

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021



FROM THE ACVA PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to all our members, I hope you all had a relaxing break.

Although 2020 was a challenging year for us all, it was undoubtedly made much easier by celebrating the successes and achievements of our members and partners throughout the year, and looking back at the important steps we made at ACvA towards creating a research sector that is vibrant, supportive, collaborative and sustainable, serving health and the economy.

This year, our Operational Team is looking forward to continuing and improving the delivery of the 2021 Milestones for the benefit of our members, including:

- Supporting the ongoing development of Flagship Visions and Roadmaps
- Enhancing engagement between our Flagships and the broader ACvA membership
- Building on our 2021 pilots, developing further capacity building programs to support our researchers
- Strengthening industry-academia partnerships
- Strengthening collaboration and co-investment with NCRIS facilities

The full Operational Plan can be viewed [here](#).

Additionally, I would like to welcome our new Board Directors – Profs Jason Kovacic, Kerry-Anne Rye, A/Prof Christina Bursill and Dr Chloe Flutter – who began their roles at the conclusion of the AGM last year, and send my sincere thanks to our retiring Directors – Profs Ben Freedman, Mark Nelson and A/Prof Andrew Murphy – for their leadership, generosity and commitment to ongoing engagement with ACvA and to helping our research community create an enduring impact on CVD health.



I would also like to extend a welcome to the newest member of the ACvA Operational Team, Dr Catherine Shang.

Catherine started her role as Project Manager with us this month and will be working to deliver projects and activities to support our Flagships, and help drive integration between the Flagships, institutional and industry partners and governments.

Wishing you all a healthy, safe and productive 2021.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR MEMBERS

As a member-based, not-for-profit organisation representing cardiovascular researchers, clinicians, industry and peak bodies across the country, we are committed to building a thriving research sector that will deliver transformative change in cardiovascular health.

The ACvA values delivering genuine impact to our members and will continually support and encourage our researchers to dream 'big', collaborate, strive for excellence and tackle the big problems with innovative solutions. To help you achieve this, we are working hard to:

- Deliver capacity building programs to support our researchers and emerging leaders, foster career development, build communications skills, and allow our research workforce to consider diverse career pathways.
- Bring our broadly based and highly committed industry members together with academia and government to participate in strategic roundtables to build productive partnerships and increase Australia's attractiveness as a destination for global industry.
- Provide a strong advocacy voice, including for innovative funding approaches and streamlined processes for translation and commercialisation.

As a result, our members enjoy a range of benefits including, access to a range of networks and programs, attendance to roundtables, and the ability to participate in and influence the research environment and culture through working groups and ACvA Flagships.

The first call for membership renewal occurs in March. To view the full list of membership benefits, please click [here](#). Please encourage your colleagues to join and help us to achieve a connected, inclusive, thriving and diverse CV sector.

FLAGSHIP HIGHLIGHTS AND FOCUS FOR 2021

Throughout last year, our Flagships were busy developing their Vision and Roadmap on how to achieve this Vision. This has resulted in some notable achievements and big plans for the upcoming year. All Flagships have endeavoured to improve communication and engagement with their broader membership, participating in our mentoring program, webinar and pilots, as well as through increasing their profile and visibility through this newsletter.

Below are a highlights and future focus from each Flagship:

Drug Discovery

Grant Review Program (in progress)

- Were the brains trust in the development of a two-stage program aimed at increasing the success of CVD grant applications to the NHMRC through a panel discussion (interactive webinar) and tailored feedback on individual grant proposals

Are developing a series of papers, including one on good experimental design/practice to improve reproducibility and translatability (in progress)

Bioengineering

The ACvA Bioengineering Pitchfest (coming soon)

- A showcasing event to demonstrate bioengineering research, ideas and capabilities in the CV sector in under

development. It will be attended by ACvA members, researchers, and experts in industry, government, to pitch to investors, foster collaboration and garner constructive feedback and advice.

Precision Medicine

Establishing the cardio-metabolism special interest group (in progress)

Big Data

Perspective piece submitted to *Heart, Lung and Circulation*

- *“A versatile big data health system for Australia: Driving improvements in cardiovascular health”* The big vision for the Flagship.

Implementation and Policy

Implementation and Policy Roundtable (coming soon)

- Cross Flagship brainstorming session to develop implementation and policy strategies, pathways, emerging opportunities and priorities for the Flagship.

