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| Victorian Cancer Agency Funding RulesUpdated June 2023 |

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This document articulates the Victorian Cancer Agency (VCA)’s general policy in relation to funded research and should be read in conjunction with the specific research obligations of your individual funding agreement. The *Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Rules* may be updated from time to time.

# 1 Research policy

The Victorian Cancer Agency (VCA) expects funded parties to work with, and maintain, a research culture which fosters honesty and integrity. The VCA considers this to include respect for human research participants, animals and the environment, good stewardship of public resources used to conduct research, appropriate acknowledgement of the role of others in research, and the responsible communication and representation of research qualifications, history and results.

## 1.1 Responsibilities of Institutions

The VCA requires funded parties to adhere to the [*National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007*](https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018) *(updated 2018)* <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018> and the [*Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018) (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 2018) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018> and considers it the responsibility of funded parties, where appropriate, to:

* Promote the responsible conduct of research, including the appropriate management of intellectual property, research data and primary materials, and give due consideration to the Commercialisation Guidelines contained in these Funding Rules
* Establish good governance and management practices
* Appropriately train staff
* Promote mentoring and encourage the open exchange of ideas between peers
* Ensure a safe research environment and encourage a gender-equal workforce that supports the retention and progression of women, refer to the [NHMRC Gender Equity Strategy 2022-2025](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/gender-equity/nhmrc-gender-equity-strategy-2022-2025) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/gender-equity/nhmrc-gender-equity-strategy-2022-2025>

## 1.2 Responsibilities of researchers and supervisors of research trainees

Researchers and supervisors of research trainees have a responsibility to:

* Maintain high standards of responsible research, including the proper management of intellectual property and the proper management and retention of research data and primary materials
* Report research responsibly
* Respect human research participants, animals used in research, and the environment
* Encourage and facilitate the open exchange of ideas between peers and appropriate consumer and community engagement in research
* Report research misconduct in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (2018).

## 1.3 Ethical standards

The VCA expects all funded parties and/or Administering Organisations to comply with laws and relevant ethical and research standards and policies for conducting research including:

* The [*National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007*](https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018)<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018> (updated 2018)
* The[*Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition*](https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes)(2013) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes>
* An ongoing commitment to the three “R’s” as a guiding principle to research using animals: the replacement of animals with other methods, the reduction of the number of animals used, and the refinement of techniques used to reduce the impact on animals
* The [*National Framework of Ethical Principles in Gene Technology*](https://www.ogtr.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/2021-07/national_framework_of_ethical_principles.pdf) <https://www.ogtr.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/2021-07/national\_framework\_of\_ethical\_principles.pdf > (The Gene Technology Ethics and Community Consultative Committee 2012)
* The [*AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics) <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics>.

## 1.4 Ethics clearance

The VCA requires that funded parties comply with ethical principles of integrity, respect for persons, justice and beneficence in research. Funded parties must receive written approval from appropriate ethics committees, safety or other regulatory bodies, where required, to undertake the research.

If awarded VCA funding, relevant committee approvals (for example Human Research Ethics Committee, Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee or Biosafety Committee approvals) must be obtained as required and copies must be provided to the VCA on request.

## 1.5 Conflict of interest

Applicants and funding recipients have a responsibility to ensure, both at the time of applying for funding, and during a funding term, that no actual or potential conflict of interest arises, or can reasonably be perceived to arise during the funding term. Funded parties also have an ongoing obligation to inform the VCA in writing of any matter that may give rise to a conflict of interest.

## 1.6 Non-duplication

While the VCA acknowledges the probability of research co-funding, the VCA has the following policies with regard to this matter.

### 1.6.1 Duplication of funding

The VCA will not provide financial assistance to meet the costs of a project to the extent that those costs have been, or are likely to be, met by funding obtained from another source (including other VCA funding).

### 1.6.2 Notification of duplicate funding

The Applicant has a responsibility not to accept duplicate funding, and to inform the VCA if, at any time during the assessment process or subsequent, funding is provided for costs requested under a VCA funding application.

### 1.6.3 Decisions on co-funding

Where a significant portion of the costs for proposed research has been, or is likely to be, funded by other sources (including other VCA funding), the VCA may decide to recommend that the proposal not be funded at all. In other cases, the VCA may decide to recommend a reduced amount of funding for the proposed research.

