



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

Discovery Projects

**Selection Report for Funding
Commencing in 2004**

Discovery Projects

Overview

Recognising the importance of fundamental research to the national innovation system, *Discovery Projects* supports excellent research projects and excellent individual researchers and teams of researchers.

The objectives of *Discovery Projects* are to:

- support excellent fundamental research by individuals and teams;
- assist researchers to undertake their research in conditions most conducive to achieving best results;
- expand Australia's knowledge base and research capability;
- encourage research training in high-quality research environments.

Selection process

Assessment of applications was undertaken by Expert Advisory Committees, which:

- excluded ineligible applications;
- assigned independent readers/assessors to review the applications;
- sought applicants' comments on assessors' reports;
- ranked each application relative to the others on the basis of the application, the assessors' reports and applicants' response to these assessments;
- assessed and recommended budgets;
- prepared funding recommendations for submission to the ARC Board and, subject to its views, then to the Minister for approval.

The ARC applied strict procedures for declaring conflicts of interest and for members to withdraw from considering particular applications. Readers for each discipline grouping were drawn from a range of institutions to avoid potential conflict of interest problems.

At the selection meeting held on 18-22 August 2003, the Expert Advisory Committees ranked the applications, taking into account readers and assessors' reports and rejoinders from applicants. The Committee made final checks on eligibility. A list of projects recommended for funding was then prepared for submission to the ARC Board. The Minister subsequently considered and approved the recommendations from the ARC Board.

Selection criteria

The selection criteria for *Discovery Projects* are:

- track record of the researchers relative to opportunities (40%);
- significance and degree of innovation in the proposed research programme (30%);
- relevance and adequacy of the proposed approach (20%);
- national benefit (10%).

National Research Priorities

In November 2002, the Australian Government designated a set of four National Research Priorities and within them 19 national research priority goals.

For Discovery Projects 1,906 applications selected a national research priority area. This represented 58.8% of all applications. Of these 515 are recommended by the EACs, with a success rate of 27.0%. Priority applications represented 58.9% of those recommended. In terms of funding endorsed over 2004-2008 for *Discovery Projects*, priority applications received \$157,416,549 (66.2% of the total recommended). For *Discovery Projects* the greatest amount of funding, \$95,741,892 is recommended for projects in the Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries priority area.

Table 1. Numbers and Success Rates for Discovery Projects by National Research Priority

	Discovery-Projects			
	Applications Received less withdrawals	Recommended Applications	Success rate %	Recommended funds 2004-2008
No area	1334	360	27.0	\$80,529,815
An Environmentally Sustainable Australia	481	101	21.0	\$27,863,088
Promoting and Maintaining Good Health	319	68	21.3	\$19,317,699
Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries	906	290	32.0	\$95,741,892
Safeguarding Australia	200	56	28.0	\$14,493,870
Total priority applications	3240	875	27.0	\$237,946,364
Priority as % of total	58.8%	58.9%		66.2%

Summary outcomes

The ARC considered 3260 proposals for funding under the *Discovery Projects* program. Of these, 875 were funded (27.0%), 20 withdrew and 26 were ineligible. This represents an ARC commitment of \$73,552,289 in 2004 or \$237,946,364 over five years.

Table 2. Success Rates for Discovery Projects commencing 2002-2004

	2002	2003	2004
Number of applications			
Received	3090	3601	3260
Withdrawn	12	27	20
Funded	717 (784)	921 (942)	875
Success Rate	23.2% (25.5%)	25.8% (26.4%)	27.0%

In all cases, success rates are calculated without including withdrawn applications.

There was a 9.4% decrease in applications for 2004 funding but the average first year funding request increased by about 3%. The success rate for applications for funding commencing in 2004 is up from previous years and the average grant size and the percentage of requested dollars funded has increased in line with the policy goal of increasing the proportion of direct costs of research being funded by the ARC.

Table 3. Numbers and Success Rates for Discovery Projects by Discipline Group

Discipline Group	Applications Received less withdrawals	Recommended Applications	Success Rate %	Requested funds 2004-2008	Recommended funds 2004-2008
BSB	619	154	24.9	\$253,155,984	\$46,659,000
EE	437	126	28.8	\$166,257,402	\$37,512,284
HCA	526	155	29.5	\$148,605,384	\$29,890,540
MIC	439	128	29.2	\$155,684,211	\$34,423,247
PE	559	150	26.8	\$260,165,028	\$57,467,000
SBE	660	162	24.5	\$176,723,283	\$31,994,293
Total	3240	875	27.0	\$1,160,591,292	\$237,946,364

The average total grant for *Discovery Projects*, over the projects' lives, has increased.

Table 4. Average total grant size for Discovery commencing 2002-2004

D-P	2002	2003	2004
At time of Ministerial approval	\$267,049	\$251,007	\$299,824
After reserves funded	\$247,013	\$249,240	\$271,939

Under *Discovery Projects*, applicants may seek funding for up to 5 years. For funding commencing in 2004, 645 applications requested funding for 4 or 5 years, of which 115 are recommended.

