



**Maridulu Budyari Gumal**  
Working together for good health and wellbeing

**Nursing and Midwifery**  
Implementation Science Academy

# AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Early to Mid-Career Researcher  
(EMCR)

## ADVOCACY ROADMAP



Prepared by the SPHERE Nursing and Midwifery Implementation Science Academy EMCR Group

**March 2025**

# NURSING AND MIDWIFERY EMCR ROADMAP

## WHY is this advocacy roadmap needed?

This advocacy roadmap addresses the critical gaps in recognition and support for nursing and midwifery Early to Mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs). Development of their careers and research are essential for improving health and care outcomes and providing crucial evidence for practice.

Representing almost half of the global healthcare workforce, nurses, and midwives, are integral to clinical practice, academia, research, and policy. In Australia, nursing and midwifery-led research has demonstrated improvements in patient outcomes, care delivery, and workforce training.<sup>1</sup> Yet, doctorally prepared nursing and midwifery researchers, particularly those in the early stages of their post-PhD careers (EMCRs), encounter significant and inequitable challenges.<sup>2</sup> These include; limited recognition and career advancement opportunities, inadequate support to bridge research and practice, difficulties in securing funding, and obstacles to building and sustaining collaborations.<sup>3</sup> These barriers can lead to burnout among EMCRs and the loss of critical expertise within the field.

**In Australia, EMCR's are defined as those who are within the first ten years of obtaining their PhD.**

**An early-career researcher (ECR):** is defined as an individual who is within five years post PhD (i.e. within five years of their PhD award date), excluding career disruptions.

**A mid-career researcher (MCR):** is defined as an individual who is between five and ten years post PhD (i.e. between five and ten years of their PhD award date), excluding career disruptions.

1. Eckert M et al. Harnessing the nursing and midwifery workforce to boost Australia's clinical research impact. *Med J Aust.* 2022 Nov 21;217(10):514-516. doi: 10.5694/mja2.51758.

2. van Dongen L et al. Career development of doctorally prepared nurses. *J Adv Nurs.* 2024 Mar;80(3):854-870. doi: 10.1111/jan.15847.

3. Sanders J et al. Embedding post-doctoral clinical academic careers in practice: The St Bartholomew's Hospital model. *J Clin Nurs.* 2022 Feb;31(3-4):427-434. doi: 10.1111/jocn.15575.

## **HOW** was this roadmap developed and **WHO** is it intended for?

The roadmap was developed through a collaborative process, incorporating insights from over 100 Australian nursing and midwifery EMCRs, clinical and academic leaders, researchers, and consumer representatives, during the inaugural National EMCR Nursing and Midwifery Research Symposium in Sydney, Australia (held in November 2024). It also draws on data from a comprehensive national survey of research activities among early to mid-career nursing and midwifery researchers in Australia.<sup>4</sup> Expert contributions were provided by national and international clinical, academic, health, industry, and consumer leaders.

This roadmap is designed to benefit a range of stakeholders. It serves employing organisations, such as universities, hospitals, research institutes, and other entities that support EMCRs. It also supports individual nursing and midwifery EMCRs seeking career development and career longevity. Additionally, it guides decision-makers such as funders, policymakers, and peak bodies that shape healthcare and research agendas.

## **Call to ACTION**

Investing in nursing and midwifery EMCRs is an investment in the future of healthcare. By fostering their development, we can create a pipeline of innovative leaders who will drive evidence translation, improve patient and population outcomes, and address emerging healthcare challenges.<sup>5</sup>

**We call upon Australian organisations, policymakers, funders, and individuals, to support and implement the recommendations outlined in this Roadmap to drive meaningful change.**

4. Straiton N et al. A National Survey of Research Activities Among Early-Mid Career Nursing and Midwifery Researchers in Australia. 2025 [submitted for publication]

5. Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 2021-2025. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021