## 1.7 The dissemination of research outputs

The Victorian Government, through the VCA, significantly invests in cancer research to support its essential role in improving cancer patient care and outcomes in Victoria. Consistent with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s [*Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018) (2018) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018>, the VCA has an expectation that researchers will disseminate their research data and that any publications arising from VCA funded research be made available through an open access institutional repository.

## 1.8 Special responsibilities: engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in research

To ensure best practice in relation to the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities or groups involved in, or affected by funded research, the VCA considers that this Research Policy should be read in conjunction with:

* The [*AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics) <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics>.
* [Keeping research on track II: a guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research ethics](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/keeping-research-track-ii%22%20%5Cl%20%22%3A~%3Atext%3DKeeping%20research%20on%20track%20II%20was%20developed%20to%20provide%20advice%2Cput%20into%20practice%20in%20research.) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/keeping-research-track-ii#:~:text=Keeping%20research%20on%20track%20II%20was%20developed%20to%20provide%20advice,put%20into%20practice%20in%20research> (NHMRC, 2018)
* [Road map III: A strategic framework for improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through research](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/road-map-3) < https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/road-map-3> (NHMRC, 2018).

# 2 Commercialisation

The commercialisation of research Intellectual Property under a VCA funding agreement means the exercise of any of the rights given to the owner of that Intellectual Property. Commercialisation options range from exclusive and non-exclusive licences, to research agreements or contracts through to joint ventures, to product supply or manufacture. The appropriate method and level of commercialisation a funded party is obliged to undertake will largely depend on the nature of the research project and the requirements of the individual funding agreement.

The VCA acknowledges that there is no single ‘best approach’ for commercialising research Intellectual Property, and that each case should be considered individually. The level and nature of commercialisation funded parties are obliged to undertake will depend on the nature of the research and the type of funding received from the VCA.

## 2.1 The purpose of promoting commercialisation

The primary purpose of promoting commercialisation under a VCA funding agreement is to ensure that funding recipients recognise and assist the aim of the VCA in promoting, enhancing and facilitating cancer research and its translation to clinical practice to enable the delivery of evidence-based cancer services in Victoria. This translation of research into clinical practice and evidence-based services could be demonstrated through a range of outcomes such as:

* The enhancement of Victoria’s skill-base in cancer patient care and treatment
* The maintenance or establishment of Victoria as the home base for manufacture or product development and supply
* Consumer and user benefits for the Victorian public through higher performance, higher quality, and cheaper products or services
* The enhancement of state-wide medical resource security in relation to cancer care and treatment options.

## 2.2 Commercialisation Obligations under a VCA Agreement

All funding agreements for VCA funding programs will be through the Department of Health on behalf of the VCA. In general, under a VCA funding agreement, funded parties have an obligation to commercialise their research Intellectual Property to a minimum standard (which is outlined in your individual funding agreement), and to do so in a way that ensures fair and reasonable access for the Victorian public to care and treatment benefits resulting from the research project Intellectual Property. This may include an obligation to ensure that the price or terms of supply of any product resulting from funded research are fair and reasonable in relation to ensuring access to any products by the Victorian public (depending on the nature of the research). For specific details on commercialisation requirements, please refer to your individual funding agreement.

## 2.3 Manner of commercialisation

Commercialisation options that may be appropriate include:

* The manufacture, distribution, marketing, hire, sale, supply, import, export or other facilitation of the availability of products to a third party
* The offer to manufacture products or distribute, market, hire, sell, supply, import, export, or otherwise make available products to a third party
* The provision or offer of a commercial service to a third party which is based on or uses the products or the research Intellectual Property

Licensing or other authorisation of a third party to undertake any of the above

* The patenting or trade marking, or other formal registration and protection of any research Project Intellectual Property
* The publication of the research Intellectual Property or any work in connection with the research project.

## 2.4 Commercialisation considerations

The VCA does not wish to impact on the ability of a funded party to publish their research. However, in considering commercialisation options for Intellectual Property, the VCA requests that funded parties pay due consideration to:

* The possibility that publication or disclosure might preclude the grant of a patent or cause the loss of that Intellectual Property
* Their obligation to ensure that commercialisation results in increased cancer patient care and treatment outcomes for the Victorian public
* The requirement of fair and reasonable access to the Victorian public to resulting care and treatment benefits.

# 3 Intellectual property

Intellectual Property refers to the various rights which the law accords for the protection of creative effort.[[1]](#footnote-2) Examples of Intellectual Property include patents, trademarks, designs, confidential information or trade secrets, plant breeder’s rights and circuit layout rights. Intellectual Property may result from activities undertaken pursuant to research funding.

