

# Review of the Australian Research Council, National Competitive Grants Program, May 2024

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**The Australian Academy of the Humanities is the national body for the humanities in Australia. As one of the nation’s five Learned Academies, we are a unique resource for government, working to ensure cultural, creative, and ethical perspectives inform Australia’s plans for now and the future.**

## Introduction

The ARC is the only source of government funding for basic research in the humanities and the primary source of industry-related collaborative funding.

Federal funding for research in the humanities is more limited than it is for the sciences. Humanities and social sciences are explicitly excluded from participating in the Research and Development Tax Incentive program, for instance, and from several other targeted government initiatives and important funding programs, leaving the Discovery program as the only option for basic research funding in these disciplines.

The current structure and practice of the ARC’s NCGP has not served research in the humanities well. The [ARC grants dataset](#) (accessed 12 May 2024) demonstrate that the one-size-fits-all approach taken in Discovery has inflated the cost of humanities research while supporting a shrinking number of projects and individual researchers. Success rates are shrinking and are dominated by senior researchers; the expanded focus on the track record of the investigator is effectively shutting out early career researchers. The success rates in fellowship programs such as the Laureates (below 5% for HASS applicants) also underline how difficult it is for researchers who are not working within an empirical or scientific tradition to receive funding. The design, scale and assessment assumptions for the Centres of Excellence has militated against successful applications from humanities researchers and collaborative groups of researchers.

## Implications for the nation

Humanities knowledges, analysis and research have never been more crucial as the nation deals with significant waves of social, cultural, economic and technological change. Major challenges to which research in the HASS disciplines will be fundamental include the social and cultural adaptation to climate change, understanding the roots of gendered violence, understanding the crisis in the public formation of knowledge and opinion (the rise of misinformation), understanding the impact and possible uses of AI, developing a pathway towards the civilizing regulation of social media, and engagement with Indigenous knowledges (to name a few examples).

## A review from first principles

That perspective, however, can be better embedded in the structure of the ARC's programs and procedures. The current suite of funding schemes within the NCGP is the product of many iterations, revisions, additions and subtractions -- all done in response to calls for various forms of change from the research community. Some of these changes have helped to modify the programs to better enable support for excellent research in the humanities. However, rather than continue to bolt on further modifications to the current suite of funding schemes, we strongly encourage the **ARC NCGP Review Panel to ensure this is a review from first principles** – considering what the grant scheme is to achieve, how should it be designed to meet that objective, and how might that design align with, and incorporate the necessary flexibility to include, the particular research practices **across the full range of Fields of Research (FoRs)**.

The ARC's NCGP dataset for success rates by FoR codes demonstrates that there are significant disparities in application and success rates for different disciplines.

The humanities in Australia have spent decades retrofitting its research practices to the requirements of the research programs available. If the ARC wishes to support research in the humanities, it must do more to tailor its programs in ways that acknowledge and facilitate excellent research in the humanities. This must involve a close examination of how its programs are skewed, mostly implicitly but often explicitly, towards the models of research practice typical of the sciences.

## Addressing under-represented groups

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to address the under-representation of women, of early career and mid-career researchers (EMCR), and Indigenous researchers within a system that has been progressively tilted towards the support of senior and established researchers. Central here is the effect of the various fellowship schemes and the consequences of big-ticket items such as the Centres of Excellence (CoE), which combine to create an undesirable concentration of funding and resources.

Below, the Academy addresses the questions raised in the ARC's Discussion Paper.

### **1. What are the best guiding objectives for the NCGP to support excellent, pure basic, strategic basic and applied research that will enable it to deliver economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for Australia.**

This group of objectives, while all in some sense worthwhile, cannot be seen as central across the range of the activities addressed by the NCGP at present. The Academy's view is that only two of the draft objectives for the NCGP are fundamental to the program as a whole. They affirm its capacity to support research across the full range of disciplines while maintaining national support for both blue sky and applied research:

- **Research excellence** in order to identify and support pure and strategic basic research, as well as applied research across and between all disciplines (excluding experimental development and medical research);
- **Research capacity** in order to attract, develop and retain research talent, promoting academic career pathways, and building a sustainable, diverse, and broad-based research sector.

The Academy notes that the **creation and dissemination of new knowledge** has slipped off the policy agenda for research funding in recent years. This should be recovered and added as a third objective. The creation and dissemination of knowledge should be a fundamental objective for any national agency focused on the funding of original research.

