

# RESEARCH STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2024

**UNITE IN THE  
FIGHT FOR  
CHANGE.**

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Diabetes Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work. We recognise their connection to land, waters and culture. We pay the utmost respect to them, their cultures and to their Elders past and present. We recognise that Australia is made up of hundreds of different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, each with their own culture, language and belief systems. Their relationship with country remains of utmost importance as it is the foundation for culture, family and kinships, song lines and languages.

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## Overview:

# Reducing the impact of diabetes through research advancements

Diabetes Australia is committed to transforming the landscape of diabetes prevention, care and treatment through fostering evidence-based innovation and solutions. As we work toward a world free from diabetes, we invite people with lived experience, stakeholders, researchers, clinicians and advocates to come together to shape the future of diabetes research.

In this consultation paper, we seek your views on the development of Diabetes Australia’s research vision, purpose, strategic goals and approach. We highlight the progress made to-date, and our agenda to invest in research that is meaningful and delivers high impact to those who matter most – at least 1.5 million Australians living with diabetes.

### Who we are

Diabetes Australia is dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society. We work with people living with, or at risk of diabetes, their families and carers, health professionals, researchers, funders, other diabetes organisations and the community to positively change people’s lives.

In 2023, Diabetes Australia launched the **Diabetes Australia Group Strategic Plan 2023-2027**<sup>1</sup>. This plan outlines our vision, purpose and mission, as well as our core approach and the goals we are working toward.

Our Vision	Our Purpose	Our Mission
	We are dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society	We work with people living with or at risk of diabetes, their families and carers, health professionals, researchers, funders, other diabetes organisations and the community to positively change people’s lives

<sup>1</sup> Diabetes Australia (2023). Diabetes Australia Group Strategic Plan 2023-2027 [https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023\\_da\\_strategic-plan\\_two-pager\\_1.2\\_A4-DIGITAL.pdf](https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023_da_strategic-plan_two-pager_1.2_A4-DIGITAL.pdf)

Underpinning everything we do, is our shared commitment to people living with or at risk of diabetes and high-quality research to inform and deliver evidence-based solutions to improve their lives. This commitment informs the goals we have set as part of our Group Strategic Plan. These goals guide us to ensure that the activities and investments we support will make a meaningful difference in the prevention and treatment of, and the cure for, all types of diabetes.

## Our Goals

**Prevent  
diabetes**

**Live well with  
diabetes**

**Reduce health &  
financial impacts**

**Find a  
cure**

Diabetes Australia is committed to reducing health inequities. As such, we have a continual focus across all the work we do, on priority populations who are at greater risk of type 2 diabetes. These include First Nations, youth, elderly and pregnant people; people living with a disability and other complex health needs; culturally and linguistically diverse; regional, rural and remote and socioeconomically disadvantage populations.



# Background:

## Diabetes research

In late 2023 and early 2024, the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport conducted an inquiry into diabetes mellitus in Australia. The Committee's report, published in June 2024, put forward 23 recommendations including increasing research funding and coordination; making improvements to diabetes management and care; and better utilisation of technologies. Diabetes Australia welcomes these recommendations and recognises that a response to this Inquiry requires more than Government action alone, it requires that all stakeholders work together in a coordinated, collaborative approach.

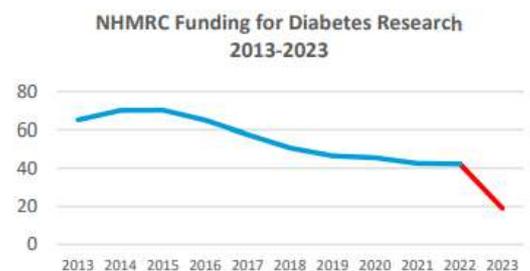
This Inquiry comes at a critical time for the diabetes community, with an increase in people living with diabetes, a wave of innovative treatments and technologies becoming available across the world, but a decline in Australian Government funding for diabetes research.