## 3.1 Publicly funded research and intellectual property

Intellectual Property rights and obligations contained in agreements for publicly funded research differ according to the aims and charter of the funding body. For example, if the central aim of the funding body is to promote and encourage research within a particular field, there may be no Intellectual Property obligations for the researcher other than providing a copy of research findings to the funding organisation.

The ultimate aim of the VCA is to improve cancer patient care and outcomes. The VCA aims to promote, enhance and facilitate cancer research and its translation into clinical practice to improve the delivery of evidence-based cancer services in Victoria. This is the rationale behind the standard Intellectual Property clause in VCA agreements.

## 3.2 The commercialisation of intellectual property

The VCA’s funding agreements contain unique provisions to encourage the commercialisation and publication of research Intellectual Property. The VCA’s funding agreements also require that this commercialisation occurs in a manner that results in fair and reasonable access for the Victorian public to knowledge, techniques, products or other benefits which stem directly or indirectly from funded research. These provisions exist to ensure that the VCA meets its aim of enabling the delivery of evidence-based improvements to the care of Victorians diagnosed with cancer.

## 3.3 Intellectual property rights and obligations

The VCA strives to adhere to industry best practice in relation to Intellectual Property management, whilst ensuring funded research meets the aims of the VCA, as follows:

### 3.3.1 Ownership of intellectual property

Currently, the VCA does not seek ownership of any Intellectual Property owned by funded parties. Under VCA agreements, funded parties retain ownership of their Intellectual Property. This policy is in line with industry best practice for the management of Intellectual Property for publicly funded research. In the case of fellowship and scholarship agreements, Intellectual Property ownership is determined according to the rules of the organisation where the recipients are employed, or which will administer the funding.

### 3.3.2 Third party rights

Funded parties are required to warrant under their funding agreement that their use of Background Intellectual Property[[2]](#footnote-3) will not infringe the Intellectual Property rights of a third party, and to indemnify the State against any loss or damage which may occur as a breach of this warranty. As such, Applicants are encouraged to assess and identify the status of any third party. Background Intellectual Property intended for use in their research and obtain relevant clearances.

### 3.3.3 Licensing of intellectual property

Funded parties must provide the VCA with a licence over the research project Intellectual Property for the VCA’s internal operations and for general publicity purposes only. This licence is non-exclusive, worldwide, perpetual, irrevocable and royalty free. In some instances, this licence may include Background Intellectual Property in so far as it is necessary to include this in order for the VCA to properly access the research Intellectual Property for internal operations and general publicity or reporting.

### 3.3.4 Internal operations and general publicity purposes

The licence described in 3.3.3 above does not allow the VCA to make commercial use of research Intellectual Property. In utilising this licence for their internal operations, the VCA may, for example, use the Intellectual Property for administrative purposes such as record keeping, and assessment of research progress. In utilising this licence for general publicity purposes, the VCA may, for example, release general information about the award title, administering institution, research project title and funding recipients in media releases or on the VCA website, but may not release confidential information regarding the research or the Applicant.

### 3.3.5 Licensing on default of commercialisation requirements

If a funded party does not reach the minimum commercialisation requirements outlined in their funding agreement and does not have an alternative VCA-approved commercialisation scheme in place or a satisfactory explanation for failure to encourage or facilitate the commercialisation of the research Intellectual Property, a licence may be invoked by the VCA which permits the VCA to commercialise a funded party’s research Intellectual Property.

The VCA’s interest in licensing research Intellectual Property on default of commercialisation is directly connected to the interest of the Victorian public in the translation of funded research into improved cancer patient care and outcomes.

The above licence can be invoked by the VCA in the event of failure by the funded party either to commercialise or to commercialise in the prescribed manner[[3]](#footnote-4).

### 3.3.6 Exemptions from licensing on default of commercialisation

VCA agreements may also contain provisions which prevent the VCA from invoking this licence in specific circumstances where its existence would impede commercialisation,[[4]](#footnote-5) or where the funded party can provide a satisfactory explanation for failure to comply with minimum commercialisation requirements..

## 3.4 Industry best practice

In addition to meeting contractual requirements for the management of research Intellectual Property, the VCA expects funded parties to maintain an awareness of industry best practice in relation to maximising and promoting clinically relevant practices and the development of therapeutics for cancer treatment.

