 'The Challenge' at an awards ceremony in Karratha in October 2024. The Challenge was a callout to develop and propose a ground-breaking solution to revolutionise and reimagine rural and remote healthcare in the Pilbara region.

The \$5 million prize was accepted by Professor Angus Turner and his team, Christine Stott and Alex Ramirez, for their revolutionary artificial intelligence powered eye screening to transform primary care project. The team will utilise this funding to provide accessibility to eye checks in remote and isolated indigenous communities with the potential for this technology to become standard procedure in detecting additional diseases of the body. This project team along with 9 other finalists were able to explore and test their ideas across the Pilbara region using their respective \$200,000 awarded in grant funding to get their innovations off the ground and into the Pilbara community.

The Challenge is a trailblazing initiative allowing like-minded innovators and disruptors the opportunity to collaborate and improve health care in the Pilbara region whilst also bringing them together with other like-minded professionals in the health care, technology, industry and government sectors.

The Challenge was enabled by the FHRI Fund with contributions from corporate partners BHP and Rio Tinto.



L to R: Alex Ramirez, Christine Stott, Professor Angus Turner, Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Medical Research.



## Highlights: Grants completed in 2024–25

### Pioneering a pill-based approach to cancer immunotherapy

While immunotherapy in cancer care can be life-saving, only 20 to 30 per cent of patients currently benefit from these treatments. In WA alone, more than 1,000 cancer patients receive immunotherapy each year, yet the majority see little or no improvement. Existing immunotherapy drugs are expensive to manufacture and must be delivered by intravenous injections, which are invasive for patients and financially burden the health system, as they need to be administered by a health professional.

With support from the FHRI Fund Innovation Seed Fund 2023–24, Professor Joost Lesterhuis and his team at WA start-up company Setonix Pharmaceuticals are aiming to develop an oral drug that boosts the immune response against cancer, improving health outcomes for cancer patients in WA and globally. During the FHRI-funded project, Setonix Pharmaceuticals improved the chemical and pharmacological characteristics of its compounds, resulting in a first

potential drug for further testing, and gained valuable insights into how the drug influences the biological response in the body and in the cancer.

Setonix Pharmaceuticals is considerably closer to defining a drug candidate that can be progressed into clinical trials and has made significant progress towards developing a new class of drug to benefit patients with cancer in WA and beyond.

The development of an oral immunotherapy drug represents a major step forward in cancer treatment, offering a less invasive treatment that could bring life-saving immunotherapy to a much higher proportion of cancer patients. It's a powerful example of how FHRI Fund support is helping WA researchers drive innovation and improve health outcomes for the community.

## Getting digital: Transforming early anxiety intervention for children diagnosed with autism

Anxiety is very commonly experienced by autistic individuals, often emerging in childhood and persisting into adulthood. Current treatment options for anxiety are limited and not designed in partnership with autistic people and their families to maximise their potential efficacy. Many families are also unable to access targeted and effective supports due to geographic location or limited time to attend therapies in-person.

Supported by a FHRI Fund Translation Fellowship, Dr Gail Alvares' research aimed to work together with the autism community to inform a potential digital solution to tackling anxiety challenges in

autistic children. In this project, Dr Alvares established a new Autism and Mental Health Consumer Reference Group, which oversaw all project activities. The research team conducted a series of focus groups and interviews to understand parents' perspectives and experiences accessing online supports for their child, then used a co-design process to inform a digital version of a group therapy program. These in-depth consultation activities allowed the research team to understand the needs and perceived barriers that families experience in accessing mental health services and online solutions.

Dr Alvares and her team evaluated the designed solution in a feasibility trial. This solution consisted of videoconferencing-delivered group therapy, with online supports and resources embedded into a learning management platform. The outcomes of this research have illustrated that group supports for parents are feasible to deliver and can address anxiety concerns in autistic children. The program has now been translated into practice within a community-based clinical service for children diagnosed with autism and training for clinicians to implement the program has been established.