In 2023, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) provided only \$19 million to diabetes research, which is less than half of the amount provided in 2022. This funding decline has brought diabetes research to a dire state in Australia. Some diabetes researchers are now concerned that critical research to address one of Australia's major health priorities will not be able to continue beyond the next 12 months. If we are to find a cure for diabetes, and effective strategies to prevent diabetes and improve treatment for its the condition and related complications, it is imperative that diabetes research funding increases and continues.

With over 1.4 million people registered with the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) and an estimated 500,000 Australians living with undiagnosed type 2 diabetes, the burden on the healthcare system is immense.

In light of this, Diabetes Australia, the Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) and the Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) put forward a submission to the Federal Government's 2024/-2025 Budget<sup>2</sup>.

Funding for diabetes research in Australia has **declined by more than 35%** over the past 10 years while the number of **people living with diabetes increased by 32%**.



<sup>2</sup> Diabetes Australia (2024). 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission: Diabetes Research <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024-25-Pre-budget-Submission-Research.pdf>

In this submission, we emphasised the urgent need for increased funding and support for diabetes research. Australia faces a crisis in diabetes research funding. There is a significant gap in funding for diabetes research.

Diabetes costs the Australian healthcare system approximately \$3.4 billion annually, presenting an enormous financial burden for people who live with diabetes and the government. However, we know from economic analysis that medical research delivers a return of almost \$4 for every dollar invested<sup>3</sup>. We anticipate that the return on investment for diabetes research is even higher. This return is generated through better treatments that reduce the impact of serious complications and prevent or reduce hospital admissions. Research breakthroughs can also improve workforce productivity and provide opportunities for Australian businesses to commercialise the results of research to create new jobs and economic benefits.

Diabetes costs the Australian healthcare system approximately **\$3.4 billion** annually



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<sup>3</sup> KPMG (2018). Economic Impact of Medical Research in Australia <https://aamri.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Economic-Impact-of-Medical-Research-exec-summary.pdf>

## Feedback Area 1:

# Diabetes Australia's research goals

The primary focus of Diabetes Australia's research agenda, and everything we do, is the diabetes community. We want to ensure any research we invest in, is to the benefit of the people living with, or at risk of, diabetes. To this end, we need to continually seek the advice of the community to understand what matters most and what they want from diabetes research to improve their lives.

The four goals of our proposed research strategy directly align Diabetes Australia's Group strategic goals, as listed in the 2023-27 Strategic Plan. These goals are to:



With these goals at the heart of our research strategy, we want to develop a progressive research agenda, investment strategy and collaborative approach. These goals should form the basis for our research priorities and be key areas for increased funding and focused investment.

Importantly, Diabetes Australia's strategy should not just be about increasing the total amount of funding for research. It is vital that new and existing funding is used for research activities that target areas of unmet need. We must also focus greater efforts on building the capacity of the research sector to empower the translation and implementation of research outcomes into real-world solutions to increase impact on the lives of people living with and at risk of diabetes.

Diabetes Australia places great emphasis on having **people with lived experience, researchers, health professionals, funders and system leaders coming together to inform, conduct and deliver research**. In considering each goal, we have used available research, including research we have funded, to understand the needs of people living with diabetes and what matters most to them. This has helped to identify the priority issues and areas for people living with diabetes. Overtime, these can be further developed with additional research, consultation and stakeholder engagement.

## **Feedback on Goals & Priority Areas**

Below we have outlined priority areas for diabetes research under four key goals.

**Aligned with each strategy goal is a series of research priorities informed by recently conducted research studies and needs assessment of the diabetes community.**

- **To what extent do you agree with these priorities?**
- **Are there any priorities missing?**

### **Goal 1: Prevent diabetes**

Increasing awareness, enhancing screening, and understanding the causes will enable more people – with or at risk of developing type 1, type 2, and other forms of diabetes – to delay or prevent the onset of diabetes.