**The remaining objectives** listed in the Discussion Paper vary in their pertinence and application across the sector. **The translation of research** is more of a

priority within some disciplines than others, although the sharing of research methods and outcomes is fundamental. The key here is the need for a review of strategies required of funding recipients for the communication of research outcomes.

For its part, the objective of **commercialisation** has been overstated in its relevance to all FoRs, and in its potential to influence practices and financial viability across the sector. As the former Chief Scientist, Prof Ian Chubb, has noted, a more fundamental objective to replace both of these could be articulated around **the uses** made of funded research – not just for commercial applications but also in policy formation, for social and cultural benefit, and for the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

While the inclusion of **research impact** as an objective is a legitimate aspiration, it is also the case that the effective assessment of research impact, while desirable, remains a work in progress internationally. The ARC’s EI process did not serve all disciplines equally well and employed a very narrow and indeed questionable set of indicators -- largely equating impact with income earned.

**National research priorities** have proven difficult to successfully integrate into the research and innovation system. There is an in-principle acceptance across the sector that there should be some strategic guidance for investment at certain points within the system. However, this inevitably brings up the question of who should frame them, and to what extent they should influence programs of basic research. Firstly, universities themselves are funding a growing portion of research and development in the sector (in 2020 it was 36% having grown from 23% in 2008<sup>1</sup>). There is strong anecdotal evidence from experience in the College that their existence can skew the application process, with applicants doing what they can to be able to claim they are addressing a national research priority. Since there is evidence that the priorities play only a minor part, if any, in the assessment process, this can be an unnecessary distortion. Furthermore, ever since they have been introduced, and notwithstanding the variation in the processes through which they have been developed, the alignment of research with national research priorities has been subject to significant variations in policy directions, frequent shifts in political interests, and the establishment of

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<sup>1</sup> [Australian Universities Accord Final Report](#), 2023, Figure 30, p. 195.

specifically targeted government investments. It cannot be regarded as an objective that has consistently stood above political influence.

The Academy acknowledges the need for some strategic direction for national funding of research but where research priorities are proposed, they should be developed in close collaboration with the research sector in order to properly serve the national, as distinct from a party political, interest.

In summary, in relation to this first question, the Academy wishes to strongly emphasise that the objective of realising Australia's potential in utilising the full complement of its research capabilities to address national and strategic policy challenges, and specifically in fully incorporating the research potential of the HASS disciplines in dealing with these challenges, has not so far been fully addressed.

**How can the NCGP further support and encourage (a) high calibre research that drives the advancement of knowledge; (b) the utilization, translation and commercialisation of research to deliver benefits to Australia's society, economy and community?**

**(a) high calibre research that drives the advancement of knowledge**

The ARC must support excellent pure and applied research that is largely investigator led; that is funded at appropriate levels to ensure viability; that is accessible at all levels of appointment within the sector; that is allocated across the breadth of academic disciplines including interdisciplinary work; that is evaluated in an equitable, transparent and disinterested manner; that contains measures to assist universities to attract and retain strong academic researchers; and that includes the capacity to address research problems identified in partnership between universities and between universities and government services or departments, and private or not-for-profit industry providers.

A further consideration in relation to (a) is to do with a restructuring of the overall design of the programs which is dealt with in the Academy's response to Question 4.

**(b) the utilization, translation and commercialisation of research to deliver benefits to Australia's society, economy and community?**

The Academy holds the most desirable manner in which to support a robust national research and innovation system is to vigorously invest in basic research

as it provides the foundation upon which all other applications of research capacity depend. Currently in Australia 85% of “pure basic research” and 39% of “strategic basic research” is undertaken in universities<sup>2</sup>. However, **funding for basic research has been static for the past 15 years, skewing funding towards commercialisation.**

The Australian Universities Accord Final Report (AUA) noted, “Australia needs to increase investment in basic research to safeguard the entire research system”<sup>3</sup> and the NCGP is the primary source of basic research funding.

It is worth noting here that the political enthusiasm for the **commercialisation** of research outcomes across the sector does not reflect the international experience, where the income from commercialisation in the vast majority of universities is highly concentrated in particular areas and constitutes at best a minor component of their budgets. **The potential importance of commercialisation in addressing shortages in university funding has been consistently overstated.** As the AUA notes<sup>4</sup> the issue is not in fact with the quality or applicability of Australian university research as an input to innovation. Australian universities have used their own funds (notably fees from international students) to conduct quality research supporting global innovation through fundamental and basic applied research, but this work is not taken up by Australian industry to deliver solutions. “Strong performance in university research quality has not been matched in Australia by industry and government R&D investment to achieve equivalent strong problem-solving and commercialisation outcomes”<sup>5</sup>.

