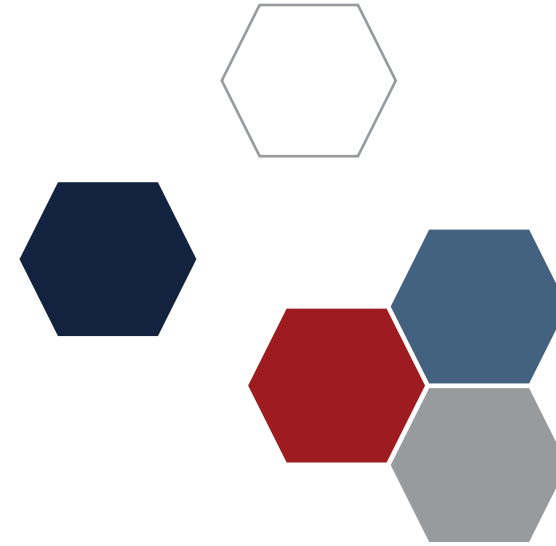




Australian Government
Department of Health



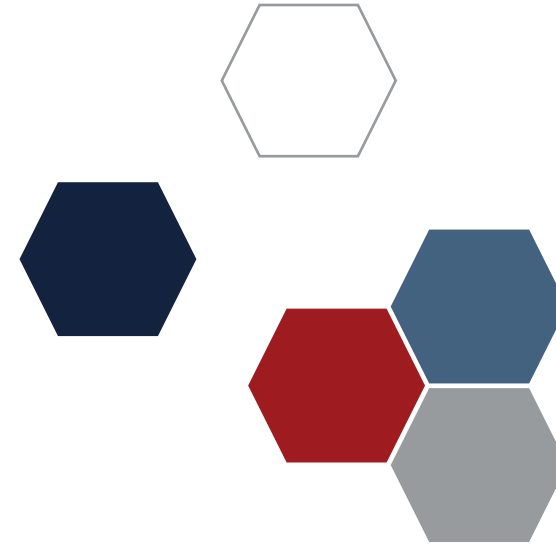
Medical Research

Future Fund

Genomic Cancer Clinical Trials Initiative

27 October 2023

A/Prof Ruth Griffiths, Acting CEO, Health and Medical Research Office



MRFF Program Updates

Grant opportunities - changes over time

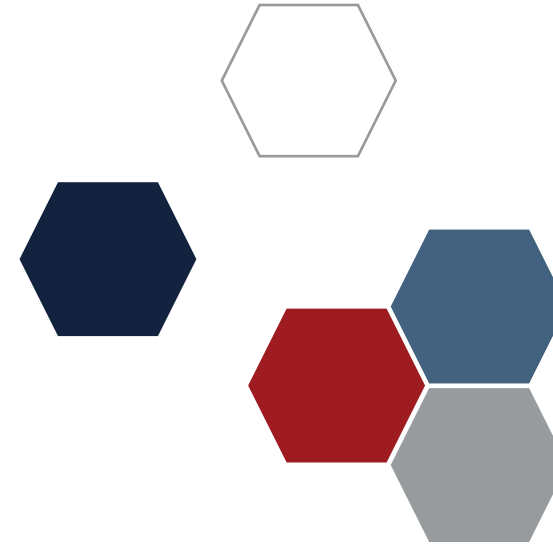
- Moving away from **targeted** to **competitive**
- Opening for longer
 - Aiming for **4-6 month** open periods, where possible
- More '**bunching together**' with common opening/closing periods; avoiding school holidays
- Forecasting
 - **Grant Opportunity Forecast Calendar**
 - **Missions:** Expert Advisory Panel develops a **Roadmap** and **Implementation Plan** following national consultation and international review
 - **Priority Investments:** Expert Advisory Panels have developed **Research Plans** outlining **aims** and **priority areas** for research investment
 - Long-COVID/PASC, childhood mental health, primary health, Targeted Translation Research Accelerator – diabetes and cardiovascular disease
 - Consideration of Priority Populations
 - Emphasis on inclusion of early- to mid-career researchers, **clinician researchers**, consumers
- **Communication** activities
 - MRFF CEO webinars, MRFF RAO webinars, Topic-specific webinars, fortnightly newsletter