To achieve this goal, people with lived experience, researchers, health professionals, funders and system leaders will need to come together in the following priority areas:

1. Improve screening, diagnosis and awareness of all types of diabetes, including less -common types.
2. Better understand causes or triggers of diabetes and develop effective strategies and policy to change them.
3. Develop greater risk stratification to better understand who is at risk of diabetes and how it can be delayed or prevented.
4. Better understand the link between diabetes and the gut and other hormones, nutrients, metabolome and microbiome, including the role of inflammatory processes.
5. Reduce health inequities through co-design development and implementation of prevention programs and supports that target high risk groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with low health literacy and people living in rural and remote parts of Australia.

## Goal 2: Live well with diabetes

More people will have access to effective treatments, quality care and support to empower them to live better and more confident lives.

To achieve this goal, people with lived experience, researchers, health professionals, funders and system leaders will need to come together in the following priority areas:

1. Research and translate the most effective diet, exercise and behavioural interventions, education programs, therapeutic treatments, and/or delivery approaches including technology-enabled interventions and models of care to best manage diabetes, related health issues and improve quality of life. Including a focus on targeting different diabetes sub-types, diverse communities, individual heterogeneity, with consideration of other health conditions, physiological states and life stages.
2. Research and translate the most effective diet, exercise and behavioural interventions, education programs, therapeutic treatments, and/or delivery approaches including technology-enabled interventions and model of care to achieve and maintain remission of type 2 diabetes.
3. Understand the impact of diabetes remission interventions on other health and social outcomes.
4. Improve screening and awareness of diabetes related comorbidities and complications.
5. Improve public, health and education system awareness, knowledge, support and response to diabetes and related issues including detection and response to hypoglycaemia.
6. Better understand the link between diabetes and other health conditions including mental health, other autoimmune disorders, and polycystic ovary syndrome.
7. Progress development of personalised management and treatment approaches based on individual responsiveness, preferences, cultural, economic, geographical context and life stage.
8. Improve healthcare services for diabetes through data linkage and integration of evidenced-based tools and technologies to achieve greater coordination, access and health outcomes.
9. Understand the long-term safety effects and comparative effectiveness including cost-effectiveness of pharmacotherapies, devices and technologies for all diabetes types.
10. Ensure interventions that are successful in clinical trials become routine clinical practice and standard care.
11. Increase understanding, and support the emotional and psychosocial needs, of -people living with diabetes, particularly in priority populations.

12. Understand barriers to health care and technology across diverse population groups with focus on priority populations
13. Encourage the use of technology such as artificial intelligence and machine learning in providing education and self-management support to reduce diabetes complication risk and improve quality of life.

### Goal 3: Reduce health and financial impacts

The health, economic and social burden of diabetes will be reduced for people living with diabetes, their families and carers, the health system and society.

To achieve this goal, people with lived experience, researchers, health professionals, funders and system leaders will need to come together in the following priority areas:

1. Develop and improve technologies and treatments including glucose-monitoring and insulin -delivery to reduce diabetes management burden and make them easier to use.
2. Understand how health technologies can support standard care and reduce the financial burden of diabetes.
3. Understand how health technologies can be integrated and achieve greater environmental sustainability.
4. Advance policy-related research to reduce health inequities and improve access to technology, health care and treatments including cost-effectiveness.
5. Develop and test systems to improve remote monitoring and access to diabetes services and support self-management.
6. Improve digital diabetes education tools and evaluate the long-term effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness of tailored education programs.
7. Understand the health economics of diabetes – the costs of living with diabetes and related physical and psychological impacts.
8. Increase understanding of the psychosocial impacts of diabetes on families and social networks and how this can be reduced.
9. Reduce the financial costs of diabetes and related physical and mental health impacts.
10. Reduce diabetes stigma and the psychological, social and relationship impact of diabetes.
11. Reduce the impact of diabetes in vulnerable populations at high-risk.

## Goal 4: Find a cure

People living with diabetes will access and benefit from new treatments that cure or delay the condition.