It should be noted that, in applications for funding commencing in 2004, the ARC is funding 67.2% of the average amount requested for 2004. In applications for funding commencing in 2003 the equivalent figure was 64.9% (64.5% after reserves were funded). For specific discipline group percentages see Table 5.

Table 5. Amounts requested by and allocated to successful applicants for 2004

Discipline Group	Average amount requested by funded applications	Average funds recommended	Average amount recommended as a proportion of amount requested
BSB	\$147,446	\$94,617	64.2%
EE	\$146,996	\$93,685	63.7%
HCA	\$88,520	\$60,733	68.6%
MIC	\$123,588	\$82,989	67.1%
PCG	\$156,685	\$111,820	71.4%
SBE	\$94,019	\$63,998	68.1%
All Disciplines	\$125,145	\$84,060	67.2%

Outcomes by institution

The following table shows applications and total ARC funding by institution for *Discovery Projects*.

Table 6. Applications and recommended funding by Administering Organisation

Administering Organisation	Applications received less withdrawals	Recommended Applications	Success rate %	Total Allocation 2004-2008
Austin Hospital Medical Research Foundation	1	0	0.0	\$0
Australian Catholic University	13	1	7.7	\$101,332
Australian Maritime College	1	0	0.0	\$0
Australian Museum	3	0	0.0	\$0
Bond University	7	1	14.3	\$79,332
Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority	1	0	0.0	\$0
Brain Research Institute	1	0	0.0	\$0
Center for Application of Molecular Biology to International Agriculture	1	0	0.0	\$0
Central Queensland University	9	2	22.2	\$249,666
Charles Sturt University	17	3	17.6	\$367,000
CSIRO - Australia Telescope National Facility	1	0	0.0	\$0
Curtin University of Technology	59	12	20.3	\$2,752,272
Deakin University	74	13	17.6	\$2,533,189
Edith Cowan University	18	3	16.7	\$723,700
Griffith University	101	23	22.8	\$5,014,032
Howard Florey Institute	4	0	0.0	\$0
James Cook University	30	9	30.0	\$2,478,973
La Trobe University	80	17	21.3	\$5,723,858
Ludwig Institute of Cancer Research	2	0	0.0	\$0
Macquarie University	109	36	33.0	\$9,217,174
Monash University	196	58	29.6	\$15,003,328
Murdoch Institute	1	0	0.0	\$0
Murdoch University	29	6	20.7	\$1,141,047
Museum Victoria	9	1	11.1	\$240,000
Northern Territory University	6	0	0.0	\$0
Private (Vic)	1	0	0.0	\$0
Queensland Institute of Medical Research	5	1	20.0	\$225,000
Queensland Museum	3	0	0.0	\$0
Queensland University of Technology	71	17	23.9	\$3,022,338
RMIT University	56	12	21.4	\$2,146,606
Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust	1	0	0.0	\$0
South Australian Museum	1	1	100.0	\$130,000
Southern Cross University	9	2	22.2	\$265,000
St Vincents Institute of Medical Research	3	1	33.3	\$330,000
Swinburne University of Technology	44	7	15.9	\$2,578,404
The Australian National University	302	115	38.1	\$34,698,338
The Bionic Ear Institute	3	1	33.3	\$150,000
The Flinders University of South Australia	46	11	23.9	\$2,308,959
The Heart Research Institute	4	0	0.0	\$0
The University of Adelaide	117	26	22.2	\$7,463,063
The University of Melbourne	319	89	27.9	\$24,969,344
The University of New England	44	6	13.6	\$1,395,666
The University of New South Wales	266	80	30.1	\$19,558,281
The University of Newcastle	99	25	25.3	\$7,292,597

Administering Organisation	Applications received less withdrawals	Recommended Applications	Success rate %	Total Allocation 2004-2008
The University of Queensland	286	74	25.9	\$22,494,829
The University of Sydney	287	100	34.8	\$32,357,606
The University of Western Australia	133	31	23.3	\$7,695,624
University of Ballarat	7	0	0.0	\$0
University of Canberra	15	2	13.3	\$477,600
University of South Australia	49	12	24.5	\$2,337,500
University of Southern Queensland	18	0	0.0	\$0
University of Tasmania	71	26	36.6	\$6,347,739
University of Technology, Sydney	60	18	30.0	\$3,396,332
University of the Sunshine Coast	1	0	0.0	\$0
University of Western Sydney	45	4	8.9	\$827,000
University of Wollongong	78	24	30.8	\$8,481,384
Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute	2	2	100.0	\$450,000
Victoria University of Technology	20	3	15.0	\$922,251
Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research	1	0	0.0	\$0
Total	3240	875	27.0	\$237,946,364

Scheme Budget

The following allocations from the *Discovery Projects* budget have been approved for new grants to commence in 2004.

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	TOTAL
\$73,552,289	\$71,728,303	\$68,133,815	\$13,602,637	\$10,929,320	\$237,946,364