# NURSING & MIDWIFERY

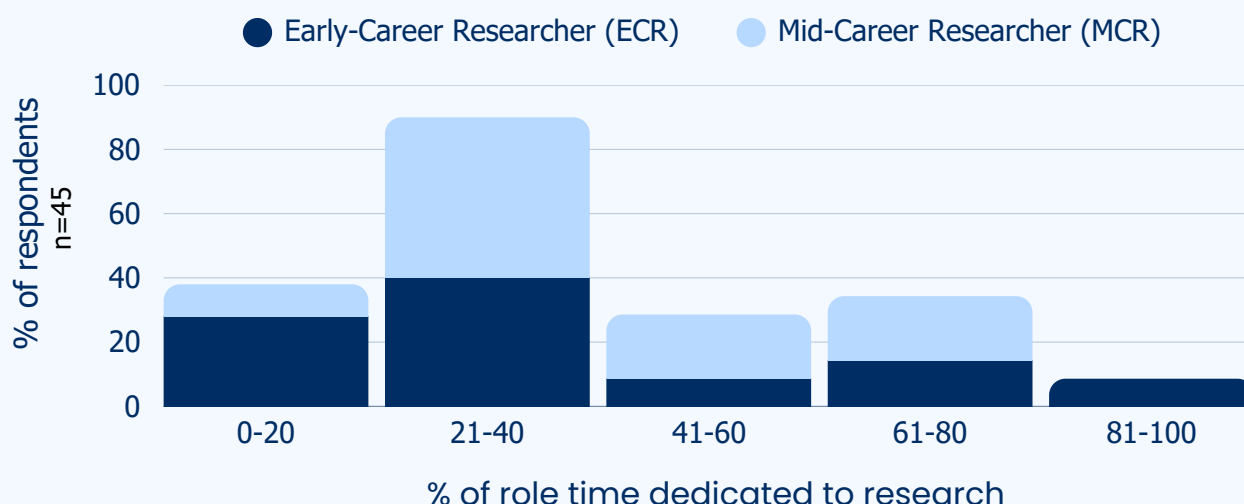
## EARLY TO MID-CAREER RESEARCHER (EMCR)

### STATISTICS

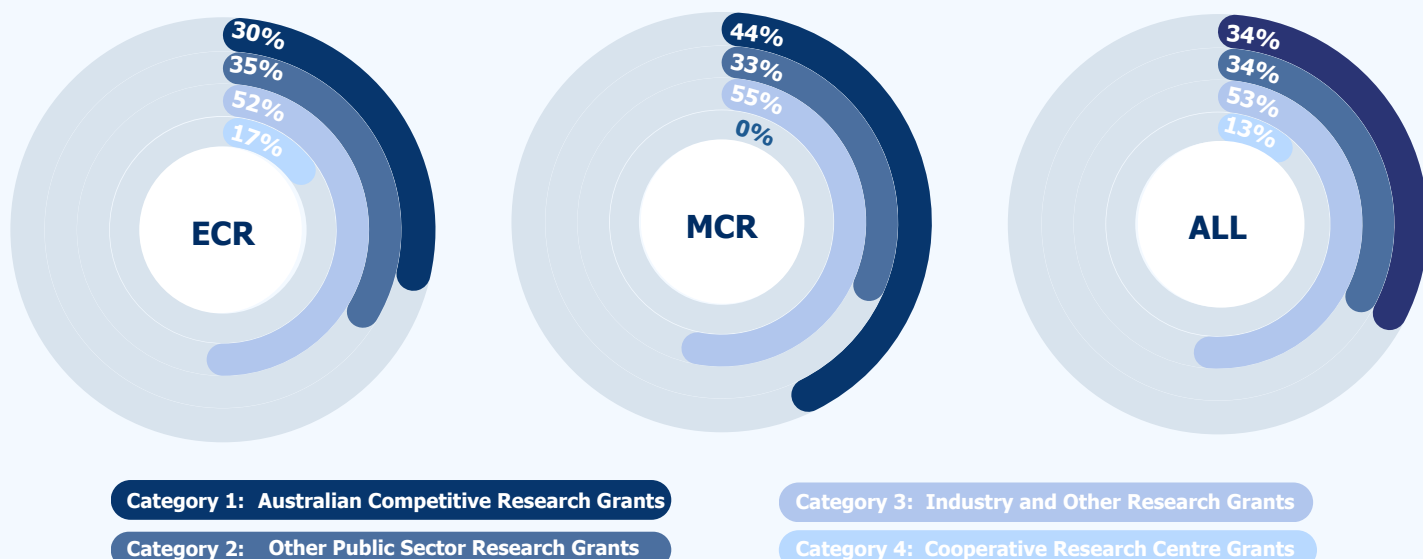
Only **5%**

of Australian National Competitive Funding goes to Nurse and Midwifery-Led Research<sup>6</sup>