# 4 Confidentiality

The VCA funding agreements contain provisions which protect contracting parties from the disclosure of confidential information. Neither the VCA (nor the Department of Health) nor the funded party can divulge confidential information regarding the other party. This mutual undertaking assists in ensuring the protection of research Intellectual Property and other confidential information.

## 4.1 Confidential information

Confidential information is broadly described as including all information and materials, in any form, which come into a party’s possession about the other party pursuant to, or as a result of, a funding agreement. It excludes information which was already in a party’s knowledge or in the public domain, information which subsequently reaches the public domain by means other than disclosure under the agreement, and information which was received and provided lawfully by a third party, or is required by law to be disclosed.

## 4.2 The Victorian Cancer Agency’s right to publicise the award of funding

The VCA reserves the right to publicise and report on the award of funding and may do so by including general information about the administering institution, researchers, funds, and a brief description of the project, as provided by the Applicant in their lay-summary. The VCA may publish the findings in any publication of its choice. This may include: media releases, general announcements about the funding and in annual reports or publication on the web. Funded parties must ensure that information contained in the project title and summaries would not, if released, compromise their own requirements for confidentiality (such as future protection of Intellectual Property).

## 4.3 Written permissions

A party to a funding agreement may make an application to another contracted party for permission to disclose confidential information. Such permission must be granted in writing. For example, if the VCA wishes to publish information about, or otherwise publicise, a research finding by a funded party which is categorised confidential information under a funding agreement, the VCA must first seek permission from the funded party and receive such permission in writing.

## 4.4 Privacy

Funded parties are required to comply with relevant privacy legislation, including the [*Privacy and Data Protection Act*](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/num_act/padpa201460o2014317/) (Vic) 2014 <http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi‑bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/num\_act/padpa201460o2014317/> and the [*Health Records Act*](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/hra2001144/) (Vic) 2001 <http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi‑bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol\_act/hra2001144/>.

# 5 Reporting requirements

The VCA’s funding agreements require funded parties to provide the VCA with reports in relation to the funded research.

## 5.1 The nature and frequency of reporting

The frequency with which parties are required to report depends on the nature of the funding and the provisions of the individual funding agreement. However, the general reporting schedule is summarised in the following table and detailed below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Report | Reporting frequency | Due |
| Progress against milestones and/or targets | 6-monthly | Every 6 months from receipt of funds |
| Financial reports (to be included in progress report) | Annually | Every 12 months from receipt of funds |
| Final report | Once only | At project completion |
| 5-year report | Once only | 5 years post project completion |
| Ad hoc reports | As requested by the VCA | On request with a negotiable time frame not greater than six weeks |

In general, funded parties will be required to undertake annual reporting; however, reporting requirements may include any, and all, of the following:

* Six monthly progress reports including specifics such as research accomplishments and difficulties, measurement of actual progress against initial milestones, the extent of clinical activities undertaken during the year (if appropriate), publication lists (including conferences, media announcements and written publications) and details of other funding received for the research project/program
* Annual audited financial reports or annual statements regarding whether the annual funding contribution and research costs were expended for research projects
* A final report, or final copy of a research project provided within a reasonable time period subsequent to the expiry of the funded term, or on earlier termination of the term
* A five-year follow-up report on the research project outcomes which must include information on: the translation of the outcomes into clinical practice; the commercialisation of the outcomes; and any other information as detailed in writing to the Chief Investigator or the Administering Organisation
* Any additional reports as requested by the VCA.

These reports will be used to assess whether the project is proceeding satisfactorily; whether funds are being acquitted in accordance with the original application goals; and to ascertain the ongoing value of the VCA’s funding schemes.

Funding may be suspended if progress is considered unsatisfactory, or funds have not been utilised in accordance with the Funding Agreement.

# 6 Acknowledgement

The VCA requires that research and other activities financially supported by the VCA be appropriately acknowledged.

## 6.1 Written acknowledgement

When, at any time during or after the completion of funded research, the researcher or any other party publishes or produces written material, such as books, articles, newsletters, advertising material or other literary works which relate to the funded research, the funded party must ensure (wherever possible) that the VCA’s support of the research is acknowledged in an appropriate form. Acknowledgement may include mention of the Victorian Government and the VCA, using wording to the following effect:

* This Research Project/Program was supported by the Victorian Government through the Victorian Cancer Agency (insert name of Award/Grant), or
* Professor/Dr XXX is the recipient of a Victorian Government (insert name of Award/Grant) through the Victorian Cancer Agency.