To achieve this goal, people with lived experience, researchers, health professionals, funders and system leaders will need to come together in the following priority areas:

1. Better understand the biological, physiological and environmental causes and triggers of type 1, type 2, gestational and other types of diabetes in order to find a cure.
2. Explore beta cell regeneration discoveries including benefits of stem cell technology and islet cell transplantation.
3. Identify and implement strategies to reverse insulin resistance and improve insulin absorption and/or insulin secretion to restore normal blood glucose response.
4. Understand the link between diabetes and other health conditions.

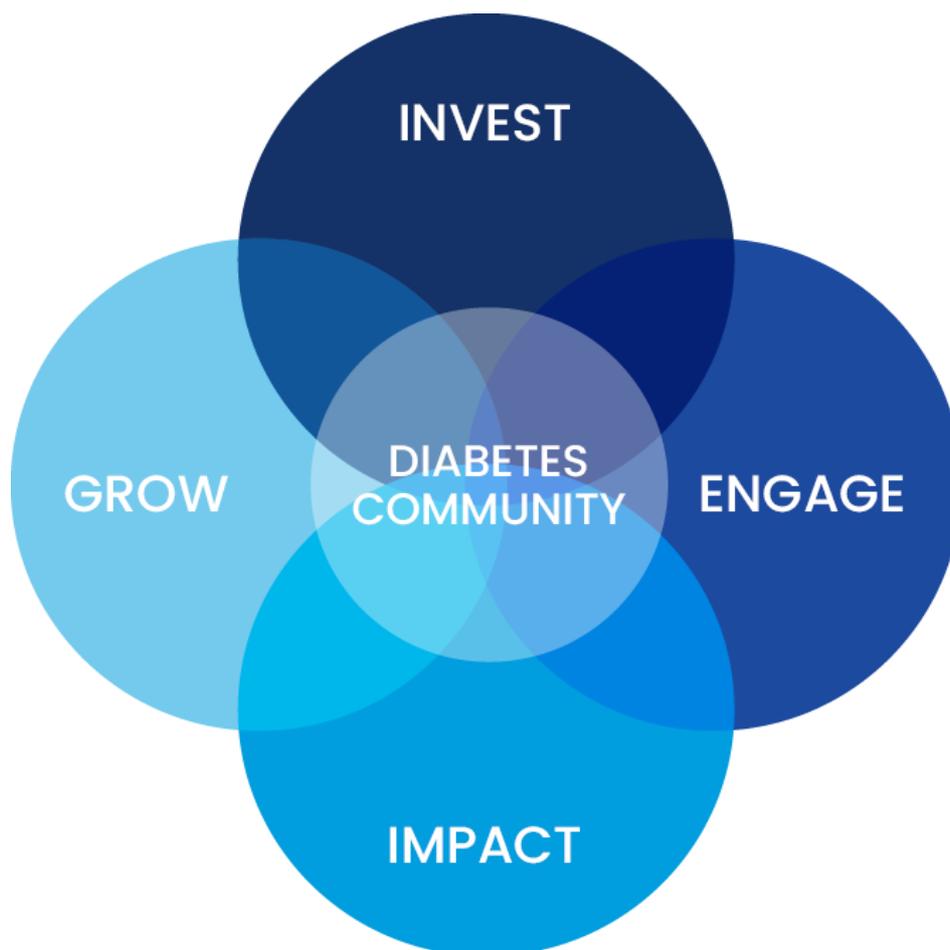


## Feedback Area 2:

# Diabetes Australia's future approach and role in research

As the national peak body representing all people living with diabetes, the role of Diabetes Australia is to lead, inform and advocate for the national research agenda, positive system changes, growth in funding, and to build the capacity of the diabetes research sector. Our aim is to develop and translate high quality evidence to prevent, treat and cure diabetes to improve the lives of people at risk and living with diabetes.

