

2027 Targeted Grant Round:

Paediatric and Adolescent Cancers and Cancer Immunotherapy

About Cure Cancer

Since 1967, Cure Cancer has backed bold new ideas from emerging cancer researchers, giving talented scientists the opportunity to pursue innovative research at a pivotal stage in their careers. Cure Cancer has funded more than 580 research projects across Australia. Our grants have helped researchers build the evidence, capability and momentum needed to advance new approaches to cancer research and establish enduring research careers.

About this grant round

For the 2027 grant round, Cure Cancer is directing funding towards two priority areas: paediatric and adolescent cancers; and cancer immunotherapy.

We are seeking high-quality proposals from early-career researchers with compelling ideas, strong scientific foundations and the potential to contribute meaningfully to improved cancer outcomes. Projects may address one or both priority areas.

Research priorities

Paediatric and adolescent cancer research: Research substantively focused on cancers diagnosed in children and adolescents aged 0–17 years. Eligible projects may study biology, diagnosis, prevention, treatment, therapeutic development, treatment response or resistance where the proposed funded aims specifically concern that population.

Cancer immunotherapy research: Research with a substantive focus on immune-based approaches to preventing, treating or controlling cancer. Examples include development or improvement of immunotherapies, immune mechanisms of response or resistance to immunotherapy, immune biomarkers relevant to treatment, and translational approaches to improve immunotherapy effectiveness or safety. General tumour immunology without a meaningful immunotherapy question is outside scope.

To be eligible, a project must have a clear and substantive focus on one or both priorities. For projects with wider cancer applications, the aims and costs proposed for Cure Cancer funding must directly address cancers diagnosed at ages 0–17 or cancer immunotherapy.

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About Cure Cancer Research Grants

Cure Cancer Research Grants support the next generation of cancer researchers to pursue bold ideas with the potential to transform cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment. By backing innovative research at an early stage, we aim to accelerate discoveries and breakthroughs that could change outcomes for people affected by cancer.

Funding available

Up to AUD \$100,000 for up to 12 months.

Early-Career eligibility

Applicants are eligible in the first 7 years post PhD. Eligibility is determined as at 1 July 2027: the earlier of PhD requirements being formally completed or award of a clinical degree (where applicable) must be on or after 1 July 2020, subject to an approved career disruption adjustment. Applicants with both qualifications must disclose both dates. Track record is assessed relative to career stage and opportunity.

Use of grant funding

Funding may only meet eligible direct costs of the approved 12-month research project, including personnel, consumables, scientific services or equipment and appropriate consumer involvement. Institutional overheads and costs funded by another source are excluded. Eligible travel and conference registration must be directly relevant to the funded project and are capped at AUD \$500 in total; this may include attendance at the Cure Cancer Researcher Symposium.

Two-stage application process

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

The EOI is intentionally short. It gives the Cure Cancer Research Committee enough information to confirm eligibility and priority alignment, understand the scientific proposition, and identify the strongest proposals to invite to a Full Application. Stage 1 assessments are conducted on a pass/fail basis, at the discretion of the assessors. Individual feedback will not be provided.

Stage 2: Full Application

Shortlisted applicants are invited to submit a self-contained Full Application. This provides the detail required for independent expert peer review, including the research plan,

feasibility and risks, budget, research environment, applicant track record, consumer involvement and lay summary. A scoring matrix is provided for the applicants' information. Full Applications will be independently reviewed by 2-3 researchers with appropriate expertise. The Cure Cancer Research Committee will consider the peer review outcomes and determine the final applications to be funded at their discretion.

Eligibility and grant conditions

1. The Chief Investigator has a legal right to work in Australia and will perform the proposed research in Australia. Australian citizenship or permanent residency is not required.
2. The grant will be administered by an NHMRC-approved Administering Institution. This is confirmed at Full Application stage.
3. The Chief Investigator meets the seven-year eligibility rule measured at 1 July 2027, using the earlier date of PhD requirements completed or clinical degree awarded (where relevant), adjusted for any approved career disruption.
4. The proposed project has a clear and substantive research focus in paediatric and adolescent cancers (diagnosed at ages 0–17), cancer immunotherapy, or both.
5. The Chief Investigator must have received less than AUD \$300,000 cumulatively in competitive peer-reviewed research funding as Chief Investigator A (CIA) or Principal Investigator (PI). The full award value of all CIA/PI-led grants counts, regardless of award date or whether awarded by government, philanthropy, institutions or industry. For fellowships, only the research funding component counts; salary-only fellowships are excluded from the threshold. Grants held solely in other investigator roles, including as co-investigator, do not count, but all awards, funding amounts and roles must be disclosed. Pending grants must be disclosed and any subsequent awards promptly reported. Eligibility is reassessed before funding is awarded.
6. The Chief Investigator will devote at least 0.5 FTE to leading and performing the proposed research.
7. Only one EOI may be submitted per Chief Investigator in the 2027 round.
8. The proposed work must not duplicate work already funded by another grant. All relevant current, pending or newly awarded funding and material overlap must be promptly disclosed; eligibility is reassessed before final award. Cure Cancer may withdraw an offer or seek return of grant funds for duplicate funding, as provided for in the funding agreement.

