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# Funding Priorities for the 2026-27 Federal Budget

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**Submitted on behalf of the Neurological Alliance Australia by Rohan Greenland (Chair) and Anne Wilson (Deputy Chair)**

**December 2025**

## **Funding Priorities**

The Neurological Alliance Australia presents its funding priorities to progress National Neurological policy, data and research infrastructure to be considered as part of the development of the Australian Government's 2026-2027 Budget.

Neurological and neuromuscular conditions have a profound impact on those diagnosed, their carers and families. These conditions include brain injuries, dementia, epilepsy, Fragile X, MND, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Parkinson's and many others and are now the fastest growing health challenges in Australia currently impacting an estimated seven million Australians plus their families. They also place a significant burden on our economy with the current national economic impact exceeding \$140 billion annually and projected to rise sharply with population growth, an ageing growth and improved diagnostics.

Despite being one of the Australia's worsening disease burdens according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, neurological conditions remain under-recognised and underfunded. The NAA presented to the Australian Government in September 2025 its *Blueprint for a National Action Plan for Neurological Conditions* (see [here](#)) which will support Government reform priorities across health, disability, aged care, workforce participation, innovation and technology.

This submission supports the Blueprint and brings in other critical elements to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to managing the increasing burden of neurological conditions in Australia now and into the future. It will ultimately lead to people with neurological conditions having equal access to care, therapies, and support when and where they need it.

## **Summary of recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

\$300,000 for 2026-2027 to establish a neurological disease working group to progress develop a National Action Plan for Neurological Conditions.

### Recommendation 2

\$1.3 m for two years from 2026-2027 for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to develop Stage Two of the national neurological data set.

### Recommendation 3

\$30 m a year from the Medical Research Future Fund for a national neurological research mission.

### Recommendation 4

\$10m for three years from 2026-2027 to support national brain banks and build a national sustainable model to share costs.

## About the NAA

The Neurological Alliance Australia (NAA) is a collective of over 45 not-for-profit peak organisations representing adults and children living with neurological and neuromuscular conditions across Australia (see page seven). The NAA's vision is that every Australian with a neurological or neuromuscular condition enjoys the highest quality of life through timely, equitable access to world-leading care, effective treatments, research and innovation.

Our members represent the needs of approximately seven million Australians including children and young people, adults and older Australians, and many priority populations groups who experience poorer health outcomes compared to the general population, including marginalised communities and those who do not or cannot access mainstream services. The NAA members bring expertise spanning lived experience, care, research, policy and advocacy.

The NAA commits to a mutually beneficial, long-term partnership with the Federal and also State/ Territory governments to ensure there are meaningful health, social and economic improvements to the lives of Australians living with neurological conditions, as well as their families and carers.

## The Detail

### 1. Progressing the National Action Plan for Neurological Conditions

The funding request of \$250,000 for 2026-2027 is to support the establishment of a neurological disease working group to develop the National Action Plan for Neurological Conditions.

The Neurological Alliance Australia presented to the Government in September 2025 its *Blueprint for a National Action Plan for Neurological Conditions* (see [here](#)). The Blueprint details the need for a National Action Plan, why governments must act now, the risk of inaction and an implementation roadmap.

## The Need

Neurological conditions affect an estimated seven million Australians and are a leading cause of disability, health-care utilisation and economic burden. Australia currently lacks a coordinated national response, despite obligations under the WHO *Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and other Neurological Disorders* (2022–2031).

A funded, structured co-designed process is required to develop the National Action Plan informed by the NAA's Blueprint for a National Action Plan.