Diabetes Australia commits to our four research pillars:



**This document outlines four research pillars committed to by Diabetes Australia: INVEST; ENGAGE; IMPACT; GROW.**

- **To what extent do you support these pillars?**
- **Is there anything missing from this approach?**

## INVEST

Over the past 12 years Diabetes Australia has invested around \$36 million in over 500 diabetes research projects across Australia. We seek to continue to invest in projects that deliver high value for our members and people living with and at risk of diabetes. Our approach includes:

- Identifying and advocating for **research priorities that address the unmet needs, issues and challenges identified by the diabetes community** in Australia. By co-creating a research agenda through consumer and community involvement – particularly including the perspectives of people with lived experience – health professionals (including diabetes educators and researchers) we can be champions for the priorities that matter most.
- **Provide funding opportunities** to support talented early-mid career, clinician and diabetes educator researchers and accelerate research translation to address these unmet needs by creating evidence-based solutions that provide benefits to people living with diabetes sooner and reduce health inequalities.

## ENGAGE

- Fostering and supporting **partnerships and collaborations within and across disciplines and sectors**. We want to support the development of multidisciplinary, co-designed solutions that leverages additional funding sources and fast-track access to discoveries that will make a big difference to people living with diabetes.
- **Promoting and activating meaningful consumer & community involvement across the research process and innovation value chain**. Employing the voice of experts with experience will ensure research projects and solutions are co-designed to increase the impact for the diabetes community.

## IMPACT

- Monitoring and communicating **research impact and value** – We want to actively communicate our research strategy, funding allocation and rigorously track, evaluate and communicate research impacts to our stakeholders and donors – to provide transparency and accountability and ensure our approaches are delivering value and return on investment for the diabetes community.
- Rigorously **governing research funding to deliver impact and return on investment** to maintain our stakeholder and public trusts as responsible custodian of valuable research funds.

## GROW

- **Strengthening capacity and supporting growth of the diabetes research workforce** – We want to grow, strengthen, upskill and broaden the diabetes research sector through training, education, networking, funding and consumer and community involvement. This will create a vibrant ecosystem that supports research excellence and creativity to deliver evidence-based innovative solutions to transform diabetes treatments, therapeutics, interventions and models of care.
- We want to also increase funding to **support high quality research projects that drive the creation and delivery of impactful evidence-based real-world solutions** – We want to increase our efforts to raise funds and direct investment into activities that support a thriving diabetes research community to improve the lives of people at living with and at risk of diabetes.

## Diabetes Australia

INVEST	ENGAGE	IMPACT	GROW
Identify research priorities that address the unmet needs, issues and challenges	Foster and support partnerships and collaborations within and across disciplines and sectors	Monitor and communicate research impact and value	Strengthen capacity and support growth of diabetes research workforce
Provide funding opportunities and accelerate research translation	Promote and activate consumer & community involvement across the research process	Govern research funding to deliver impact and return on investment	Support creation and delivery of impactful real-world solutions

## Feedback Area 3:

# Purpose and impact

The goals of Diabetes Australia's research agenda are to prevent disease, support people to live well with the condition, reduce financial burdens, and ultimately find a cure. The purpose of this multifaceted approach is to address diabetes from multiple angles, reflecting the complexity and prevalence of the condition. Together, these efforts not only aim to alleviate the immediate challenges posed by the diabetes epidemic but also work towards a healthier future for all.

### **What are your views on the purpose and potential impact of this strategy?**

- **The overarching purpose of the strategy is to facilitate meaningful lived experience involvement into the research process and agenda to advance the development and translation of evidence-based solutions to improve the lives of people living with and at risk of diabetes, their families, and the community. To what extent do you agree the approach outlined in the strategy will achieve this purpose?**
- **To what extent do you agree with this statement: This strategy will support and strengthen the capacity of the diabetes research sector to deliver evidence-based solutions to improve the lives of people living with and at risk of diabetes, their families, and the community.**
- **To what extent do you agree with this statement: By rigorously monitoring and communicating research impact and value will attract greater investment into diabetes research.**
- **An overarching goal of the strategy is to empower development and translation of evidence-based solutions to reduce the incidence and impact of diabetes on people, health systems and society. Is there any additional strategic initiatives that could help to achieve this?**
- **General Feedback: Do you have any other feedback on the objective, goals, priorities and approach?**



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