2023 MRFF Clinical Trial Activity Grant Opportunity – NOW OPEN

- \$750 million over 10 years from 2022-23 under the **MRFF’s Clinical Trials Activity Initiative**
 - objective of this initiative is **to increase clinical trial activity in Australia**
 - initiative provides funding to the **Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need priority area**
- **2023 Clinical Trial Activity Grant Opportunity** opened 25 October, will close 29 May 2024, and will provide up to **\$65 million** for :
 - **Stream 1:** conduct a pilot study to assess the feasibility of a new clinical trial for one or more treatments and/or management strategies for a rare cancer, rare disease and/or unmet need.
 - **Stream 2:** conduct a clinical trial of one or more treatments and/or management-based interventions for rare cancers, rare diseases and/or unmet need.
 - **Stream 3:** conduct a clinical trial that assesses the comparative effectiveness of two or more health interventions to treat a specific clinical condition, to inform the decisions of policy makers, clinicians, and consumers regarding healthcare and to minimise the use of unnecessary, ineffective, and harmful health interventions.
 - **Stream 4:** conduct an implementation science trial to identify scalable strategies for reducing the provision of low value care.

2023 International Clinical Trial Collaborations

- Round 2 now open, closes 6 February
- Funding for Australian sites and/or international coordinating centre for an international clinical trial
 - Phase 3 studies



MRFF Data and Reports

Increasing MRFF data available

MRFF Financial Assistance Report (May 2023)

- MRFF financial assistance consistency with 2020–2022 priorities
- **Funded rates**
- MRFF policies, performance and assurance activities
- MRFF highlights and research snapshots...and more

MRFF Coronavirus Research Response Report (May 2023)

\$130 million total funding

80 projects funded
69 through competitive processes

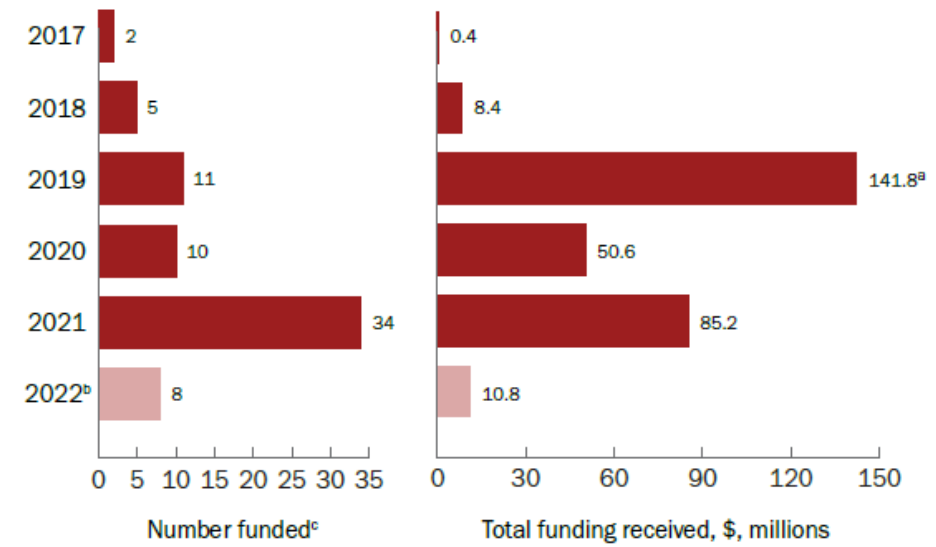
- awarded through 24 grant opportunities
- across all 4 broad research areas and 20 fields of research
- with similar funded rates between males and females

Leading to:

- the first Australian-made COVID-19 mRNA vaccine
- the world's first 'living guidelines'
- new ways to vaccinate against, diagnose and treat COVID-19
- new ways to perform clinical trials

MRFF Report on Funding for Rural, Regional and Remote Health Research (August 2023)

- **MRFF investment into RRR focused projects has increased since inception**
- A rural focus has been embedded in a number of grant opportunities (through streams and eligibility criteria)
- Increased funds have been awarded to projects that are undertaken in rural areas, and to projects that address health topics of significance to rural areas of Australia



^a The total for 2019 includes the 2019 Rural, Regional and Remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure grant opportunity (\$124.4 million awarded).
^b The dataset for 2022 is not yet complete and does not include data for grant opportunities that opened in 2022 and for which outcomes are not yet available or have not been announced.
^c The number of projects funded includes grants with payments that commenced before or on 30 December 2022.