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Career disruption and relative to opportunity

Career disruption is an administrative mechanism that may adjust the post-PhD eligibility window in eligible circumstances. Cure Cancer applies the definitions of Career Disruption and Career Circumstances set out in the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy. By submitting an application, the applicant confirms that their institution can provide supporting information if requested.

Relative to opportunity is considered when assessing an applicant's track record. Applicants may briefly describe career circumstances that have materially affected research opportunity or productivity so that achievements can be considered fairly in context.

Other grant conditions

- Cure Cancer funding is for the approved project and may not be used for institutional overheads.
- Cure Cancer's standard funding condition is joint ownership, with the Administering Institution, of new intellectual property arising directly from the Cure Cancer-funded project. The terms governing ownership, protection, use and commercialisation, and any proposed variation, will be negotiated with the Administering Institution and recorded in the written funding agreement before funding commences. Any departure from joint ownership requires Cure Cancer's express written agreement. Pre-existing intellectual property remains with its existing owner, and student thesis copyright remains with its lawful owner.
- Applicants must comply with all relevant ethics, governance and regulatory requirements before undertaking activities that require approval.
- Grant funding decisions made by Cure Cancer are final.

Questions about eligibility should be directed to research@curecancer.com.au.

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

Purpose

The EOI is a screening application. Its purpose is to enable the Cure Cancer Research Committee to identify proposals that meet the round's eligibility and priority requirements and are sufficiently promising to warrant the time and detail of a Full Application.

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Applicants should write for a cancer research committee with broad expertise and observe all EOI word limits. Up to one supplementary A4 page of figures and concise legends may be attached and referenced in the narrative. No other appendices are permitted.

Submission requirements

- Complete the current Cure Cancer EOI Application Form.
- Submit both a PDF and .docx version using the naming format Surname_CureCancer_EOI.pdf and Surname_CureCancer_EOI.docx.
- Submit by the published deadline to research@curecancer.com.au.
- Receipt will be acknowledged by email. Contact Cure Cancer if an acknowledgement is not received.
- Late or incomplete EOIs, or EOIs that do not meet the eligibility requirements, will not progress to Committee screening.

How EOIs are considered

Cure Cancer will first confirm administrative eligibility and alignment with at least one research priority. Eligible EOIs will then be considered by representatives of the Research Committee, with attention to the strength and importance of the scientific proposition, its feasibility, the applicant's potential and career development, and consumer involvement where appropriate to the research. EOIs are assessed at the discretion of the Research Committee. Decisions made at the EOI stage are final and are not subject to review or appeal. Cure Cancer does not provide individual feedback, scores or reasons for EOI decisions beyond notification of whether an applicant has been invited to submit a Full Application. The EOI decision determines whether an applicant is invited to Stage 2; it is not the final funding assessment.

Completing the EOI

- **Section A: Applicant and eligibility.** Provide qualification dates (PhD and/or clinical degree), applicant details, priority area(s), effort commitment, cumulative CIA/PI-led research funding, and disclosure of other investigator awards. There is a single funding stream, not separate career-stage categories.
- **Section B: Project snapshot.** Provide the scientific title and project details, then explain priority alignment, the problem or evidence gap, central question or hypothesis, aims, broad approach, expected outcome, significance, innovation and high-level feasibility.
- **Section C: Applicant potential and career development.** Explain why you are well placed to lead the project, how the grant would support your development as an

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independent researcher, and identify up to three key outputs or achievements. Relative to opportunity information is optional.

- **Section D: Consumer involvement.** Briefly describe how people affected by cancer have informed the project so far, or how they will be involved if the proposal progresses. The approach should be meaningful and proportionate to the research.
- **Section E: Declaration.** Submission confirms that the EOI is complete and accurate, that named contributors have agreed to their inclusion, and that the EOI may be shared with people involved in Cure Cancer's assessment and grant administration processes.