## 6.2 The reproduction of logo/s and insignia

Wherever practical, the Victorian Government and the VCA logo should be included with acknowledgement of Victorian Government funding through the VCA on presentations delivered by funded parties. Funded parties should contact the VCA for a copy of the relevant logo/s in the appropriate format.

## 6.3 Verbal acknowledgement

Where appropriate, at any time during or after the funding period, when an oral announcement is made in relation to funded research, including print media interviews, public announcements, presentations, or statements made on television and radio programs, funded parties must verbally acknowledge the contribution of the Victorian Government through the VCA.

## 6.4 Additional acknowledgement obligations

Funded parties must ensure that any acknowledgement does not lead the audience to believe that any particular views or messages being conveyed are those held by the VCA or the Victorian Government, unless the VCA has formally endorsed such views or messages in writing.

# 7 Administration of funds

## 7.1 Legal agreements for the release of funding

Legal agreements for the release of funding will be between the Department of Health and the Administering Organisation nominated by the successful recipients within their application.

## 7.2 Administration of funding

Following endorsement of the legal agreements for release of funding to recipients by the Administering Organisation, agreements are required to be endorsed by the Minister for Health or by the relevant financial delegate of the Department of Health. Following this endorsement, funding will be transferred electronically to the Administering Organisation.

# 8 Administering Organisations policy

In the case of all VCA funding, funds must be administered by an identified Administering Organisation. The Administering Organisation, as the primary Applicant, is expected to administer the funding and coordinate the research outlined in their application and will be required to sign an agreement ensuring the completion of the research. The below criteria outline the VCA’s process for identifying Administering Organisations.

## 8.1 Role of Administering Organisations

Most public health services, public universities, and other research or medical organisations that have existing financial relationships with the Department of Health will meet the VCA’s requirements to be an Administering Organisation.

Administering Organisations must be located in Victoria, and meet accountability and other requirements, including demonstration of:

* Existing engagement in medical research in Victoria
* Appropriate levels of infrastructure and support to ensure that research can be properly supported (this may include, but is not limited to, access to lab equipment, clinical services and other research infrastructure, and adequate mentoring and supervision)
* The financial viability and stability of the organisation (including, but not limited to, appropriate insurance and indemnity cover, including third party and professional indemnity)
* Compliance with industry best practice and nationally recognised standards in relation to human and animal ethics
* The capacity to ensure that all reporting requirements under the funding agreement are met
* The capacity to meet general VCA and Victorian Government accountability requirements, including adherence to ethical employment and research practices, and account auditing that complies with Australian Accounting Standards
* Capacity and willingness to adhere to the VCA’s policy positions in relation to intellectual property, confidentiality, acknowledgement, and other key policy areas.

## 8.2 Obligations of Administering Organisations

The specific obligations of Administering Organisations are contained within the relevant legal agreements for each VCA research funding program. Broadly, Administering Organisations must:

* Ensure the completion of the research project, for which they are identified as the primary Applicant in the original funding application
* Receive and administer funds and conduct the research in the manner outlined in the original funding application and in accordance with the funding agreement
* Manage relevant reporting processes for the project across all collaborating sites
* Effectively manage communications between researchers, including collaborating organisations and individuals, and the VCA.

## 8.3 Special requirements for collaborative projects or programs

In the case of research projects of programs where there is more than one organisation participating in the funded research, a single Administering Organisation must be identified.

This Administering Organisation will, *inter alia*:

* Receive VCA funding on behalf of the members of the collaboration
* Be expected to administer funds on behalf of all individuals and/or organisations undertaking research pursuant to the funding
* Certify the consent and capacity of collaborating organisations.

# Appendix 1 – Principles of Victorian Cancer Agency supported research

## A1.1 Translational research

Translational research is a general term encompassing research that focuses on clinical outcomes and quality research principles, carried out by multi- and inter-disciplinary teams that explicitly address how knowledge created from the research will be used to drive advances in an area of patient clinical need. The core elements that distinguish translational cancer research from more traditional bench-top research are patient clinical need, and collaboration between research and clinical disciplines. For the purposes of the VCA, translational research is outlined in Figure 1 and summarised as follows:

* T1: Encompasses the transfer of new knowledge of disease mechanisms gained in the laboratory into the development of new methods for diagnosis, therapy, and prevention and their first testing in humans
* T2/T3: Translates results from clinical studies into everyday clinical practice and health decision-making encompassing areas such as: epidemiology, behavioural science, psychology, communication, cognition, social marketing, economics, political science and policy.

