Minister for Education Christopher Pyne

Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowships
Announcement

Wednesday 23 July 2014

I’m extremely pleased to be with you to announce the funding outcomes for the 2014 Future Fellowships.

Today I am announcing 150 new Future Fellows with a total value over four years of $115 million.

This new cohort of Fellows will bring further merit to our higher education sector, and help to keep Australian research world-class.

The effort of our Future Fellows, and their talent, is what is needed to keep Australia at the cutting edge of world class research.

And the importance of this scheme is widely recognised across the sector—it has been a highly successful scheme and the Australian Government has recognised this.

This is why the Future Fellowships scheme has been given an ongoing funding commitment by this Government—this was recently announced in the 2014–15 Federal Budget.

Our commitment will provide for 100 four-year Fellowships each year from 2015 onwards.

This, for the first time, has relieved the sector of a significant funding uncertainty, and makes clear our commitment to this scheme in the long term.

The provision of an ongoing Future Fellowships scheme simplifies the administration of the scheme and creates a continuity which has not existed previously.

Those who watch the research sector closely will know that the Future Fellows are a vital part of how research is done in Australia.

These Fellows are some of the most productive members of the Australian research workforce.

The Fellowships awarded today cover a broad range of research disciplines that will deliver benefits for not only our local area, but also the nation.

Be it improving robotics, fighting malaria or obesity, preparing for drought, rescuing indigenous languages, or analysing our galaxy and ancient stars—a Future Fellow is receiving the keys that will unlock their future today.

In unlocking that future we also pave the way in building Australia’s research capacity.
The Future Fellowships scheme has supported many great research careers—and two of our new fellows will tell us about their research shortly.

The long list of outstanding researchers who have been awarded Future Fellowships in the past includes Professor Mark Kendall, the inventor of the nano-patch, which is revolutionising vaccine delivery around the world.

It also includes Professor Kathy Belov, who has made significant progress in learning more about the genetic nature of Devil Facial Tumour Disease in our Tasmanian devils—it is hoped research in this area will save this iconic Australian species from extinction.

Future Fellowship grants have given wings to the work of our geologists, our historians, our astronomers and our engineers.

These grants underpin our future economic security.

The work of Future Fellow Boris Baer, on honeybees, is essential to the beekeeping industry which faces unknown challenges with new diseases threatening our agricultural security.

Australian agriculture and food security are also strengthened by work to be conducted by the two fellows who are speaking today.

Dr Matthew Tucker is a Senior Research Fellow at the ARC Centre of Excellence in Plant Cell Walls here at The University of Adelaide.

This Centre is at the forefront of advancing fundamental scientific understanding of plane cell wall biology to enable sustainable biomass production for food security, human health, and energy biomass conversion.

As part of his Fellowship, I understand Dr Tucker will use next-generation molecular methods to identify ways to improve crop quality and yield for better food, fuel and fibres.

Dr Sarah Wheeler is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of South Australia and her research will focus on the Murray-Darling Basin and aiding water managers in planning for future water scarcity.

I congratulate all of the Fellows with us here today and I look forward to hearing more from Dr Tucker and Dr Wheeler.

As you are all aware, it is through the Australian Research Council that these Fellowships are administered.

It is through the ARC that the Australian Government can deliver on key research priorities.

The Australian Government has also recently announced funding outcomes, through the ARC, for a Special Research Initiative for Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University.
The $42 million approved for this Initiative will support research and training in virology, disease and transmission control as well as the development of new treatments and vaccines for tropical diseases.

And a fortnight ago at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital here in Adelaide I announced the approval of $35 million to advance research in the critical area of juvenile diabetes.

Funding for the Special Research Initiative for Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes will allow researchers to work towards finding a cure for Type 1 juvenile diabetes—this initiative is led by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

The Australian Government has also committed $24 million for an Antarctic Gateway Partnership in Tasmania.

This Initiative will facilitate scientific collaboration between the University of Tasmania, the CSIRO and the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). The Gateway will allow better remote sensing and mapping capabilities, and improve the partnerships which provide observations of land, sea and ice in the Antarctic.

Accelerating research in dementia is another important commitment of this Government. To this end we have committed $26 million, through the ARC budget for research in dementia, which is part of a larger $200 million government initiative.

This Government is a strong supporter of research in Australia and we are focusing on key areas which we believe will deliver important outcomes for the nation and its people.

The 150 Future Fellowships awarded today, like these new budget measures and the additional $150 million provided for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, are an important investment in Australia’s research capacity.

It is strong commitments to research initiatives like these that will allow Australia to continue to successfully compete internationally while building research capacity.

Australia has a strong reputation for excellent research of international standing and I know that the 150 Fellowships awarded today will only enhance Australia’s reputation on the world stage.

Thank you.