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Dear Aidan,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Australian Research Council (ARC) consultation on proposed changes to Funding rules for Discovery Programme schemes and the Future Fellowships scheme.

At the outset, I wish to again stress the strong support of the Australian Academy of the Humanities for the Future Fellowships scheme. It is a particularly vital programme for humanities scholars for whom unencumbered time is the most important issue in terms of undertaking their research.

Given the short time frame for the consultation, the Academy sought feedback from a target group of Fellows rather than solicit advice from its wider Fellowship. Overall there was general support for the streamlining of funding rules. However, on the issue of eligibility for the Discovery Programme schemes, we received some conflicting advice, which would indicate possible disadvantages of the proposed changes at the discipline-specific level. With respect to the Future Fellowships, while the Academy applauds the ARC's intention to encourage institutions to retain researchers, and open up career paths for mid-career researchers, this provision may seriously limit the number of Future Fellowships that would be supported by universities.

On the basis of feedback from Fellows, the Academy's specific comments on the proposed changes is as follows:

#### Discovery Programme schemes

*Changes to eligibility criteria to allow a CI to be employed at a minimum of 0.2FTE or hold an Emeritus appointment (both must be at an Eligible Organisation); and eligibility for Adjunct appointments has been removed, though these people may be included as Partner Investigators.*

The Academy generally supports the simplifying of the eligibility criteria. We note that the 0.2FTE commitment from an employing institution is unchanged and this would seem to represent a minimal commitment by an institution.

However, we received specific feedback from our **Archaeology Section** with concerns about these proposed changes on equity grounds, and who consider that *all affiliates of Eligible Organisations* should be eligible to apply as CIs. Their concerns are as follows:

- Research ability does not reside solely among employees of Eligible Organisations, which is why it is important to retain the ability of Adjuncts and Affiliates/Honorary Research Associates to be named as CI's on high quality research proposals. The change will potentially lead to a loss of distinguished and productive researchers, many of whom have been CIs in the past. Requiring them to be PIs means they have to find an appropriate colleague who is willing to be a CI and work under their direction. Many CIs, in addition, will already hold Discovery Grants and will not be able to accommodate the Adjuncts.
- *Emeritus* appointments are held only by very senior, always retired, university members, nearly always professors (Level E). Restricting the non-earning, eligible applicants to Emeritus appointments discriminates against less senior retired Affiliates/ Honorary Research Associates, who may have equally if not more distinguished research careers and still be research-active. This would exclude people (and, in particular, women) whose career options and structures have been such that they didn't reach Level E before retirement.

*CIs on ARC Centres of Excellence (and other key ARC schemes) may only apply for or hold only one additional Project/Award/Fellowship under the Discovery Program (note the rule may be applied post-award).*

*Laureate Fellowship holders will also have to relinquish one Discovery Project (DP) if they hold two – this also allows someone holding two DPs to apply for a Laureate and relinquish one if successful.*

Given the limited resources available for research funding the Academy would agree with these revisions on cross-scheme limits for two reasons:

- First, both the Centres of Excellence and Laureate Fellowships are generously funded to undertake high-level research, so in the interests of equity holding one additional project or award would seem fair in a climate of restraint.
- Second, one would expect that sustaining a high level of output was difficult with more than one project or award in addition to the Centres of Excellence and Laureate Fellowships - which demand high quality and quantity output.

However, the Academy considers it would be prudent to model the consequences of these cross-scheme limits based on a sample of current cases.

We would also add that these cross-scheme limits should not apply to Linkage Projects which have different parameters and demands to Discovery Projects.

## Future Fellowship scheme

*Eligible Organisations would be required to commit to retaining successful applicants in continuing positions. Only researchers employed on non-continuing basis, or have held positions for a total of less than three years, will be eligible to apply.*

These were the two proposed revisions on which we received the most feedback.

With respect to the issue of universities committing to continuing appointments:

- The Academy supports policies that would encourage universities to undertake workforce planning before an institution supports a candidate's application. We do, however, have concerns that new requirement may have the effect of reducing institutional support for applications for Future Fellowships. Continuing teaching-and-research positions must take the applicants' teaching experience and suitability into account, not just their research prowess. Automatic tenure may lead many Heads of Departments and Deans refusing to support individual applications, and in the context of tight institutional budgets and strategy, the Academy is concerned about the potential impact on support for applications in the humanities.
- A possible further disadvantage is that Future Fellowships may end up restricted to institutions that are confident in having long-term budget surpluses, a consequence that is likely to see Future Fellowships concentrated in fewer institutions.
- It may also be very difficult for the ARC to monitor and hold the universities accountable for a) putting forward applicants who are not in continuing positions, and b) ensuring a continuing position after the Fellowship.

With respect to the eligibility of researchers:

- The proposed change restricts Future Fellowship applications to candidates who do not currently occupy continuing positions or have done so for less than three years. The justification is that anyone who has had a position for more than three years is no longer mid-career. The Academy is concerned that this redefines the notion of "mid-career" considerably, and would mean that there will be a large gap in eligibility for people who are building an excellent track record but are not yet ready to apply for a Laureate Fellowship. Future fellowships have replaced QEII and ARC professorial fellowships and this proposed change would mean that this major cohort of potential applicants would no longer be able to apply for a research fellowship unless they were in the tenuous position of being on short term contracts.

The Academy would be very pleased to elaborate on any of the observations contained in this submission. I can be contacted via email to [christina.parolin@humanities.org.au](mailto:christina.parolin@humanities.org.au) or phone on (02) 6125 9860.

Yours sincerely,

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