Figure 1: Translational Research Continuum

*Note: This figure is adapted from the* [*US National Institutes of Health model for research translation for the NSW Health and Medical Research Strategic Review*](https://www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au/app/uploads/2018/07/strategic-review-report-2012.pdf)<https://www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au/app/uploads/2018/07/strategic-review-report-2012.pdf>

The translational research collaboration approach also differs from traditional collaborative research approaches where teams are typically assembled around similar scientific or medical fields, to one where the focus of collaboration may be between a range of disciplines, including researchers, clinicians, health service managers, clinician-managers and consumers.

A translational research collaborative team may be expected to comprise:

* Basic researchers working on gaining an understanding of, and/or identifying targets in, an area of identified patient clinical need
* Clinical trial co-ordinators guiding clinical trials for research outcomes
* Clinicians and practitioners who are involved with treating patients, assisting in the recruitment of patients into clinical trials, as well as advising on areas of patient-clinical need
* Health care service provider managers and policy makers
* Active consumer and community engagement.

Please note, the VCA does not fund basic discovery projects that may be better suited for other funding bodies such as National Health and Medical Research Council.

Previously funded translational VCA projects are also available to view on the VCA website <https://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au>.

## A1.2 Collaboration

As the VCA has a focus on translational research, collaboration between disciplines and organisations is encouraged to increase the quality, capacity and sustainability of cancer research in Victoria. The VCA appreciates that collaboration currently occurs in many instances in relation to cancer research between disciplines and organisations within Victoria, as well as interstate and overseas.

All people and organisations involved in the research project are considered to be collaborators. Associate/Co-Investigators represent a specific sub-set of collaborators who are directly involved in the conduct of the project, but not responsible for the direction and progress of the project. Other collaborators may only be providing support for a particular aspect of the research. For example, a collaborative partner may provide resource support (such as biobanking) that enables the research to be carried out or implemented into the clinical environment.

By encouraging collaborative arrangements, the VCA is asking researchers to consider looking beyond their discrete departments and organisations, and to seek out people who may be doing similar research. This may allow for stronger and higher quality research proposals and reduce the possibility of research being duplicated.

All people and organisations involved in the research project are considered to be collaborators. These include Associate Investigators, Co-Investigators, and Consumers. Consumers may also be Associate Investigators.

Associate Investigators and Co-Investigators represent a subset of researchers that makes a significant contribution to the project objectives and ensures progress is made toward key milestones. An Associate Investigator (AI) is defined as an investigator who provides some intellectual and/or practical input into the research and whose participation may warrant inclusion of their name on publications.

The Co-Investigator's role in the grant is to contribute to the development of the research proposal, participate in the design and execution of the research, analyse the data, and interpret the results.

Associate Investigators and Co-Investigators are not able to draw salary from the fellowship/grant direct research costs. Consumers may be remunerated for their contribution to the proposed research, but they are unable to draw a salary.

Collaboration may be between individuals, departments and/or organisations. This includes organisations or individuals that provide specific resources or services that contribute to the research, such as registries or statistical analysis.

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## A1.3 Consumer and community engagement

The VCA, in alignment with the NHMRC and Cancer Australia recognises that involving consumers and community members can add value to health and medical research and have a right and responsibility to do so. VCA considers consumer and community engagement integral to cancer research. Those affected by research have a right to be involved in research[[5]](#footnote-6), particularly where research is publicly funded. Their input should be included throughout all stages and types of research.

A lived experience perspective improves the likelihood of achieving the goals and objectives of proposed research, including the impact and broader relevance of the research to consumers and the community.

As noted on the Cancer Australia website, *“Evidence suggests that involving consumers leads to improved health outcomes, improved safety, a more trusted health system and a more satisfied workforce”*.

Please refer to the *‘*[*VCA Statement on Consumer Engagement in Cancer Research’*](https://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au/). This Statement provides practical guidance for researchers to actively and authentically, engage consumers and the community in their proposed research.

Grant and fellowship applications must outline consumer and community engagement throughout the proposed project, including:

* A plan for the level of consumer and community engagement in the development of the research proposal
* How this engagement will be maintained over the course and all stages of the research.

The application needs to demonstrate how the consumer representative/s will be engaged and contribute to the research proposal. Researchers are strongly encouraged to work with their research offices, applicable philanthropic organisations and relevant advocacy groups to ensure continuous and substantive consumer engagement in their research project.

Applications will be deemed ineligible for funding if the consumer and community engagement section or form is left blank, or Applicants indicate that this section is not applicable to their research proposal. If the Consumer Evaluation Panel deem the consumer engagement in an application to be insufficient, it will be deemed ineligible to receive funding.