#### How much research time do EMCRs have?<sup>4</sup>



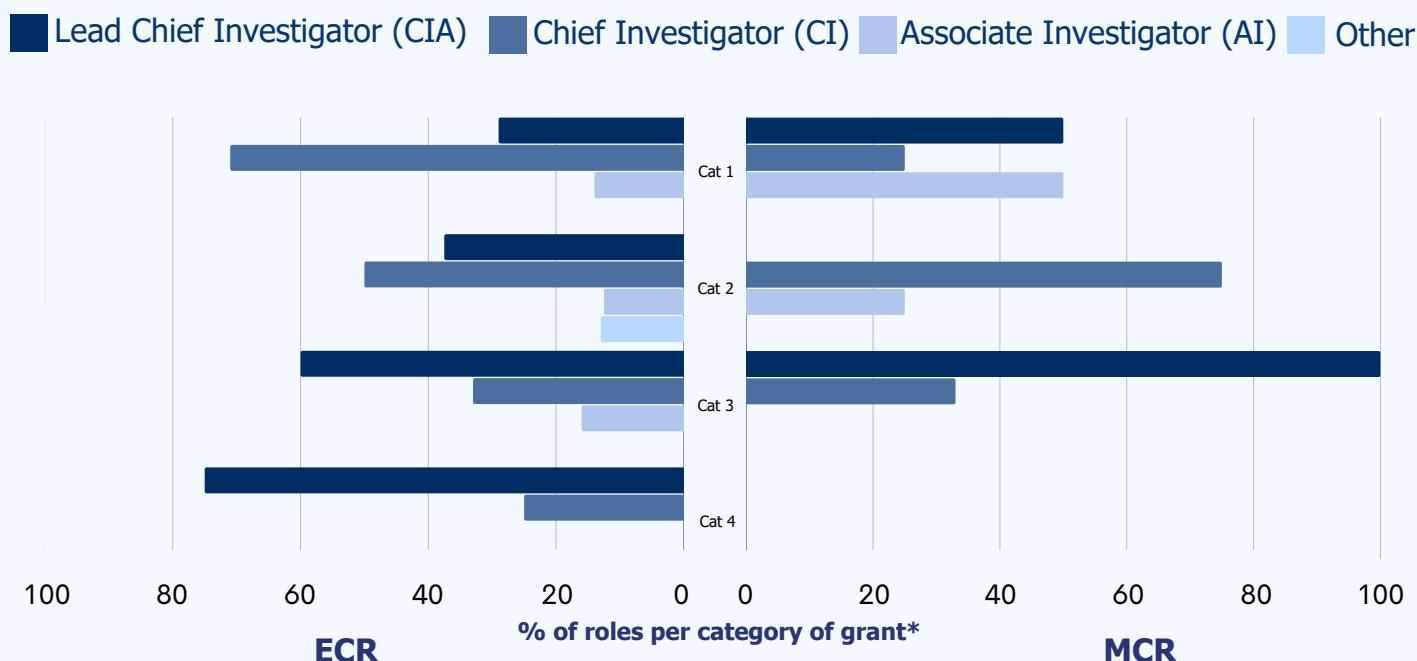
#### What category of grants are EMCRs applying for?<sup>4</sup>



4. Straiton N et al. A National Survey of Research Activities Among Early-Mid Career Nursing and Midwifery Researchers in Australia. 2025 [submitted for publication]

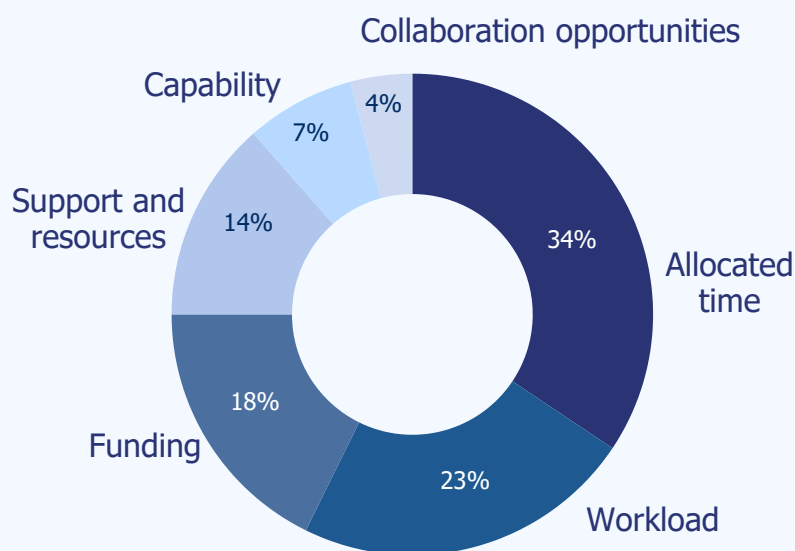
6. Ferguson C et al. Global perspectives on under-funding for Clinical Research Training Fellowships in Nursing. J Clin Nurs. 2021 May;30(9-10):e48-e50. doi: 10.1111/jocn.15758.

# What roles do nurses & midwives have on grant applications?<sup>4</sup>



\*This demonstrates of those who applied for Category 3 grants, 60% of ECRs held CIA roles vs 100% of MCRs held CIA roles.

## Barriers to conducting research<sup>4</sup>



Several key **barriers** impact the ability of EMCRs to engage in research activities.