EOI outcomes

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a Full Application. Applicants should not prepare the full proposal until invited. The scientific direction, funding amount and priority alignment should remain consistent between stages; any material change should be discussed with Cure Cancer before the Full Application is submitted.

Stage 2: Full Application

The Full Application is by invitation only and is the basis for independent peer review and final funding decisions. Reviewers may not receive the EOI, so the Full Application must be self-contained. Applicants may reuse and expand material from Stage 1.

Application requirements

- Complete all sections and observe the stated word limits. Text above a word limit may be disregarded.
- Write clearly for expert cancer researchers who may not work in your exact subfield. Define specialist terms and acronyms.
- Up to two figures may be included in the Research Plan. Concise figure captions are excluded from the word limit.
- Include up to 12 key references in a concise, consistent citation style.
- Electronic signatures are accepted. The Administering Institution must be NHMRC-approved.
- Do not attach supplementary material unless Cure Cancer requests it.
- The proposal must remain within the single grant funding limit and at least one priority area. Material changes from the EOI should be disclosed to Cure Cancer before submission.

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Submission requirements

- Submit both a PDF and .docx version using the naming format Surname_CureCancer_FullApplication.pdf and Surname_CureCancer_FullApplication.docx.
- Submit by the invitation deadline to research@curecancer.com.au.
- Receipt will be acknowledged by email.
- Incomplete or late Full Applications may be excluded from peer review.

Section-by-section guidance

Section A: Applicant and grant details

Confirm applicant and qualifying-degree dates, single grant request, at least 0.5 FTE Chief Investigator commitment, priority area(s), cancer type/population, amount requested, duration, administering institution and research office contact.

Section B: Peer review information

Provide research keywords, the expertise required to assess the proposal, the Head of Lab or Department, and any direct reviewer conflicts. Reviewer conflict information is used for assignment only; applicants should not nominate preferred reviewers.

Section C: Research project

Provide the scientific project title, a concise project summary, the background and evidence gap, aims or hypotheses, detailed research plan, feasibility and risks, milestones, significance and potential impact, priority alignment, and up to 12 key references.

- **Project summary.** Orient the reviewer to the problem, research question, aims, approach and expected outcome.
- **Background and evidence gap.** Set out the relevant evidence, unresolved problem and why the research is needed now. Explain how the proposal complements rather than duplicates existing work.
- **Aims and hypotheses.** State the specific aims and, where appropriate, hypotheses or research questions, and show how the aims relate to one another.
- **Research plan and methods.** Describe the study design, models or populations, methods, analyses, outcome measures and key activities in enough detail for reviewers to judge methodological quality and reproducibility. Up to two figures may be included.
- **Feasibility, risks and approvals.** Address timeframe and budget, access to essential samples, datasets, platforms or expertise, key dependencies and risks, mitigation strategies, and the status of relevant ethics, governance or regulatory approvals.

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- **Key milestones and decision points.** Identify the major milestones, expected timing and outputs that will demonstrate progress and support decisions during the project.
- **Significance, innovation and potential impact.** Explain what is new or important about the work, the contribution it could make to the field, and how the findings could ultimately improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment or outcomes for people affected by cancer.
- **Priority alignment.** Explain the substantive connection to paediatric and adolescent cancers (ages 0–17 at diagnosis), cancer immunotherapy, or both. Immunotherapy applications should identify an immune-based therapeutic mechanism or strategy, not simply a connection to general tumour immunology.

Section D: Research team and environment

List the people whose expertise is important to delivery of the project and describe their role and expected effort. In the research environment statement, describe the infrastructure, mentorship and institutional support that will enable the project and support the applicant's development as an early-career researcher.

Section E: Proposed budget and other funding

Provide one project budget for the single 12-month period (maximum AUD \$100,000). The justification should explain costs, project necessity and co-funding. The combined research-related travel and conference registration allowance is capped at AUD \$500; institutional overheads and duplicate project costs are ineligible. List current or pending funding that supports the same or closely related work and clearly explain any scientific or budget overlap.

Section F: Applicant track record and career development

- **Research readiness and independence.** Explain why you are well placed to lead the project, focusing on relevant experience, contributions, leadership and emerging independence.
- **Career development.** Describe your objectives over the next three to five years and how the grant would accelerate your development, independence, collaborations or capability.
- **Relative to opportunity - optional.** Provide only the career context needed for reviewers to assess your track record fairly.
- **Key research outputs or achievements.** Identify up to five relevant outputs, with complete or sufficiently specific authorship to establish position, and explain your individual contribution. Do not claim collective outputs as sole achievements. Preprints must be identified as such.