## Transforming diagnosis and outcomes for patients with mitochondrial diseases

Mitochondrial diseases (MD) are a highly heterogenous group of inherited metabolic diseases that affect approximately one in 5000 live births in Australia. Common symptoms include heart failure, brain and nervous system defects, metabolic failure, motor function impairments, hearing and vision problems, and premature death in many cases. The difficulty of diagnosing multisystem MD and the lack of treatment options, place a large burden on many Australian patients and their families, highlighting the need for research that investigates the fundamental nature of MD and uses that knowledge to discover new methods for diagnosis and treatment.

Professor Aleksandra Lipovska received FHRI Fund support through the Research Excellence Awards for her investigation into how single gene changes can affect changes in energy production, breakdown of fats and sugars, and can cause different metabolic diseases, ranging from cardiovascular disease to insulin resistance and diabetes.

Professor Lipovska and her team have identified the molecular mechanisms that cause a metabolic disease associated with energy dysfunction. The mutation impairs the cellular architecture preventing important cargo shuttling between different parts of cells. This leads to reduced energy production, collapse of cellular structures and causes muscle and heart defects that lead to premature death in patients. The team now has a new target for drug development and prenatal screening.





## Advancing aged care nutrition through innovation in 3D food printing

Almost half of all aged care residents are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition, and the risk is even higher for the one in 3 residents who require special meals called texture-modified foods (TMFs) due to difficulties with chewing and swallowing. These residents often face severely limited food choices, especially when it comes to fruits and vegetables – an essential part of a healthy diet. With the support of a FHRI Fund Innovation Fellowship, Dr Leizhou Zhong introduced innovative 3D food printing technology to create enticing, nutrient-rich TMFs, focusing on fruit- and vegetable-based meals. This initiative uses upcycled, cosmetically imperfect but perfectly edible produce – reducing food waste while enhancing nutrition.

The research examined how 3D printed meals were received by aged care staff such as chefs, managers and dietitians as well as residents and their families across 3 WA aged care providers. Through on-site 3D food printing demonstrations and tastings, Dr Zhong explored the benefits and challenges of integrating this technology into aged care settings. The findings, currently being analysed, will be published in peer-reviewed journals.

The Innovation Fellowship enabled Dr Zhong to engage diverse communities in promoting healthy and sustainable eating using 3D food printing as an educational and interactive tool. Dr Zhong introduced the research to young students in Perth, Pilbara and South West regions, as well as politicians, industry leaders, and scholars during events including a showcase at Parliament House in Canberra.

# Open Days: connection across the sector driving real impact

In 2024–25, the FHRI Fund brought people together from across the State to celebrate and grow WA's health and medical research and innovation community. A series of Open Days showcased homegrown research, launched new funding opportunities, and created connections between researchers, innovators, healthcare providers and communities.

Across the year, FHRI Fund Open Days highlighted the power of collaboration and the importance of involving consumers and communities in shaping health research. By connecting researchers, clinicians, innovators, industry and communities – and through strong partnerships with WA Life Sciences Innovation Hub (WALSIH), health service providers, universities and research institutes – the FHRI Fund is helping ensure that new ideas and discoveries translate into better health outcomes for people across WA. And by driving innovation here in WA, we are also contributing to solutions that make a difference worldwide.

## Building a connected innovation ecosystem

The July 2024 Open Day at the UWA Club, co-hosted with WALSIH, highlighted WA's collaborative innovation environment. Nearly 150 attendees heard keynote speaker Dr Simon Graindorge of OncoRes encourage attendees to embrace curiosity and seize WA's unique opportunities. The event also profiled leading WA innovators from Veintech, VitalTrace, Argenica Therapeutics, and Marine Biomedical, demonstrating local strength across medtech and biotechnology.

## Strengthening regional health partnerships

In October 2024, the focus turned to regional health with an Open Day in Albany, co-hosted with UWA Albany and the WA Country Health Service (WACHS). Under the theme 'Partnerships for regional health and wellbeing', the event highlighted how collaboration between metropolitan and regional partners strengthens the health system. Initiatives in youth mental health and diabetes management in Aboriginal communities showed how local partnerships can deliver practical improvements while contributing to national research efforts.