## What the Investment will Achieve

- a fully resourced working group supported by project management functions
- stakeholder consultations across governments, people with lived experience, NAA members and other related organisations, clinicians, researchers and industry
- engagement of health economist for more economic modelling on costs and returns on investment
- deeper environmental scan of Australia's current neurological policy landscape such as the soon-to-be published renewed National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions, National Strategic Action Plan for Rare Diseases 2020, and others
- support a comprehensive evidence review and service gaps audit possibly with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in part informed by the NAA Neuro Service Gaps and Innovation Survey (not seeking government funding contribution) to be undertaken from January 2026
- completion of a framework beyond the NAA's Blueprint to inform a detailed National Action Plan with:
  - economic modelling on costs and returns on investment
  - mapping of current programs, policy gaps and system inefficiencies
  - a multisectoral collaboration framework
  - priority actions and measurable outcomes.

## Governance and Oversight

- a Federal–State/Territory Steering Committee, co-chaired and co-administered by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and the Neurological Alliance Australia
- multi-sector participation and collaboration including governments, patient and related groups, consumer organisations, clinicians, researchers and industry
- the Australian Government to lead on engaging with State and Territory governments through the Health Ministers' Meeting or similar intergovernmental forum to coordinate involvement with the development and implementation of the National Action Plan.

## 2. Develop Stage Two of the national neurological data set

The funding request for \$1.3 million for two years from 2026-2027 is to support the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to complete Stage Two of the national neurological data set.

### The Need

Australia lacks consistent and comprehensive data on neurological conditions particularly on priority populations such as:

- First Nations peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse groups
- people living in rural and remote communities
- populations not accessing mainstream services.

These gaps prevent effective planning, policy development, equitable resource distribution and program evaluation. WHO's *Intersectoral Global Action Plan for Epilepsy and other Neurological Disorders* (IGAP) highlight routine data collection as a core obligation for Member States such as Australia.

### What the Investment will Achieve

- completion of Stage Two of AIHW's neurological data improvement activities including:
  - providing better understanding of the intersection between disability and specific neurological conditions, potentially revealing patterns of comorbidity
  - producing estimates of prevalence (and potentially incidence) that are more current, and which use Australian data for specific neurological conditions
  - exploring the possibility of creating different datasets for specific neurological conditions
  - giving insights into the trajectory of diagnoses and health service use for specific neurological conditions, showing treatment pathways and health service use
  - ensuring comparability across data sources, by understanding differences between mappings of specific conditions and condition groups
- integration of data across health, disability and, aged care
- improved identification of prevalence, progression, service utilisation and unmet needs (which will complement the findings of the NAA Neuro Service Gaps and Innovation Survey likely to be published in mid-2026)
- establishment of a National Neurological Data Repository hosted by AIHW, enabling regular updates and long-term sustainability.

### Governance and Oversight

- oversight by the AIHW Neuro Conditions Expert Advisory Group, including representative from the AIHW, Department of Health and the NAA
- formal reporting aligned with WHO IGAP indicators.

### 3. Fund a Neurological Research Mission

The funding request for \$30 million per year over 10 years (total \$300m) through the Medical Research Future Fund.

#### The Need

Neurological conditions cost the Australian economy over \$140 billion annually and are the leading cause of disability. Yet neurological research is currently fragmented and under-resourced relative to burden of disease. The NAA has developed its Roadmap to Progress (see [here](#)) to revolutionise the prevention, detection, treatment, and care of neurological and neuromuscular conditions, enhancing individual health and strengthening Australia's health system.

#### What the Investment will Achieve

The funding of \$30m pa over 10 years to unite and build on separate research investments in neurological conditions, coordinate action and accelerate progress in neurological and neuromuscular health and add value to research occurring across other diseases.

It is structured around four interlinked, outcomes-driven Pillars: Prevent, Detect, Treat, and Care which will leverage the powers of fundamental discovery research, clinical and medical approaches, population health, and health promotion research, to achieve its objectives. See [here](#)).

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More specifically the funding will buy:

- translational research programs across major neurological diseases
- development of advanced diagnostics (including AI imaging, biomarkers)
- clinical trials, longitudinal cohort studies, and early-phase therapeutic development
- investment in neuro-prevention and early detection strategies
- advances in evidence-based care and management models
- capacity building: fellowships, infrastructure, national collaborative networks.