Clinical Trials

Clinical Trial Roundtable (see below)

- *“Building the Future for Cardiovascular Clinical Trials – Towards a National Clinical Trials Enabling Platform”*

SAVE THE DATE - CLINICAL TRIALS ROUNDTABLE



The ACvA is holding a Roundtable: **“Building the Future for Cardiovascular Clinical Trials – Towards a National Clinical Trials Enabling Platform”** on Tuesday 9 February, 2:00 – 4:30pm AEDT, with the objective of building a shared vision for facilitating a world-class national clinical trial landscape in Australia, with CVD as a test case. Chaired by Professor John Zalcborg OAM, Chair, Australian Clinical Trials Alliance, you will hear from Academic, Industry speakers and senior Government speakers with a commitment to bringing more CVD Clinical Trials and associated work to Australia.

More details and event registration can be found [here](#).

EOI FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE ACvA REMUNERATION AND NOMINATION COMMITTEE

The ACvA is seeking an EMCR (< 15 years post-PhD) to join our Remuneration and Nominations Board sub-committee (RNC) that is currently chaired by Professor Karlheinz Peter and supported by Professor Kerry-Anne Rye.

This is a great opportunity for an EMCR to assist the ACvA Board of Directors in matters relating to Board composition and structure, appointment and evaluation of senior executive performance, succession planning and diversity policy. This is also a great career development opportunity.

Please submit your interest to acva@ozheart.org by **Friday 12 February 2021**. Applicants should provide a brief description as to why they wish to join the RNC (300 words max) and a brief bio (250 words max). Applications will be assessed by the current members of the RNC and approved by the Board.

ACVA ACTIVITIES

Grant Review Program

Late last year, the ACvA launched the second stage of the pilot Grant Review Program, which involved submission of NHMRC Investigator grant proposals with an overall score of ≥ 4.8 to a panel of 8 esteemed reviewers for tailored feedback.

The Pilot phase of the Program has recently concluded. We would like to take the opportunity to say a big thank you to all of the panellists who volunteered their time and energy over the Christmas break to review each application. Your generosity, commitment and dedication to improving the outcomes of our sector are greatly appreciated.



Michael Berndt



Alexi Bobik



Livia Hool



John Horowitz



Levon Khachigian



Eduardo Pimenta



Judith Whitworth



Owen Woodman

The Review Panellists

Due to popular demand, we are also planning to launch another round of reviews for the Ideas grant. Stay tuned for more details in the upcoming weeks!

Specialist Working Groups (Previously known as Special Interest Groups)

At the request of our members, we have established Specialist Working Groups for Peripheral Arterial Disease, Cardio-oncology and Environmental Determinants of Cardiovascular Health. The Special Interest Groups are truly multidisciplinary in nature and provide a platform for interested researchers, medical professionals, consumers, government and industry members to for focused discussion and planning activities in specialist fields and drawing on expertise from across all ACvA Flagships.

These Specialist Working Groups are now developing 'Green Papers' to communicate their groups' vision, goals and objectives, as well as highlighting the challenges and opportunities in each field, with plans to publish in relevant journals. The groups follow a generic Terms of Reference ([here](#)), but tailor the Terms of Reference to their specific vision and goals.

While the Peripheral Arterial Disease group have opted for rotating Chairs at each meeting, the current Chair(s) for the other Special Interest Groups are:

Cardio-oncology – A/Profs Aaron Sverdlov and Doan Ngo



Environmental Determinants on CV Health – Prof Arnagretta Hunter



Other areas under consideration are Women and Heart Disease, Secondary Prevention and Cardiometabolic Disease.

If you are interested in these groups or have suggestions for other important areas of focus, please contact Meng Hsu (meng.hsu@ozheart.org).



Emerging Leaders Committee – Message from the Chair

As we start 2021, the Emerging Leaders Committee (ELC) wishes all a healthy and productive year ahead! Despite all the uncertainties imposed by the SARS-COV-2 in 2020, the ELC had a busy year and we had the opportunity to see 3 of our main projects come to life:

- i) the results of the cardiovascular workforce [survey](#);
- ii) the launch of a science communication and engagement program delivered by Dr Hannah Brown, the Cardiovascular Champions (#ACvACVChamps on Twitter), with more than 40 Champions selected as our inaugural cohort; and
- iii) the launch of the Cross-sector Mentoring Program, including areas such as fundamental research, clinical, public health and health services, industry and policymaking, with 28 mentee-mentor pairs already working together.

These important initiatives have helped inform strategies to stop the brain drain of cardiovascular researchers, improve the confidence of our researchers to engage with the community, promote the importance of cardiovascular research, and increase networking and collaboration opportunities. We are excited to soon be launching a roundtable discussion that will help us develop new and very targeted activities for the ACvA ELC community.