MRFF Report on Gender Data for Grant Opportunities (August 2023)

- **Overall MRFF funded rates for women and men are similar**, for both leading Chief Investigators (20.3% for women and 21.5% for men) and all Chief Investigators (25.7% for women and 25.7% for men)

Some excerpts from the Financial Assistance Report (FAR)

The MRFF makes significant investments across all broad research areas

Broad research area	Number of grant opportunities completed	Funded grants	Funding	% of Funding
Basic Science	18	40	\$64,716,158.04	13.3%
Clinical Medicine and Science	23	136	\$277,096,247.86	56.8%
Health Services Research	18	64	\$92,819,599.82	19.0%
Public Health	17	35	\$53,516,135.56	11.0%

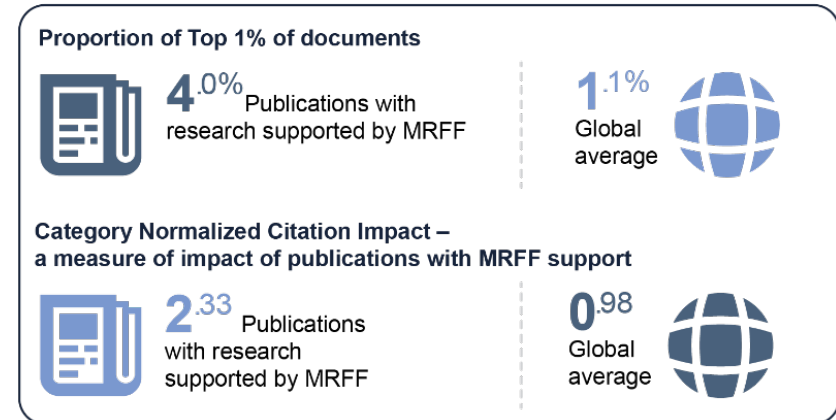
MRFF funded rates are above 30% (on average)

Broad research area	Number of applications	Funded grants	Funded rate
Basic Science	124	40	32.2%
Clinical Medicine and Science	424	136	32.1%
Health Services Research	179	64	35.8%
Public Health	95	35	36.8%

MRFF funded rates for women and men researchers are comparable

	Gender	Number of CIs in applications	Number of CIs in funded grants	Funded rate
All Chief Investigators (CIs)	Women	4415	1517	34.4%
	Men	5116	1591	31.1%
Lead Investigator (CIA)	Women	457	143	31.3%
	Men	564	156	27.7%

Scientific articles of research supported by MRFF have higher impact than the global average



FAR – Success rates through the Clinical Trials Activity Initiative

Table G Funded rates of MRFF grant opportunities

MRFF initiative	Grant opportunity	Applications	Applications funded	Funded rate
Clinical Trials Activity	2021 Clinical Trials Activity	105	31	29.5%
	2021 Innovative Therapies for Mental Illness	16	7	43.8%
	2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.1)	24	4	16.7%
	2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.2)	24	3	12.5%
	2021 Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need	97	29	29.9%
	2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 22.1)	20	3	15%
	2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 22.2)	No outcome available at the time this report was written.		
Clinical Trials Activity and Emerging Priorities and Consumer-Driven Research	2022 Multiple Sclerosis Research	No outcome available at the time this report was written.		
	2022 Pancreatic Cancer Research	9	4	44.4%




FAR – Information on clinical trials across MRFF initiatives

Enabling clinical trials research




Clinical trials are an essential component of health and medical research, playing an important role in validating new treatments and approaches for the prevention, management, detection, and diagnosis of health conditions.