The return on investment for neurological research typically yields up to \$4 for every \$1 invested.

#### Governance and Oversight

- oversight by a Neurological Mission Steering Committee appointed by the MRFF
- representation from NAA, research institutes, colleges, patient groups and state/territory health departments.

### 4. Fund critical infrastructure for national neurological brain banks

The funding request for \$10 million over three years to support national brain banks and establish a national cooperative, sustainable model.

## The Need

Neurological brain banks are essential for research into conditions such as multiple sclerosis, dementia, Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, epilepsy and rare neurological and neuromuscular conditions as tissue is not available for research in any other way.

Brain banks contribute to enabling major breakthroughs in neurological conditions. National brain banks networks exist in other countries where there is significant investment, unlike in Australia which risks falling behind.

Brain banking in Australia is currently fragmented and underfunded. National brain banks will allow best practice to be used across the system and streamline the processes and resourcing across neurological conditions, reducing duplication and providing better and timely access to biospecimens.

## What the Investment will Achieve

- convening of roundtables to explore future opportunities for brain banking
- sustained operational funding for national brain bank infrastructure
- increased donor recruitment and involvement
- streamlined and standardised brain banking processes.

## Governance and Oversight

- A national governance group comprising brain bank heads, the NAA, the Department of Health Disability and Aged Care, and representatives from the NHMRC or MRFF.

## Funding Priorities Funding

The summary of funding requests from the Neurological Alliance Australia is:

Priority	2026-2027 Funding	Purpose
National Action Plan for Neurological Conditions	\$300,000	to establish a neurological disease working group to progress the Plan, economic modelling, environmental scans and stakeholder engagement
Stage Two of National Neurological Data Set	\$650,000	for the AIHW to build a comprehensive national data set
Neurological Research Mission under MRFF	\$30 million	to coordinate action and accelerate progress in neurological research, diagnostics, treatments, prevention
National Brain Bank Infrastructure	\$3 million	to develop, sustain and integrate Australia's neurological brain banks

For more information about this submission and the work of the Neurological Alliance Australia please contact:

David Ali  
Executive Officer  
Email: [david.ali@NeurologicalAlliance.org.au](mailto:david.ali@NeurologicalAlliance.org.au)

### **Current Organisational Members**

- Angelina CASK Neurological Research Foundation
- Australian NPC Disease Foundation (ANPDF)
- Brain Foundation
- Brain Injury Australia
- Childhood Dementia Initiative
- Dementia Australia
- Dystonia Network of Australia
- Emerge Australia (ME/CFS)
- Epilepsy Action Australia
- Epilepsy Australia
- Epilepsy Foundation
- Friedreich Ataxia Research Association
- FAST Australia (Angelman Syndrome)
- Fight Parkinson's
- FND Hope
- Fragile X Association of Australia
- Genetics Alliance Australia
- Huntington's Australia
- Homer Pack
- Klim Foundation
- Leukodystrophy Australia
- Meningitis Centre Australia
- Migraine Australia
- Mito Foundation
- MJD Foundation
- Motor Neurone Disease Australia
- Multiple Sclerosis Australia
- Muscular Dystrophy Australia
- Muscular Dystrophy Association of WA
- Muscular Dystrophy Foundation Australia
- Myasthenia Alliance Australia
- Myositis Association Australia
- Nerve Connection Foundation
- Neurological Council of WA
- Palliative Care Australia
- Parkinson's Australia
- Polio Australia
- Post Polio Victoria
- Save Our Sons Duchenne Foundation
- SCN2A Australia
- Spinal Muscular Atrophy Australia
- Stroke Foundation
- The Australian Young Onset Dementia Special Interest Group
- Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance

### **Current Associate Members – individual researchers from:**

- Macquarie University, NSW
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute, VIC
- Neuroscience Research Australia and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, NSW
- Perron Institute for Neurological and Translational Science, WA