While we reflect on these achievements, 2021 will also be a time for many of us to say goodbye from our Committee role. This year marks three years since the establishment of the ELC, and some of us will be stepping down and making space for new emerging leaders but we will still be involved and supporting the work of the ACvA. For those interested in joining the ELC, we will be releasing more information mid-year.

Best wishes from Francine and the ELC

Upcoming webinars from ACvA

On the back of webinars hosted last year, and positive review from our members, the ACvA will be hosting a series of webinars throughout this year and expand the topics covered to target a wider audience.

The planned webinar series are:

- Research Impact (February)
- Tips on grant writing success: Converting a near-miss grant to a successful one (April)
- Consumer engagement (June)
- Commercialisation basics (September, Speaker)
- How to write a commercialisation grant (November)

Watch this space!

Celebrating Success!

We would like to celebrate the successes of our members across the States, on the back of what was a very challenging year.

- All recipients of the Heart Foundation Vanguard grants, including our members:
 - Prof Graham Hillis
 - Dr Brad Broughton

- Prof John Horowitz
 - Prof David Kaye
 - Prof Levon Khachigian
 - Prof Kerry-Anne Rye
 - Prof Rebecca Ritchie
 - Prof Markus Schlaich
 - A/Prof Christina Bursill
 - A/Prof Bing Wang
 - Dr Kristen Bubb
 - Dr David Elliot
 - Dr Tracey Gaspari
 - Dr Yugeesh Lankadeva
 - Dr Shiang Lim
 - Dr Lauren May
 - Dr Pierre Qian
- Congratulations to A/Prof Peter Psaltis and Prof Derek Chew who were awarded an NHMRC Ideas grant with a NHMRC Partnership grant, respectively.
 - Congratulations to Dr Dean Picone and Dr Emma Thomas who received Heart Foundation Fellowships.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE CVRNS?

This year, we are continuing to work with all the State-based CVRNs to maximise our alignment and support each other for delivery of initiatives locally, which are critically important, given the federated nature of our country. Here's an update from New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland.



NSW CARDIOVASCULAR
RESEARCH NETWORK

PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP - MARCH 2021

Following on from the successfully delivered inaugural CVRN-NSW Health Peer Review Workshop in November 2018, a second peer review workshop is proposed to coincide with the 2021 round of the **NSW Cardiovascular Research Capacity Program**, Early-Mid Career and Senior Researcher Grants. The program will include: presentations targeting key components of the grant application; a Q&A panel with experienced reviewers of previous rounds and; an opportunity for you to pitch your project to an expert panel. We will be confirming the date in the next few weeks and details for joining the workshop will be provided in the Guidelines for the EMCR and Senior Researcher Grants provided by NSW Health.

CVRN – NETWORKING EVENT

To launch 2021, the CVRN are proposing a whole of network event for Q1, as a face to face and online occasion. The focus of this event will be to:

- relaunch the CVRN and our activities planned for 2021,
- introduce our new Executive committee and recognise and thank our outgoing committee members and
- initiate conversation and engagement among our members through an interactive presentation by a key researchers on the impact of COVID and CVD.

A save the date with more details will be circulated in February.

The NEW CVRN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Recently the CVRN endorsed a new streamlined and simplified Governance Framework with a single committee - the Executive Committee to drive the strategic direction of the NSW CVRN and endorses high-level activities and initiatives of the network. An EOI for new members to join the new Executive committee was circulated to the network prior to Christmas 2020 with outstanding

applications received. The Committee, after much deliberation, have shortlisted applicants and our new members will be announced in early February. It is strongly believed that the Executive Committee's expanded and inclusive membership reflects the vision and purpose of the CVRN going forward and will be an exciting new chapter for CVRN.



Our Western Australia partners, the Western Australia Cardiovascular Research Alliance (WACRA), have recently released their Chair's Report for 2020.

Established in June 2019, the Alliance has evolved to become the peak leadership body in WA representing researchers in heart, stroke and vascular disease to accelerate translation and improve health outcomes for all Western Australians.

We are pleased to celebrate their successes over the past 18 months, including successful Q&A and Symposium sessions, and advocacy efforts with the WA Future Health Research and Innovation Fund to raise awareness and secure long-term funding for WA cardiovascular researchers.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with WACRA. To read the complete report, please click [here](#).



The Queensland Cardiovascular Research Network (QCVRN) provides a framework to strengthen CV research in the State through fostering multi-disciplinary collaborations, attracting new funding, building research capacity and advocacy. They currently have over 200 members with a diverse range of expertise from academic, clinical, research, community and industry organisations.