For detailed guidelines on consumer and community engagement in medical research, Applicants should refer to:

* *The NHMRC* [Consumer and Community Engagement Toolkit and Associated Resources](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/consumer-and-community-engagement) (Particularly helpful are the downloadable forms at the bottom of this webpage).
* *Cancer Council NSW* [Consumer Review Guidelines for research grant applications](https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CCNSW-Consumer-Review-Guidelines-2020.pdf)
* *The Consumer and Community Involvement Program* [CCI Program](https://cciprogram.org/)
* *Cancer Australia* [Consumer engagement | Cancer Australia](https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/about-us/who-we-work/consumer-engagement)
* *Victorian Cancer Agency* [*VCA funding rules*](http://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au/)
* *Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Alliance* [Consumer Engagement Toolkit](https://www.viccompcancerctr.org/about-vccc/consumer-engagement/toolkit)

For assistance in finding a consumer to contribute to your project, Applicants may also consider contacting hospital consumer committees or relevant philanthropic organisations.

# Appendix 2 – Impact of Career Disruption Statement and Research Productivity Relative to Opportunity

## A2.1 Context

The Impact of Career Disruption Statement and the [NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities> takes into account the quality rather than simply the volume or size of the Applicant’s research contribution.

## A2.2 Principles

The VCA recognises that research careers have diverse trajectories and acknowledges the importance of due consideration of circumstances that may have affected eligible Applicants’ research productivity. Therefore, in line with the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy, eligible candidates submitting under the various VCA funding schemes will be considered on the basis of their research productivity relative to opportunity and other scheme dependent criteria.

The NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy considers working arrangements, career histories and personal circumstances and provides an acknowledgement of research performance given the opportunities available.

Research opportunity is designed to provide assessors with an accurate appreciation of career history against a timeline of years since graduation from highest educational qualification, ensuring the assessment processes accurately evaluate an Applicant’s career history relative to their current career stage. It also considers whether their productivity and contribution are commensurate with the opportunities that have been available to them. It provides more realistic consideration of a researcher’s capabilities, assisting those who have had career interruptions for family and other reasons. In addition, assessors will recognise research opportunities and experience in the context of employment situations, including those external to academia as well as the research component of employment conditions.

Applicants are able to provide information to assessors that will allow them to contextualise research outputs relative to the opportunity. Both research output assessment and contextualising within disciplinary expectations of research impact are required. In addition to standard academic publications, research outputs can include grey literature, consultancy reports or reviews, patents and policy advice, competitive grants and other research support, higher degree student completions, major exhibitions, invited keynote and speaker addresses and other professional activities and contributions to the research field.

In line with the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy, the VCA will consider a career disruption, career break or other life circumstances that interrupt progression of research productivity as part of the Impact of Career Disruption Statement.

The NHMRC defines *Career Disruption* as a prolonged interruption to an Applicant's capacity to work due to:

* Pregnancy
* Major illness/injury
* Carer responsibilities.

A period of Career Disruption is defined as:

* A continuous absence from work for 90 calendar days or more, and/or
* Continuous, long-term, part-time employment (with defined % FTE) due to circumstances
* Classified as Career Disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or

more.

Relative to Opportunity considerations do not include:

* Minor (or short-term) changes that occur during the normal course of conducting research, e.g. broken equipment or delayed ethics approval
* Minor (or short-term) medical conditions
* Recreational leave or general administrative activities related to research, such as preparation of grant applications and publications or committee-related activities.

The Impact of Career Disruption Statement provides an opportunity for Applicants to detail career disruptions/breaks relative to career stage. In addition to the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity policy, the VCA also considers a *Career Break* as a period of time taken from your research career to pursue other professional activities in industry or clinical work, travel, or study. Examples of these may be included in the Impact of Career Disruption Statement. As part of the Evaluation Panel’s deliberation of applications, the VCA will highlight to the Scientific Evaluation Panel where there has been a career disruption for an Applicant. The Impact of Career Disruption Statement aims to take into account relevant research opportunity considerations over the progression of a research career and are not intended to address minor changes to life circumstances.

Please note the VCA may ask Applicants to provide evidence to support their career disruption/break claim.

## A2.3 Guidance for documenting impact of career disruption and research output

The level of detail provided may vary between funding schemes, reflecting the differing career stage of researchers applying.

