National Health Genomics Policy Framework and Implementation Plan 2018-2021

Electronic copies of documents
The following documents can be accessed via the COAG Health Council website under the heading National Health Genomics Policy Framework 2018-2021:

- National Health Genomics Policy Framework
- Supplementary Information to the National Health Genomics Policy Framework
- Implementation Plan

The Framework

In March 2016, the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council (AHMAC) directed the Commonwealth to lead, in partnership with states and territories, the development of a whole-of-governments high level policy framework.

In November 2017, the COAG Health Council agreed Australia’s first National Health Genomics Policy Framework (the Framework). The Framework recognises the increasing potential of genomics in helping people live longer and better through appropriate access to genomic knowledge and technology to prevent, diagnose, treat and monitor disease. It aims to harness the health benefits of genomic knowledge and technology into the Australian health system in an efficient, effective, ethical and equitable way to improve individual and population health.

The Framework provides a shared direction and commitment between all governments in Australia to consistently and strategically integrate genomics into the Australian health system through an agreed high-level national approach to policy, regulatory and investment decision-making for genomics.

Implementation

In November 2018, the COAG Health Council approved the joint Commonwealth and state/territory Implementation Plan to support the Framework. The Implementation Plan describes actions that will support Australia achieving the goals of the Framework. There are 28 actions included, with five governance related actions and 23 actions aligned to the five strategic priority areas. These will allow governments to prioritise activities and address current and emerging issues as resources permit.

Consultation

The development of the Framework and Implementation Plan was informed by extensive national, public and targeted stakeholder consultation, including roundtables, bilateral meetings and written submissions.

Timeframes

The timeframe of the Framework and the Implementation Plan is 2018-2021, with a review of the Framework anticipated in 2020 to inform the next iteration. As such, the Framework prioritises particular issues for initial consideration and indicates where further work is needed, while also recognising that stakeholders have a role in addressing issues independently. The Framework is not intended to address all issues related to genomics and health.
Strategic Priorities, Principles and Enablers

Five Strategic Priorities are identified in the Framework for Implementation:

1. Person-centred approach: delivering high quality care for people through a person-centred approach to integrating genomics into health care.
2. Workforce: building a skilled workforce that is literate in genomics.
5. Data: responsible collection, storage, use and management of genomic data.

The following three principles underpin the Strategic Priorities of the Framework:

- The application of genomic knowledge is ethically, legally and socially responsible and community trust is promoted.
- Access and equity are promoted for vulnerable populations.
- The application of genomic knowledge to health care is supported and informed by evidence and research.

To help guide decision and policy makers in successfully implementing the Framework, three key enablers have been identified:

- collaborative governance and leadership;
- stakeholder engagement; and
- national and international partnerships.

The Framework should be read in conjunction with the Supplementary Information to the National Health Genomics Policy Framework, which provides additional information about why the strategic areas for action identified in the Framework are considered to be a priority. It also provides further background information for those readers who are less familiar with genomics.

Governance

Oversight for the Framework and Implementation Plan is provided by the Project Reference Group on Health Genomics (PRG), which has been established under the auspices of AHMAC's Clinical Principal Committee. The PRG is chaired by the Commonwealth and has members from each Australian jurisdiction, New Zealand and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Standing Committee.

The oversight of the PRG will provide opportunities for open dialogue and to work together across jurisdictions on major issues, providing opportunities to align efforts and minimise duplication of efforts. This is important because significant work towards implementing key actions across the Framework is being undertaken at the international, national, state and local levels by government and non-government stakeholders.

For more information

For further information on the Framework and Implementation Plan, including specific priorities or projects contact genomics@health.gov.au

¹The term 'genomics' is used to refer to both the study of single genes (genetics) and the study of an individual’s entire genetic makeup (genome) and how it interacts with environmental and non-genetic factors.