## Harnessing technology for future health

As part of West Tech Fest, the December 2024 Open Day at the University of Notre Dame Fremantle, focused on health technology for the future. More than 200 attendees explored the potential of artificial intelligence, wearable devices, and telehealth to transform health care. The WALSIH medtech showcase featured innovative WA companies like Biotome, Earflo, Springboard Medical Manufacturing Alliance and Oqea, demonstrate how WA's geographical challenges can drive innovation from local companies.

## Advancing clinical trials in WA

The May 2025 Open Day in Busselton, co-hosted with the Busselton Population Medical Research Institute (BPMRI), celebrated clinical trials as a pathway to patient benefit. Central to the event was recognition of the Busselton Health Study, one of the world's longest-running population health studies, which, for over 50 years, has informed global research into heart disease, cancer, diabetes, respiratory illness, and sleep disorders. The event also marked the launch of WA's first Clinical Trials Roadmap, designed to expand clinical trial opportunities and improve patient access to evidence-based treatments.



# FHRI Fund Strategy 2025–30: a bold and ambitious approach

During 2024–25, a key priority for the Advisory Council was the development of a new strategy designed to take the FHRI Fund into the future. This significant undertaking was informed by detailed analysis to map emerging sector themes and opportunities aligned with the FHRI Fund Act, ahead of sector-wide engagement, evidence-gathering and strategic development work to shape and inform the [FHRI Fund Strategy 2025–30](#) (the Strategy).

The year was marked by strong collaboration with stakeholders across WA's health, research, and innovation ecosystem. Robust consultation and expert input was sought to ensure the Strategy reflected international best practice and the needs of the WA health and medical research and innovation community.

## Stakeholder engagement



14+

Formal interviews and several informed discussions. 20 key stakeholders involved, including the Minister for Medical Research.



7

Strategic workshops conducted to gain key stakeholder insights and input.



40+

Stakeholders engaged across workshops and interviews.



1

Stakeholder forum with more than 60 attendees, who provided additional insight to inform and test strategic themes.



274

Stakeholder submissions received electronically provided insight to current strengths, challenges and opportunities.

Source: FHRI Fund Strategy 2025–30

The Advisory Council, supported by the Office of Medical Research and Innovation (OMRI) and external consultants, has achieved a bold and ambitious focus for the next 5 years of health and medical research and innovation in WA. The Strategy reinforces transparency and accountability, whilst positioning the FHRI Fund to deliver on its renewed vision and goals and transform health, wellbeing, and economic outcomes for Western Australians through high-impact research and innovation investment.

# Strategy on a page

## Our purpose

Fire up life-changing health breakthroughs for Western Australia

## Our vision

By 2035, triple the impact of health research and innovation with a uniquely Western Australian focus

### Strategic goals

#### Sustainable health system

WA health expenses per capita

#### Healthier Western Australians

Health adjusted life expectancy

#### Prosperity of Western Australia

Economic contribution of health and medical research and innovation

#### Make WA famous for health and medical research and innovation

Global top 10 health researchers and innovators

### Strategic themes and priorities

#### Connect and collaborate



- Empower pathways and collaboration
- Inspire impact through an aligned focus
- Be bold and predictable

#### Accelerate and translate



- Underwrite innovation
- Activate the innovation community
- Build investment partnership

#### Foundational confidence



- Retain early to mid-career researchers
- Attract and retain world-class talent
- Make WA competitive

### Guiding principles

Impact driven research and innovation

Fair and inclusive access

Excellence with accountability

Power in partnership

Future ready investment

# FHRI Fund Governance

The Act establishes the FHRI Fund and also requires the establishment of the Advisory Council and Governance Framework for the FHRI Fund Scheme.

## Advisory Council

The Act requires the Minister for Medical Research to establish and maintain the Advisory Council, to guide the application of investment income from the FHRI Fund. The Advisory Council is made up of eminent persons with experience in fields such as research, innovation, business, law, finance, corporate governance and the philanthropic, charitable and not-for-profit sectors. The membership of the Advisory Council is described below.