Through a range of its initiatives, the MRFF has funded Australian clinical trials across many different health conditions. MRFF-funded projects bring researchers, medical specialists, and patients together to promote clinical innovation, improve patient outcomes and support jobs and economic growth of the health and medical research sector.

Clinical trials – under Clinical Trials Activity initiative

19 grant opportunities 	161 number of grants 
 \$300,155,728.36 value of grants	

Clinical trials – outside Clinical Trials Activity initiative

63 grant opportunities 	161 number of grants 
 \$511,071,617.41 value of grants	

The MRFF Clinical Trials Activity initiative dedicates funding for clinical trials including:

<p>grant opportunities which have funded Australian clinical trials in rare cancers, rare diseases, and areas of unmet need – targeted funding has been provided in areas such as childhood brain cancers, neurodegenerative diseases, low survival cancers and diseases, reproductive cancers, and COVID-19</p> 	<p>International Clinical Trial Collaboration grant opportunities which allow Australian researchers to participate in and/or lead an international clinical trial</p> 	<p>the 2021 Innovative Therapies in Mental Therapies grant opportunity which supported trials assessing the safety and efficacy of new therapies for treatment resistant mental illness.</p> 
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Clinical trials research is also supported through several other MRFF initiatives including:

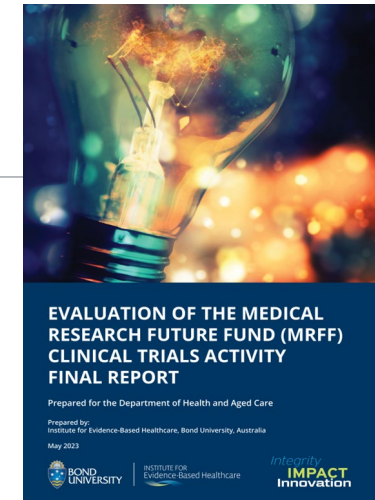
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Missions • Clinician Researchers • Early to Mid-Career Researchers • Emerging Priorities and Consumer-Driven Research • Frontier Health and Medical Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Health • Indigenous Health Research Fund • National Critical Research Infrastructure • Preventative and Public Health • Primary Health Care Research
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Examples include:

<p>Mission grant opportunities have funded new clinical trials in cardiovascular health, dementia, ageing and aged care, genomics, mental health, stem cells therapies, traumatic brain injury, Indigenous health research and brain cancer</p>	<p>the 2019 Rural, Regional and Remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure grant opportunity invested \$124.4 million so that patients can access clinical trials where they live</p>	<p>Emerging Priorities and Consumer-Driven Research grant opportunities have supported clinical trials in a range of areas including endometriosis, medicinal cannabis, and lung cancer genomics.</p>
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Evaluation of MRFF-funded Clinical Trials

- The Department engaged the **Institute for Evidence-Based Healthcare (IEBH) at Bond University** to evaluate the **MRFF Clinical Trial Activity initiative** and other MRFF-funded clinical trials
- Key findings include:



Study Design And Quality Characteristics

MRFF-funded trials are comparable or better in design and quality to other national and international funders

16% of MRFF trials aim to recruit >1000 participants, more than NHMRC, NIH and CIHR

43% of MRFF trials were part of a clinical trial network, compared to NHMRC (40%)

Progress Towards Measures Of Success And Impact

Increased research into unmet need, particularly in rare cancers

Allowed more Australians access to clinical trials

Significant involvement of professional organisations, industry and consumers in trials to enhance research translation