The top **enablers** to engage in research activities include **mentorship, allocated research time and support and resources.**<sup>4</sup>

# 46.7%

Of **nursing and midwifery EMCRs** rated the **research support** provided by their primary institution as

## "AVERAGE"

(remaining; 42.2% good/very good; 11.1% very poor/poor)<sup>4</sup>

4. Straiton N et al. A National Survey of Research Activities Among Early-Mid Career Nursing and Midwifery Researchers in Australia. 2025 [submitted for publication]

# NURSING AND MIDWIFERY EARLY TO MID-CAREER RESEARCHER ADVOCACY ROADMAP



## RECOGNITION

as Researchers



## COLLABORATION

as Partners



## CAPACITY & CAPABILITY

for Impact

RECOMMENDATIONS





# RECOMMENDATION 1

## RECOGNITION AS RESEARCHERS

### For Organisations

#### **Develop and Implement Strategic Communication Plans**

Showcase the valuable contributions of nursing and midwifery EMCRs. Share their research outcomes and impact across organisational, media and community platforms.

#### **Establish and Leverage Leadership, Mentorship and Networking Opportunities**

Connect nursing and midwifery EMCRs with established sector leaders (e.g. Australian Academy of Science, Franklin Women) and researchers (e.g. Australasian Nursing and Midwifery Clinical Trials Network), with ongoing funding to enable these initiatives to be accessible, sustainable, and impactful.

#### **Create Recognition Awards and Programs**

Celebrate the research achievements of nursing and midwifery EMCRs, partnering with professional bodies to design, promote, and sponsor recognition initiatives and awards.

### For Individuals

#### **Develop and Implement Personal Communication Strategies**

Highlight your contributions as a nursing or midwifery EMCR by sharing research achievements across professional networks, communities, social media, and academic platforms, to boost visibility.

#### **Engage in Mentorship and Networking**

Actively seek and participate in mentorship programs and professional networks to elevate your professional and public profile, while facilitating opportunities for collaboration and recognition.

#### **Pursue Recognition and Awards**

Identify and apply for recognition programs and awards that acknowledge your research contributions, showcasing your achievements to academic, healthcare, and public audiences.



# RECOMMENDATION 2

## COLLABORATION AS PARTNERS

### For Organisations

#### **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaborations**

Encourage, support, and fund research initiatives, which bring together nursing and midwifery EMCRs from across disciplines and settings, to drive innovative and impactful research.

#### **Build Academic-Healthcare Partnerships**

Enabling nursing and midwifery EMCRs to lead and drive evidence-based care, and drive sustainable practice change, through supporting and funding joint initiatives that bridge the gap between academia and healthcare settings.

#### **Establish or Leverage Dedicated Platforms for Collaboration**

Support nursing and midwifery EMCRs to connect, share resources, collaborate on large-scale, high-quality research, and respond effectively and efficiently to funding opportunities, maximising the impact and success of collaborative efforts.

### For Individuals

#### **Collaborate Across Disciplines**

Pursue partnerships with academic and healthcare colleagues from diverse disciplines to enhance research innovation and impact.

#### **Forge Academic and Healthcare Connections**

Establish relationships with different organisations to lead collaborative research that drives evidence-based practices and sustainable change.

#### **Leverage Collaboration Platforms**

Engage with platforms designed to facilitate idea-sharing, networking, and joint research endeavours, enabling effective responses to funding opportunities and research success.





# RECOMMENDATION 3

## CAPACITY & CAPABILITY FOR IMPACT

### For Organisations

#### **Invest in Future Healthcare and Academic Leaders**

Equip nursing and midwifery EMCRs with research skills and knowledge translation skills, to drive and independently lead research that enhances practice, care, and health outcomes. Fund training programs to build a pipeline of healthcare and academic leaders.

#### **Facilitate Access to Shared Support and Resources**

Provide support in research design, biostatistical and economic analysis, consumer engagement, and implementation science to drive inclusive, collaborative research that strengthens the skills and expertise of nursing and midwifery EMCRs.

#### **Tailored Continuous Professional Development Programs**

Offer continuous professional development opportunities for nursing and midwifery EMCRs, enhancing skills in funding acquisition, project management, evidence translation, and strategies for building and sustaining a strong research program.

### For Individuals

#### **Continuous Development of Research and Leadership Skills**

Enhance your research and leadership skills to drive impactful research in nursing and midwifery practice, patient care, and population health.

#### **Leverage Shared Resources for Research**

Access diverse resources to advance your research design and project management skills, supporting the conduct and dissemination of high-quality research, while creating more opportunities for collaboration.

#### **Pursue Professional Development and Fellowship Opportunities**

Take advantage of professional development opportunities and fellowship programs to personally and professionally grow and develop your research portfolio, while building a strong track record and a program of research.

# CONTRIBUTIONS

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