- A member with experience in representing the community.
- A member who is considered to be an expert in research.
- A member who is considered to be an expert in innovation.
- At least 3 other members whom, taken together, are considered to have a suitable variety and level of relevant expertise and experience.
- At least one of the members will have experience in dealing with issues relating to the health of people living in regional WA.
- At least one of the members will have experience in dealing with issues relating to the health of Aboriginal people living in WA.
- The Minister for Medical Research will appoint one of the above members as the Chair.
- There will be 2 non-voting State Government members, one of whom will be the Director General of the Department of Health, or nominee.

Visit the [FHRI Fund website](#) to learn more about the FHRI Fund governance model and associated strategic documents

During 2024–25, the Advisory Council membership included:



**Ms Rebecca Tomkinson**  
Chair



**Mr Kane Blackman**  
Member



**Adjunct Professor  
Dale Fisher**  
Member



**Ms Jennifer Lawrence**  
Member



**Professor  
Christina Mitchell**  
Member



**Ms Lesley Nelson**  
Member



**Dr Marcus Tan**  
Member



**Professor Angus Turner**  
Member



**Professor Fiona Wood**  
Member



**Dr Shirley Bowen**  
Director General  
Department of Health  
Member (non-voting)



**Ms Rebecca Brown**  
Director General  
Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation  
Member (non-voting)

# Expert Committees

## Aboriginal Health Expert Committee

The purpose of the Aboriginal Health Expert Committee (AHEC) is to provide advice and guidance to the Advisory Council in the development of FHRI Fund strategy and priority goals, and to provide advice and guidance to OMRI in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of FHRI Fund research and innovation activities.

The AHEC were engaged in the consultations held during the development of the new FHRI Strategy 2025–30 to inform the strategic goals and priorities, in addition to ordinary meetings held during the year.

A particular area of focus for AHEC during 2024–25 has been supporting and informing OMRI development of the *'Aboriginal Health Research (AHR) Assessment Principles, Criteria and Guidance'* to ensure that AHR supported by the FHRI Fund is of the highest quality and benefit, as defined by Aboriginal peoples and communities. Development has involved consultation with Aboriginal communities across WA, engagement with the NHMRC and a review of national and international best practice. This work continues in 2025–26.

## Research Expert Committee and Innovation Expert Committee

In 2025, 2 new FHRI Fund Expert Committees, the Research Expert Committee (REC) and the Innovation Expert Committee (IEC), were established. Their purpose is to provide expert advice, guidance and/or recommendations to the Advisory Council and the Department of Health on key issues, priorities, and opportunities in health and medical research and innovation in WA.

Following induction in March, the REC and IEC participated in consultation workshops to inform the development of the FHRI Fund Strategy 2025–30. The committees will continue to meet in 2025–26 and contribute their specialist knowledge and advice as required.

# Selection governance

The FHRI Fund Governance Framework ensures funding is strategically allocated, transparently managed and outcomes focused. Decisions about Program and Initiative (P&I) grant recipients are guided by independent expertise, strong community representation and clear accountability.

## Selecting FHRI Fund Programs and Initiatives

The process for selection of P&Is is prescribed in the Act and the FHRI Fund Governance Framework. The Minister for Medical Research must seek and consider recommendations from the Advisory Council prior to approving expenditure of money from the FHRI Fund Account. The composition of expertise and experience of the Advisory Council ensures the investment of money from the FHRI Fund Account is strategic, evidence based and responsive to the needs of Western Australians.

## Selecting FHRI Fund grant recipients

P&I funding recipients are determined through transparent, competitive, merit-based review and assessment processes informed by the NHMRC – Australia's leading funder of health and medical research.

The appropriate selection method for each P&I is decided at the design stage and endorsed by the Advisory Council. Some P&Is, such as the Research Infrastructure Support (RIS) program, determine grant recipients through eligibility criteria such as receipt of national and international competitive grant income during the relevant period and formula-based calculations while others such as the WA Near Miss Awards (WANMA) program determine grant recipients based on NHMRC grant application scores representing excellence. The majority of FHRI Fund P&I grant applications are competitively reviewed and assessed by a FHRI Fund Grant Review Panel (GRP). P&I grant selection processes are outlined in the P&I guidelines and conditions.