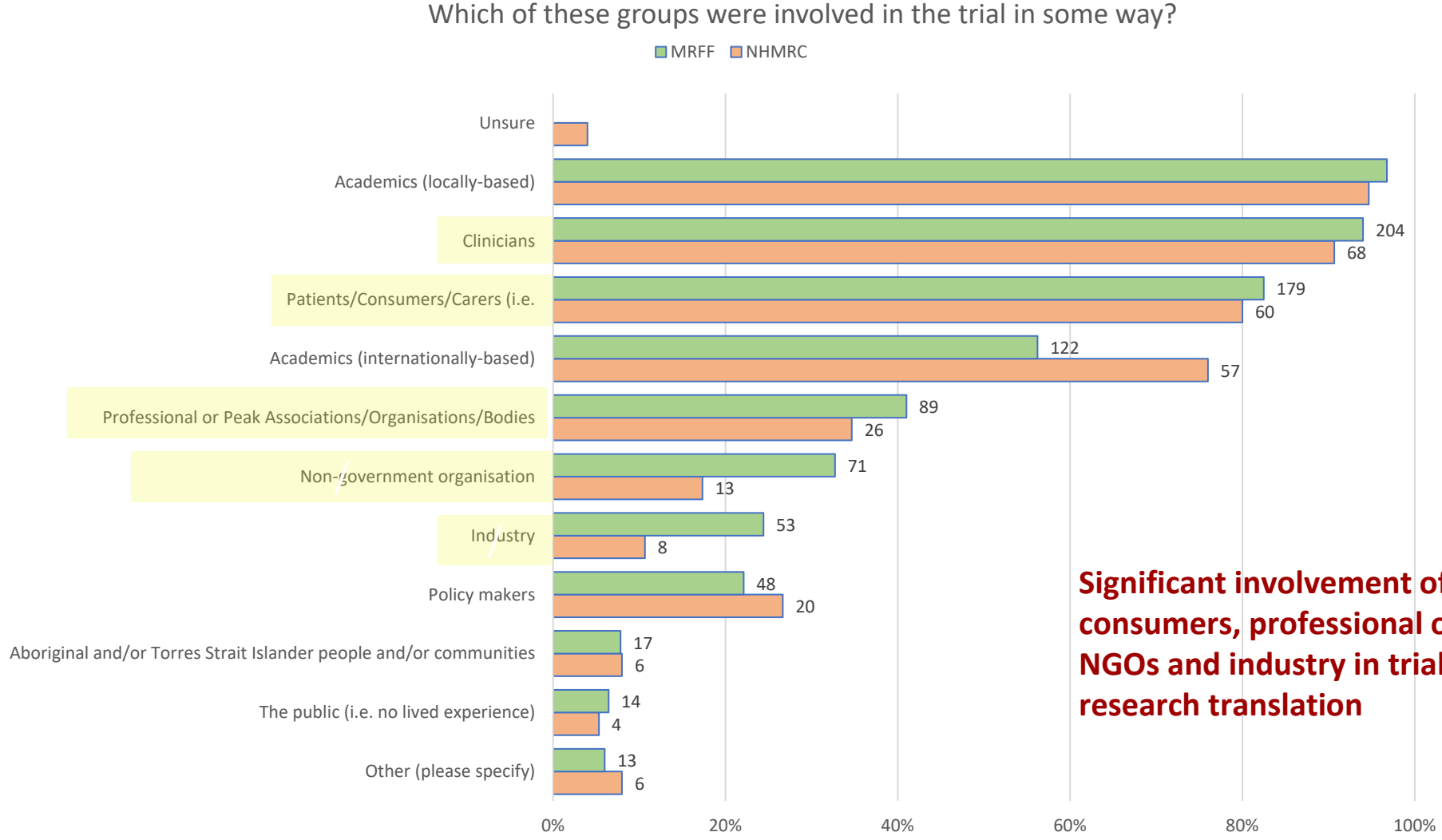
Key Opportunities To Enhance Return On Investment

Encouraging more efficient or innovative trial designs (e.g. factorial or adaptive/platform trials)

Exploring specific priority setting methodologies

Encouraging increased trial registration, protocol availability, and use of Standardised Outcome Sets