Evaluation of the breadth and depth of the uses of university research is a more inclusive and relevant way of assessing the outcomes of taxpayers’ investment, and this has been consistently overlooked. There is a danger that the insistence on commercialisation works to commodify academic research in narrow and unproductive ways: it implicitly privileges the commercial over other, possibly more useful, outcomes. There is also the danger that the commercialisation of knowledge which was generated by the use of public funds can lead to purely private rather than public benefits.

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<sup>2</sup> [Australian Universities Accord Final Report](#), 2023, p. 203

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, sections 5.2.2 – 5.2.3, pp. 193–197

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 196.

### **3. How can the outcomes, impact and contribution of NCGP funded research be best identified and communicated.**

While the Academy agrees that assessment of the impact of funded research is desirable, it notes that what might constitute impact is subject to wide variations across fields of research and research activities. The task of satisfactorily defining impact has not yet been completed, and is open to gaming and special pleading. Some of what is claimed as impact -- such as changes in policy settings, for instance -- is difficult if not impossible to verify. The ARC's recent EI assessment did not employ a single indicator which provided robust data for the HASS disciplines, or for some others such as mathematics. Furthermore, there is anecdotal evidence of an increasing trend towards using matrices that value quantity over quality, and this is changing how impact might be understood. Internationally there is ongoing work aimed at developing an appropriate form of reporting for the impact of research, but there is no jurisdiction in which this has been entirely satisfactory so far.

A more nuanced reporting regime than is currently in place, which provides a wider range of information on a research project's achievements and outcomes, might take us further in this direction. The timeframes to be used for such a regime, however, would need careful consideration and would not be the same for all categories of research. Finally, a more thoroughly implemented program of communication of the outcomes and uses of research which informed government and the public would assist in demonstrating and evaluating the impact of the projects funded.

### **4. (a) What structure and design of the NCGP would: best support the NCGP's objectives**

#### **Reducing unconscious bias**

There are a number of strategies which should be considered as part of the review of the structure and design of the NCGP. The ARC Review raised concerns about the part played by unconscious bias triggered by recognition of the proposer's name or that of their university base. The review panel suggested that changes to the programs which raised the percentage of the total score allocated to the investigator may have exacerbated this tendency. This could be addressed by assessing the quality of the project alone, at least in the first instance. Not only might this assist in reducing unconscious bias among assessors, it might also reduce the power of the privileged position held by the

Go8 universities in comparison to smaller and regional universities, and ensure that the process is focused primarily on excellent ideas. A two-stage process in which the project description is assessed in isolation by a blind review that de-identified the proposer/research team and their institution, might be one way of achieving this. This shorter proposal could be assessed by expert assessors from that area of research rather than by the generalists within the College. Proposals supported at this first stage could then be invited to present their full proposal to be ranked by the College as to their viability, institutional support, and track record. There would be no need, at this second stage, to re-litigate the quality of the research idea.

## **Addressing the limitations of CoE, Discovery & Linkage programs**

There are several programs within the NCGP which are designed and assessed in a manner that is skewed towards scientific rather than humanities or social sciences research practices. Consequently, the success rate for humanities applications is lower than it might be if the program was designed in a more inclusive manner. The Centres of Excellence (CoE) program is one example of this. In this case, the scale required of the proposals assumes a cost of research that is well above what is typical for humanities projects. A reduction in the scale required of applicants would enable more humanities proposals to contest this scheme.

More significantly, the limitations of the one-size-fits-all approach affects more than just the CoE program. It has also made the Discovery and Linkage programs a difficult fit for researchers in the humanities. The need to build budgets to the application threshold for Discovery, for instance, has unnecessarily inflated the cost of humanities research while reducing the capacity of the ARC to capture the full range of lower cost but still excellent research that could be accomplished within these fields of research.

## **New NCGP opportunities – smaller scale CoEs**

It is important that this review recognises the need to vary the design of their programs to align them more accurately with the research practices of the research fields they serve. To accomplish this for the humanities, a graduated level of support is suggested, with an additional funding threshold for grant applicants to the HCA panel set at a lower level: for instance, an additional



funding threshold of \$50,000 would result in higher success rates, it would be likely to serve as an entry level grant for early career researchers, and it would eliminate the need for applicants to seek ways to inflate their budgets to meet the current threshold. The current threshold should be retained at its current level for larger projects but it is likely that there would be significantly fewer applicants at this level if the lower threshold was also in place.