QCVRN launched in 2015 with visions of:

qcvrn@qcvrn.org @qcvrn
www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/Queensland-CVRN



Membership is **FREE** and benefits include:

- Member only benefits such as access to masterclasses like 'Anatomy of a grant'
- Networking and opportunities to share research and collaborate with researchers and clinicians in CVR
- Annual webinar and regular research showcases
- Exclusive support for ECRs

Email: qcvrn@qcvrn.org

Accomplishments in 2020

- Secured \$265,000 in funding
- Hired a program manager
- Increased membership from 50 to 200
- Held a successful webinar
- Held a successful networking session
- Launched grant writing support scheme
- Planned a suite of workshops to support ECR development
- Funding proposal submitted to QLD government

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The ACvA is available to provide assistance with applications, including putting you in touch with relevant Flagships, our Special Interest Groups and industry partners. If you would like assistance, please contact us (acva@ozheart.org).

MTPConnect REDI Fellowship Program

The REDI Fellowship Program provides up to \$250,000 per Fellow per annum, giving Australia MTP companies the financial support to bring academics and clinicians in-house for up to 12 months to work on priority medical research projects.

A REDI Industry Fellowship requires a sponsor (industry), a fellow (e.g. researcher, academic, clinician, tech transfer professional) and a specific research and development project.

Applications will be reviewed three times annually with the first submission deadline 1 March 2021, followed by submission deadlines of 1 July 2021 and 1 November 2021.

Find out more: https://www.mtpconnect.org.au/Category?Action=View&Category_id=293

Targeted Translation Research Accelerator

The TTRA program provides a new integrated research program to improve the prevention, management and treatment of diabetes and cardiovascular disease (D&CVD) in Australia. Research efforts will focus on the most pressing areas of unmet clinical and research needs in D&CVD, which are leading causes of death and disability in Australia.

Expressions of Interest are now open for two new Research Centres and the first round of Research Projects funding.

Find out more about Research Centres:

https://www.mtpconnect.org.au/Category?Action=View&Category_id=306

Applications close 15 March 2021

Find out more about Research Projects:

https://www.mtpconnect.org.au/Category?Action=View&Category_id=307

Applications close 22 February 2021

MRFF Mission for Cardiovascular Health

The next round of MRFF Mission for Cardiovascular Health grants is open. Applicants must propose research that falls into one of the three streams below:

- **Stream 1** (Targeted Call for Research): providing new therapeutics and devices that prevent cardiovascular disease and/or stroke
- **Stream 2** (Targeted Call for Research): providing new interventions that promote rapid and more effective recovery following an acute cardiovascular disease and/or stroke event
- **Stream 3** (Incubator): generating new approaches that have the potential to transform care following a cardiovascular and/or stroke event.

Applications close 3 March 2021

Find out more: <https://www.grants.gov.au/Go/Show?GoUuid=260c2036-6258-40e9-b643-5935299c57fd>

Heart Foundation Vanguard Grants

The purpose of the Vanguard Grant is to provide funding to test the feasibility of innovative concepts in clinical, public health and/or health services (including clinical service delivery) or biomedical research which may lead to larger, more rigorous studies in the future. Both pilot studies and 'stand-alone' projects will be considered. These projects are expected to produce tangible outcomes with the potential to further advance preclinical research technology or improve cardiovascular health.

Applications OPEN 1 March 2021

Find out more: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/research-funding-available>

Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowships

Future Leader Fellows are emerging leaders; the best and brightest in cardiovascular research. Being awarded a fellowship will allow a researcher to build their research capacity, as they become leaders of research groups. In 2021, the Heart Foundation has expanded eligibility criteria to include researcher up to 15 years post-PhD.

Applications OPEN 8 March 2021

Find out more: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/research-funding-available>

Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships

The Postdoctoral Fellowship aims to identify the best and brightest (recent) PhD graduates and to give them a boost to their research career and enhance their ability to attract and secure future funding.

This Award is aimed at early career researchers and seeks to identify the strongest emerging Australian talent who have just completed or are nearing completion of their postdoctoral studies (PhD). The successful Postdoctoral Fellow will have not just a demonstrated strong track record during their PhD but also be actively engaged in leadership development such as supervision of students demonstrating the potential to become a leader in their research field.

To be eligible, you must have been awarded your PhD no more than 3 years prior to the application closing date.

Applications OPEN 22 March 2021

Find out more: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/research-funding-available>