## Grant review panels

GRPs, comprising independent researchers, innovators, industry-based subject matter experts, and consumer and community representatives, are established to review and assess FHRI Fund P&I grant applications. Each GRP member is selected based on skills, expertise and experience relevant to the particular FHRI Fund P&I.

OMRI maintains a register of researchers, innovators and consumers who have expressed an interest in reviewing FHRI Fund grant applications, and GRPs are established by OMRI using this register and other relevant sources if necessary. The prerequisites for sitting on a FHRI Fund GRP include expertise and experience relevant to a particular health issue, health and medical research and innovation as well as lived experience and consumer and community involvement. In 2024–25, 137 GRP members including 16 health consumers sat on 22 GRPs.

To address diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in line with the FHRI Fund Funding Principles, OMRI considers the distribution of age, gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander status, ethnicity and affiliations to organisations such as health service providers (HSPs), universities, industry, and medical research institutes. Every GRP includes at least one consumer or community member. The GRP's review and assessment of applications informs the recommended funding allocation for the relevant P&I and the awarding of grants in accordance with State Government financial and procurement processes and delegation authorities.

Ongoing opportunities are available to participate in a FHRI Fund GRP, and both Aboriginal people and people with lived experience of the health system are especially encouraged to apply. Visit the FHRI Fund website to find out more about GRPs, their role and to register interest.

In accordance with the FHRI Fund Governance Framework, outcomes from all selection processes used in 2024–25 are available on the FHRI Fund website and can be viewed at Future Health Research and Innovation Fund – Funding outcomes.



## Evaluating the first 4 years of the FHRI Fund (2020–24)

Independent consultants were engaged in 2024–25 to undertake a comprehensive 4-year evaluation of the FHRI Fund Scheme, assessing its achievements in meeting the object of the Act and to facilitate continuous improvement of the FHRI Fund and its strategic and operational instruments.

The evaluation included an assessment of the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the design and implementation of identified strategic and operational instruments, as well as assessment of the use and performance of these instruments in achieving the object of the Act. A further topic-based evaluation of 6 P&Is was also undertaken.

Alongside the evaluation, the 3-yearly Performance Review of OMRI, the Advisory Council and the Expert Committees was undertaken to assess their accountability, integrity and performance. This performance review also aims to facilitate continuous improvement.

The evaluation found several positive early signs of progress against the objects of the Act (noting that the period between research and translation into interventions that lead to outcomes can be 10 to 15 years). All strategic instruments were deemed appropriate, with priority goals and P&Is effective in achieving their desired objectives. All operational instruments were deemed appropriate. Areas for continuous improvement were noted and include recommendations to simplify strategy, strengthen decision-making and grant management processes, and enhance community and stakeholder engagement.

The performance review found governance is a strength of the FHRI Fund and that OMRI effectively operates across a number of areas. Opportunities were noted for increased strategic focus, the ways in which Expert Committees and GRPs are utilised and improved operational efficiency.

# FHRI Fund financial statement

The FHRI Fund is administered by the Treasurer. In accordance with Part 3 of the Act, the Department of Health as the accountable authority must include in its annual report information about the operation of the FHRI Fund during the financial year. The certification of financial statements for the FHRI Fund for the year ending 30 June 2024 and financial position as of 30 June 2024 is provided in the [Department of Health Annual Report 2024–25](#).

## 2024–25 FHRI Account financial report

In June 2020, the WA FHRI Account, an agency special purpose account under the *Financial Management Act 2006* section 16, was established by the Act. The aim of the special purpose account is to provide a secure and long-term source of funding in support of health and medical research, innovation and commercialisation.

	2025 (\$'000)	2024 (\$'000)
Balance at start of period	42,859	54,575
Receipts	56,472	54,792
Payments	(59,505)	(66,508)
Balance at end of period	39,826	42,859

Source: Annual Report 2024–25, Department of Health, Government of Western Australia.

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