## **Bring back ARC Research Networks**

Finally, the ARC might review the success of the ARC Research Networks programs from a decade or so ago, which turned out to have played a major role in building capacity in disciplines such as cultural studies, cultural history, literary history, and media and communications studies.

### **4 (b) reduce complexity and deliver grants more efficiently**

The recent adjustment to the application process for the Discovery round has at least broken the process into two parts. It is not yet clear if this has reduced the time required or the opportunity cost incurred in completing an application. There is anecdotal evidence from some universities, as well as from the ARC, that the number of EOIs is dramatically higher than the previous year's full applications, and so the cost of managing this within the university may well be greater than before. The total number of EOIs to the HCA panel in this current round was 386, whereas there were 209 full applications to the Discovery round in 2023. The ARC should review the effects of this strategy on the completion of the current round.

## **Complex processes require university support**

The complexity of the application as it stands means that aspiring applicants need support from their university's research offices as they complete their proposals. This support is more available in some universities than others, and this variation is structural: that is, with the sector framed as one of competition, those working in the more wealthy and more comprehensive metropolitan universities are better positioned to compete successfully. The complexity of the application, and the specificity of the ways in which it presents its tasks to prospective applications, reinforces this situation. The change to a two-step process, initially focused solely on the quality of the project's central idea, may help address this problem in the first stage, but there would still be the problem of navigating through the full application later on.

#### **4 (d) set the right balance between different scheme types and duration**

The proliferation of fellowship schemes, while valuable in building research capacity and international competitiveness, have had a number of deleterious effects. This proliferation has encouraged the mistaken idea, notwithstanding the ARC's advice to the contrary, that they constitute a viable research-only career pathway for academics in the sector. Fellowships have impacted on the commitment of senior staff to the maintenance of their teaching and service responsibilities, and served to remove some of the most highly qualified researchers from continuing contact with undergraduate students. The benefits have gone disproportionately to the individual, while the costs are largely felt by those left to fill the gaps in the teaching departments. The ARC needs to consider whether these costs are worth the benefits.

#### **The DECRA scheme is not serving EMCRs**

As the ARC Act Review panel indicated in their analysis, the DECRA program is now widely regarded as no longer serving its original purpose of supporting early career researchers. It might be better to replace this program with the suggested revision to the Discovery program that would provide entry for early career researchers at a lower funding threshold. Or there may be ways of reviving the previous practice of supporting named postdoctoral fellows within Discovery grants. This has all but disappeared, as selection committees have tended not to support them, but it was an extremely effective way of providing a pathway into ARC support for ECRs and more detailed and supportive advice to applicants might assist in reviving them as a strategy.

#### **Are both the Future Fellowships and Laureate Fellowships still required?**

The difference between the Future Fellowships and Laureate Fellowships has eroded over time, but they have combined to concentrate the benefits of the ARC's Fellowship schemes to those at appointment levels D and E. Given the increasingly dominant success rate at this level of appointment in Discovery as well, there is a case for reducing the support provided by the Fellowship scheme at this level. We may only need one rather than two programs. That said, it is also true that humanities applications to both these senior fellowship programs have met with extremely limited success (below 5% according to the ARC's success data). Where the assessment process uses a joint panel, such as with the

Laureate Fellowships, there is usually only one humanities representative, and so the dominance of the science's model of what constitutes excellent research is almost unavoidable.

#### **4 (e) use peer review in the most effective way**

While peer review remains the preferred means of assessment in our disciplines, the proliferation of schemes as well as the ERA and EI has exposed the shallowness of the pool of expertise upon which we can draw for these tasks. This was particularly evident in the poor quality of peer review provided to the HCA panel in ERA, but it is also apparent in the appointments to the College of Experts. The perceived variation in the quality, expertise, and experience of those appointed to the College over time undermines the sector's confidence in the process. Given the limited pool for us to draw upon, the ARC should reconsider its policy of only appointing an individual to the College once. While it would be unwise to appoint individuals to successive terms, there is an argument for returning to past members after an appropriate interval to ensure that the level of expertise and seniority is sufficient to support the sector's confidence in the outcomes. Such strategies may assist in modifying existing practices but the Academy believes that the ARC should conduct a focused consultation with former College and ERA panelists to consider how best to deploy peer review in a context in which the supply of qualified and experienced peer reviewers is limited.

