



Dated: 3 October 2025

Via email: HMRStrategy@health.gov.au

Draft National Health and Medical Research Strategy consultation

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Health Libraries Australia (HLA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the Draft National Health and Medical Research Strategy.

ALIA is the national body for libraries and information services in Australia. ALIA HLA is a sector committee representing librarians and information professionals working in all health sectors across Australia including: hospitals and other clinical facilities, research institutes, regulatory agencies, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, government departments, regional health services, professional colleges, universities, cooperative research centres, not-for-profit and community organisations, and parts of public library services. The vision of HLA is that all Australians benefit from health library and information professionals' expertise that is integral to evidence based health care.

The Headings throughout this submission refer to the Department's Guiding questions for submissions.

1. Vision

A national vision that sets future health and medical research priorities, fosters collaboration, highlights economic benefits, and unites all contributors in a single strategy is both inspirational and transformative.

However, the current strategy overlooks the vital role that research libraries and professional librarians play in supporting research and strengthening evidence-based practice. Recognising librarians as part of the established research workforce would demonstrate a commitment to equity, inclusion and acknowledge the diversity needed to build a truly robust research ecosystem.

For example, in the chair's introduction:

*The draft National Strategy is the result of a national consultation and evidence gathering process conducted throughout 2024 - 2025. It reflects the collective insights of researchers, clinicians, policymakers, **information professionals**, industry leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and community leaders and consumers.*

Reference: [NHMRC Good institutional practice guide](#) (2025)

2. Values

The proposed strategy values—*Impact & Sustainability, Quality & Integrity, Equity, and Collaboration & Partnership*—provide a strong and appropriate foundation to guide actions, behaviours, and decisions for all parties. The values reflect principles that are essential to a high-performing, trustworthy, and community-focused research system.

However, a gap that must be addressed is the importance of equitable access to evidence, and the vital expertise of knowledge intermediaries such as health libraries and professionally qualified librarians. Embedding this recognition within the values would reinforce the commitment to equity, strengthen the integrity of the research system, and ensure that collaboration and impact are underpinned by access to the best available evidence.

3. Goals

The proposed goals support the strategy's vision and values working towards driving this national initiative. Including health libraries and professionally qualified, experienced health librarians in the Strategy is crucial to recognising our role as key enablers, and evidence intermediaries. Our expertise ensures that research investments are translated into measurable impact, equitable access to knowledge, and the delivery of reliable, evidence-based information that underpins research-informed patient care. Without our inclusion, the Strategy risks overlooking a critical element in the research ecosystem. The inclusion of health libraries and professionally qualified health librarians maximises the return on national research investment.

4. Focus Areas

1. **Build a vibrant research system that delivers for the nation**

2. **Embed research processes that are modern, efficient and consumer centred**
Building a truly vibrant research system requires equitable access to high-quality, relevant evidence, alongside expert advice and training in study design and research methodologies. To achieve this, the National Strategy must explicitly embed and acknowledge the role of health libraries and qualified librarians as core components of the research infrastructure. Their expertise in evidence access, knowledge management, and research support strengthens the system's capacity, ensures efficiency, and enables research to be translated into practice—ultimately supporting innovation and improved health outcomes for all Australians.

3. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing**

Libraries continually work to translate health research for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by supporting culturally appropriate information access, and research information needs of our First Nations communities. Libraries advocate for and support



community self-determination, facilitating research collaboration, preserving Indigenous knowledge, and equipping communities with digital literacy to utilize health information.

References:

Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) [Indigenous Matters](#) (2024)

ALIA [First Nations Domains](#) (2025)

5. Enablers

Librarians are essential enablers of the research workforce, and libraries are critical infrastructure. Together, they form an intrinsic foundation for a thriving health and medical research ecosystem.

Acknowledging librarians and institutional collections as integral research assets would significantly strengthen the current NMRC strategy. A successful and sustainable research landscape depends on access to:

- **Comprehensive library services** that deliver curated collections of reputable, evidence-based resources alongside a suite of support services
- **Qualified health librarians** who provide expert advice across the research lifecycle, including scholarly publishing, research metrics, and data management.

6. Priority-ranking of Actions and Enabling Initiatives

1. **An Australian Health and Medical Research Workforce Plan:** to be truly comprehensive, the plan must acknowledge the essential role of health libraries and professional librarians as enablers of research excellence and effective research translation. Failing to recognise our contribution risks overlooking a critical part of the research workforce—one that ensures equitable access to knowledge, strengthens evidence-based practice, and supports the capacity of researchers and clinicians to deliver innovation and improved health outcomes for all Australians.
2. **An Australian Health and Medical Research Infrastructure Roadmap:** A national roadmap is needed to provide clarity and strengthen the critical research infrastructure that underpins innovation, including health libraries. Without coordinated action, access to library services will remain uneven, perpetuating inequities across the country—most acutely experienced by clinicians in rural and remote communities and by those working outside university settings. Ensuring equitable access to high-quality library services is not just an infrastructure issue; it is a matter of fairness, capacity building, and supports the best possible health outcomes for all Australians.
3. **Access to data, digital assets and advanced technology:** Equitable access to authoritative, high-quality evidence must be guaranteed through robust, nationally supported library systems and platforms. Without this, researchers, clinicians, and communities' risk being left behind. The strategy must also champion open access models that ensure the widest possible sharing of new research outputs—so that every stakeholder, from policymakers to practitioners to patients, can benefit from the latest knowledge. Investing in this infrastructure is not optional; it is essential to advancing



discovery, strengthening the health system, and translating newly gained knowledge directly into improving outcomes for all Australians.

7. Governance

The establishment of a National Strategy Advisory Council is a welcome and important initiative. To ensure that access to evidence and the translation of research are firmly embedded in strategic decision-making, we strongly recommend that the Council includes representation from health librarians. Librarians bring unique expertise in knowledge management, scholarly communication, and evidence translation—skills that are critical to building a strategy grounded in accessibility, equity, and impact.

8. Metrics

To measure Australian success - a key indicator would be to encourage all researchers and research organisations to register and participate in the global community-led open persistent identifier initiatives - [ORCID](#) and [ROR-ID](#).

In addition every clinician and medical science researcher within the public health system require full access to a health library and professional health sciences librarian to guide and support their evidence-based research activities.

9. Other considerations

A major challenge in Australia is that health libraries are often underfunded, despite being essential to research quality, evidence access, and the translation of research into practice. The strategy provides a key opportunity to highlight the need for sustained and appropriate resourcing of libraries—encompassing both professional staffing and the procurement of critical resources such as databases, high-quality information, and specialised software. Closing this gap will strengthen the entire research ecosystem and ensure equitable access to evidence across all health settings.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely



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On behalf of Health Libraries Australia an ALIA Sector Committee