There is an expectation that each Applicant will contextualise their career opportunities and achievements within discipline expectations.

### 2.3.1 Overview

In all schemes, some or all of the following components are considered:

* Details on career and opportunities for research and other relevant experience
* Recent significant research outputs
* Five career-best research outputs
* Further evidence in relation to research impact and contributions to the field
* Most significant contributions to the research field of the proposal.

### 2.3.2 Research opportunity

Research Opportunity comprises two separate elements:

* Career experiences (relative to opportunity)
* Career impacts – includes career disruptions/breaks or other life circumstances that interrupt progression of research productivity.

There are many ways to capture this information and the details below outline some of the key considerations. Applicants should refer to scheme-specific *Guidelines for Applicants.*

In all schemes, Applicants should provide within the Impact of Career Disruption Statement a brief description of career circumstances which may have influenced their research productivity, for example:

* The number of years since graduation with highest educational qualification
* The opportunities for research in the context of:
	+ employment situations, including those external to academia
	+ the research component of employment conditions
	+ any periods of unemployment, part-time employment or other interruptions
	+ childbirth, parental responsibilities, carers’ responsibilities, major illness/injury
* If university-based, whether the Applicant is contractually in a research-only, teaching and research, teaching-only, teaching and administration, research and administration, administration-only academic, researcher in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand the employment situation. The description should indicate the percentage of current role in each of these areas, as well as the percentage of time spent over the past ten years in these roles
* If industry-based, whether the Applicant’s role is industry, research and administration, research in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand the employment situation. The description should indicate the percentage of current role in each of these areas, as well as the percentage of time spent over the past ten years in these roles
* The research mentoring and research support facilities available to the Applicant
* Any other aspects of career or opportunities for research that are relevant to assessment and that have not been detailed elsewhere in this Proposal (for example, any circumstances that may have limited research and publications or affected the time available to conduct and publish their research)
* Applicants should provide a total FTE for periods of unemployment, part-time employment or interruptions for parental leave, carers’ responsibilities, major illness/injury.

### 2.3.3 Research output

Evidence of research output can be articulated in a combination of ways, and may include:

* Recent significant research outputs – a list of outputs split into five categories (over a particular number of years):
	+ Scholarly books
	+ Scholarly book chapters
	+ Refereed journal articles
	+ Refereed conference papers only when the paper was published in full in the proceedings
	+ Other (for example, major exhibitions, compositions or performance).
* Grants awarded as a Chief Applicant, Associate or Co-Investigator, Fellow or Awardee (over a particular number of years)
* Career-best research outputs – full reference and statement explaining and justifying the impact or significance of the output most significant contributions to the research field of this proposal. A statement of how the Applicant’s research has led to a significant change or advancement of knowledge in their field, and an outline of how these achievements will contribute to the proposal.

Applicants may also consider providing a description of research impact relative to opportunity and in the context of discipline/end user benefits. This may comprise of additional evidence in the form of research outputs other than academic publications including, but not limited to:

* Patents, intellectual property licences, registered designs
* Policy advice and other professional activities
* Grey literature
* Consultancy reports or reviews, competitive grants and other research support income
* Higher degree student completions, major exhibitions, invited keynote and speaker addresses and other professional activities and contributions to the research field
* Mentoring, supervising and supporting junior researchers in their career development
* Community engagement and public advocacy
* Contributions to government advisory boards, committees and professional societies (local, national or international)
* Non research contributions to organisations, institutes and government departments
* Conception or direction of a research project or program
* Building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within or beyond own institution.

For more detailed information about career disruption and how to apply the Relative to Opportunity Policy, including examples to illustrate the concept, please refer to NHMRC’s [Relative to Opportunity Policy](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities>.

To receive this publication in an accessible format email the Victorian Cancer Agency <victorian.canceragency@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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Available at: [Victorian Cancer Agency](http://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au) <www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au>

1. Australian Government, [*Australian Government intellectual property manual*](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/australian-government-intellectual-property-manual.pdf)(2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Intellectual property relevant to the funded research, which was in existence prior to the Victorian Cancer Agency grant. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. In a manner that ensures fair access to the Victorian public to knowledge, techniques, products or other benefits which stem directly or indirectly from funded research. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Where, for example, evidence is made available to the Victorian Cancer Agency that a third-party desires to undertake commercialisation of the Intellectual Property, but considers that the State’s right to invoke such a licence is an impediment to commercialisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, Position Statement Community and Consumer Engagement in Research at SAHMRI, February 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)