#### **4 (f) leverage the opportunities and manage the risks of using artificial intelligence.**

Given the lack of knowledge about exactly how the use of AI would assist the ARC, given the fact that the industry's management of these processes is both opaque and unpredictable, and given the commercial rather than public interest objectives driving development in this industry, the integration of AI technologies into the management or assessment of the ARC programs is not currently supported.

**5. How can the NCGP best support collaboration between disciplines (between and across HASS and STEM), among researchers (both national and international), across funding sectors and funding programs.**

## **Collaboration, obstructed by the system**

While collaboration is universally regarded as a good thing in principle, the structure of the sector, including that of the ARC is such that it actively obstructs collaboration in practice. The framing of the university sector as composed of institutions in competition with each other directly inhibits the amount of collaboration which occurs between disciplines and across institutions.

Competition between universities influences the decisions about which researchers get to lead proposals, and the role that research infrastructure and institutional support plays in the assessment of proposals. Universities directly discourage their researchers from collaborating in a project which is not administered by their own institution. Given current policy settings, there is probably little that can be done about this structurally, but the ARC should consider whether there are incentives which might be built into programs to counteract these influences and encourage collaboration across the sector.

At present, the sorts of collaboration which should bring HASS and STEM into partnership include those which would assist the nation in addressing major areas of social, cultural and economic change: adaptation to climate change, social transition in communities affected by shifts in energy policy, or understanding threats to social cohesion generated by new technologies such as AI.

## **Grant programs to grow collaborative research**

With all funding allocated to panels serving specified discipline clusters, and notwithstanding the existing arrangements for interdisciplinary projects, it is not likely that this kind of collaboration will occur unless there are programs which specifically target it, or if such an approach can be embedded in existing programs such as the CoE program. **A targeted, potentially smaller scale, version of a CoE** round aimed at generating HASS/STEM collaborations around a national 'wicked problem' would be a valuable initiative, and would directly demonstrate the centrality of university research to the nation's progress. There is also merit to the idea of establishing a smaller scale HASS-specific CoE

program, given that the outcomes from a HASS-led program would be very different to one led by a science group which included HASS on its fringes.

The **Linkage program** has benefited from the changes in timelines and assessment, but some impediments remain which affect collaboration with industry. Industry participation can still be burdensome, and the process of establishing a partnership lengthy. For humanities projects which are typically conducted in partnership with a not-for-profit or public sector provider, the amount of industry contributions in cash and in-kind can unduly affect the chances of success when they take on importance in the assessment process.

An initiative which did make a difference to collaboration, when built around specified problems or research focus, was the **ARC Research Networks**. This allocated up to \$250K to groups of up to 40 researchers with a view to funding the process of bringing researchers together. For many of the humanities-based networks, this proved an extremely economical and successful way of building collaborative and cross-disciplinary research, as well as bringing ECRs and senior researchers into collaborative as well as mentoring relationships. A small scale and targeted reiteration of this program, aimed at humanities researchers and perhaps directed towards national priorities, would be a good investment.

## How the ARC assesses interdisciplinary research

Finally, there is still the question of how well the current systems of assessment deal with interdisciplinary research -- which frequently employs collaborations between researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds. The sector remains unconvinced by the current strategies to deal with these applications. Fostering interdisciplinary collaborative research will be important to address NSRP, National Well-being index, fostering First Nations research and closing the gap in First Nations life expectations. To do this, there may be a **need to re-evaluate the composition of the Selection Advisory Committees** to ensure the relevant breadth of disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise, and to recognize the limitations of existing COI processes for research involving identifiable, closely connected and small populations.

## **6. How can the NCGP promote a strong and diverse research sector, including through supporting research training and opportunities for early career researchers, women researchers and other under-represented groups.**

The current mechanisms used to ‘ring-fence’ fellowships for EMCRs have mutated over the years to the point where the DECRA program is effectively a mid-career fellowship. ECR success in Discovery is less than 20%, and this needs to be addressed by revising the conditions of eligibility for ECR-specific fellowships and the framing of assessment criteria. Suggestions made earlier in this submission -- introducing a lower threshold for a new tier of Discovery proposals, reviving the Research Networks, for instance -- would also assist in opening access to ECRs and linking them with senior mentors.