Evaluation of MRFF-funded Clinical Trials

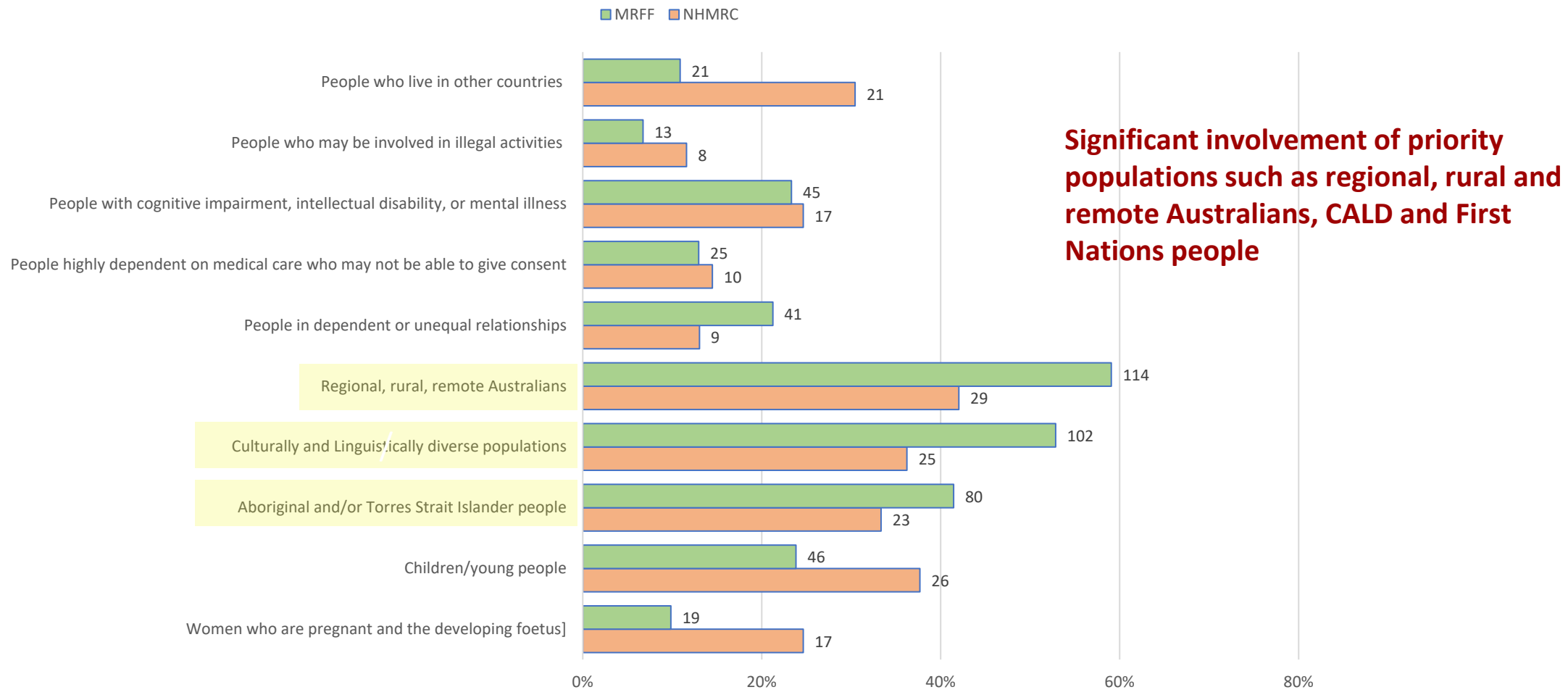


Significant involvement of clinicians, consumers, professional organisations, NGOs and industry in trials to enhance research translation

Grantees of clinical trials funded by the **MRFF** or the **NHMRC Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies scheme** were asked “Which of these groups were involved in the trial in some way?” *Source: Evaluation of the MRFF Clinical Trials Activity Initiative Final Report - Appendix, Institute for Evidence-Based Healthcare, Bond University.*

Evaluation of MRFF Clinical Trials Activity

Does your trial include participants from any of the following populations



Grantees of clinical trials funded by the **MRFF** or the **NHMRC Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies** scheme were asked the question: “Does your trial include participants from any of the following [vulnerable] populations? *Source: Evaluation of the MRFF Clinical Trials Activity Initiative Final Report - Appendix, Institute for Evidence-Based Healthcare, Bond University.*

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<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/medical-research-future-fund/mrff-news>



Nominate for an MRFF Grant Assessment Committee (GAC)

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/2021-22-medical-research-future-fund-mrff-grant-opportunities>



Register for MRFF grants opportunities

<https://www.grants.gov.au/>



Check out the grant opportunity forecast

<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/medical-research-future-fund/mrff-grant-opportunities-calendar>



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