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- **Research funding record.** Disclose all peer-reviewed grants and fellowships across all dates, including government, philanthropic, institutional and industry awards. Identify investigator roles, total award values, and any fellowship research component. CIA/PI-led awards count cumulatively towards the less-than-AUD-\$300,000 threshold; co-investigator grants and salary-only fellowship funding must be disclosed but do not count. Explain overlapping and pending funding separately.

Section G: Consumer involvement

- **Consumer involvement plan.** Describe how people affected by cancer have influenced the research question or design, and how they will be involved during the project and in interpretation or translation of findings. Identify who will be involved, their role, and how participation will be supported or resourced. The approach should be meaningful and proportionate to the research.
- For paediatric and adolescent cancer research, relevant consumers may include parents, carers, childhood cancer survivors, adolescents or young people with lived experience where appropriate, and relevant advocacy or support organisations.
- Applicants may also identify any confirmed consumer partners or groups and their proposed role. This is optional at the time of submission.

Section H: Lay summary

- **Provide a lay project title.** Explain the problem, what you will do and why the research matters in language suitable for the general community. Avoid technical jargon. If funded, Cure Cancer may work with the applicant to adapt the summary for donor and public communications.

Section I: Certifications and declarations

- The Full Application requires declarations from the Chief Investigator, the Head of Lab or Department (or equivalent), and an authorised signatory for the Administering Institution. Electronic signatures are accepted.
- The Chief Investigator must confirm that the application is complete, true and correct, that the applicant has read and will comply with the Cure Cancer Research Grant Guidelines, that all named project team members and consumer partners have agreed to their inclusion, and that the application may be shared for assessment and grant administration.
- The Head of Lab or Department must confirm that the applicant has access to the research environment, infrastructure and supervision or support required to undertake the project and that they have reviewed the application.
- The authorised institutional signatory must confirm authority to act for the NHMRC-approved Administering Institution and acknowledge that, if successful, the institution

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will negotiate and enter into Cure Cancer's funding agreement, including its standard position on joint ownership of intellectual property arising from the funded project.

Full Application assessment and peer review

Eligibility and alignment with at least one research priority are confirmed before the application is scored. Eligible Full Applications are assessed using the published Cure Cancer Full Application Scoring Matrix.

Assessment criterion	Weight
Scientific Merit	35%
Track Record and Career Development	35%
Feasibility	20%
Consumer Involvement	10%

- **Scientific Merit (35%)** Reviewers assess rationale, evidence base, aims, methodological rigour, innovation, likely contribution to knowledge and potential benefits for people affected by cancer.
- **Track Record and Career Development (35%)** Reviewers assess relevant leadership, applicant readiness, research achievement relative to career stage and opportunity, mentorship and career development support. Facilities and project infrastructure are considered within Feasibility.
- **Feasibility (20%)** Reviewers consider whether the aims are achievable within the proposed timeframe and budget and whether the research environment, resources and project planning support successful delivery.
- **Consumer Involvement (10%)** Reviewers consider whether consumer involvement is meaningful, appropriate to the research, and integrated into project development and delivery.

Independent review process

Full Applications will normally be assessed by 2-3 independent researchers with expertise relevant to the proposal. Reviewers are required to declare conflicts of interest and to protect the confidentiality of applications. Scores may be normalised to account for differences in reviewer scoring patterns before being considered by the Cure Cancer Research Committee. The Research Committee will consider the independent reviews and finalise the ranked funding list. Cure Cancer will assign funding in rank order until the available budget is exhausted.

The Full Application Scoring Matrix will be published on the Cure Cancer website for applicants and reviewers.

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Key dates*

- Expressions of Interest open: Monday 26 October 2026
- Expressions of Interest close: Wednesday 2 December 2026
- EOI review: December 2026 to January 2027
- EOI applicants advised of outcome: Thursday 28 January 2027
- Full Applications by invitation open: Friday 29 January 2027
- Full Applications close: Wednesday 31 March 2027
- Full Application peer review and scoring: Thursday 1 April to Friday 14 May 2027
- Grant Review Panel meeting: Thursday 20 May 2027
- Applicants advised of outcome: Friday 28 May 2027
- Funding commences: Thursday 1 July 2027

** Dates may be varied at Cure Cancer's discretion.*

Contact and enquiries

Please refer all grant enquiries to research@curecancer.com.au

Applicants are encouraged to contact Cure Cancer before the deadline if they are uncertain about eligibility, priority alignment or a material change between the EOI and Full Application stages.