As noted earlier, the **anonymisation of applications** would assist in opening up access to women and other under-represented groups, and the recent improvements to **ROPE** may assist in limiting unconscious bias in the assessment process. However, some researchers have suggested that ROPE, in its positive attempt to recognise issues such as periods of career interruption, may actually play a part in enabling gender discrimination. Some researchers say that replaying difficult periods in their careers or personal lives has been unnecessarily daunting. The manner in which ROPE has expanded has actually gone beyond its initial quite specific relevance -- to provide evidence of career interruption, disadvantage and so on. ROPE needs to be improved so as to cover the range of issues raised; it would be helpful for the ARC to consult with researchers about the role this now plays, how it might be made more accommodating for applicants dealing with disadvantage or disability, and whether it should be redesigned to make it a better fit for its original purpose.

### **Supporting researchers with a disability**

Similarly, if the ARC wishes to foster a more inclusive research culture, there should be consideration given to permitting researchers to use ARC funds to support researchers living with a disability or with experience of specific cultural, social or care responsibilities that require adjustments in how they conduct their research and how they apply for funding. Consulting with research groupings around Australia who have, for example, supported research conducted by and for people with disabilities as part of NDIS or Royal Commissions would advance quality research from diverse research perspectives.

## De-coding what the ARC really wants

There is a widespread assumption among humanities researchers that there is an ARC ‘line’ on what makes a successful application works against diversity and the more speculative, innovative, theoretical or risky proposals. ‘What does this really ask for?’ is a common question among applicants when seeking help from their research offices. That question implies that the ARC application is to some extent coded, and researchers need to crack that code in order to be successful. Indeed, there is now a consulting industry devoted to providing expert advice on ‘de-coding’ the application form. It would be helpful if the ARC consulted a diverse selection of researchers -- successful and unsuccessful -- to ascertain how their application processes may be discouraging or disadvantaging those it might most wish to support.

## Systemic replication

In providing feedback to the sector on ‘characteristics of successful applications’, ARC members may make a highly competitive research sector less diverse because institutions believe they should more strongly support applicants and applications that best mirror those characteristics. There should be a careful assessment of the risk of reinforcing rather than dismantling systemic factors that impede the development of a strong, diverse and inclusive research sector. One area for focus here would be in recognising that Indigenous Australian academics often comment that they experience an unhelpful mix of career acceleration, concentration in teaching areas, and lack of opportunity for development of academic leadership skills outside an Indigenous-focused area. Finally, on this issue, the nominal distribution of funding between different FORs or panels would benefit from more focused consideration of the purpose of a scheme. Some FORs that are vital to addressing significant challenges have had very little access to NCGP funding which may be as much about the structure of the panels and the membership of the SACs as it is about the capacity to conduct quality research in those disciplines.

**7. Are there aspects of the NCGP that could be strengthened or redeveloped to advance support for: (a) Indigenous Australian research, incorporating indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems (where appropriate), and (b) indigenous researchers irrespective of their areas of research.**

The ARC Act Review panel noted that there was now a strong case for targeted ARC fellowships for Indigenous Australians, with the significant expansion in the numbers of Indigenous scholars who would now be eligible for post-PhD fellowships. It was recommended that these fellowships could be introduced within the Discovery and DECRA programs, but also that it would be desirable for an **Indigenous Laureate award**, similar to the Kathleen Fitzpatrick award for women. It is also important to recognise that many Indigenous scholars have their expertise in non-Indigenous areas of research and any new awards should not only acknowledge the generation of Indigenous knowledges but also acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous researchers to other fields of research. There is a need for the ARC to consider strategic interventions to support and develop the work of Indigenous researchers, while recognising that such interventions would require monitoring and modification over time as circumstances change.

There are two general points the Academy would like to emphasise here. The first is that the size of the cohort of Indigenous researchers within the sector has reached a point where it is both desirable and feasible to design specific programs of support for their work across the sector as well as supporting Indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems. The second is that the Academy recognises that it is not in a position to speak for the Indigenous research community and that it is important the ARC consults directly with that community as it develops new initiatives to strengthen its support. To this end, we welcome the ARC Review's recommendation 4 (i) that the ARC established a Designated Committee for engagement and consultation with Indigenous Australian academics and their research partners<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [Trusting Australia's Ability: Review of the Australian Research Council Act 2001, 2023, p. 5](#)