Professor Margaret Sheil
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Research Council
Outline

• ARC Update

• Programs
  – Future Fellows
  – Centres
  – Research Networks
  – International Collaboration

• Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)
ARC Managers

- Margaret Clayton,
  ED BSB & Discovery/Fellows

- Krishna Sen,
  ED HASS & Outreach

- Leanne Harvey,
  GM Research Excellence

- Mary Burton,
  GM Legal & Policy
ARC Update

• Advisory Council Established
• Organisational Structure
• Minister’s commitment to transparent decisions
• Contribution to Innovation Review
• RMS Project
ARC Advisory Council

- Margaret Sheil (Chair)
- Margaret Seares (UWA)
- Stuart Macintyre (UniMelb)
- Arun Sharma (QUT)
- Terry Hughes (JCU)
- John Ralston (UniSA)
- Elizabeth Jazwinska (J&J)
Future Fellows

- *Future Fellowships* scheme will reward Australia’s best and brightest mid-career researchers and outstanding international researchers.

- *Election commitment* waiting on final budget approval before releasing consultation paper and draft funding rules.
Objectives

• Attract and retain outstanding Australian mid-career researchers;
• Build collaboration across industry, research institutions, and disciplines;
• Support research in areas of national priority that will result in economic, environmental, social, health or cultural benefits for Australia; and
• Strengthen Australia’s research capability by supporting innovative, internationally competitive research.
Selection Criteria

• Investigator
  – consideration will be given to the opportunities the Future Fellowship candidate has had to attain the level of achievement
  – evidence of capacity to conduct high quality, innovative research
  – record of high quality research outputs
  – evidence of international research standing

• Strategic Alignment
  – how well does the research project align with and/or complement the research strengths of the host organisation(s)?
  – will the proposed project contribute significantly to the building and sustainability of existing or emerging research strengths of the host organisation(s)?
Selection Criteria

• **Collaboration**
  – evidence of Future Fellowship candidate’s capacity to build collaboration across industry, research institutions, and/or with other disciplines.
  – the extent to which the proposed project will build collaboration across industry, research institutions and disciplines.

• **National Priority**
  – will the proposed project contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge in one or more areas of national priority?
Funding Levels

• Up to 200 new Future Fellowships, will be awarded per year, commencing in 2009 to 2013.

• There are two proposed salary levels
  • Step 1:$95,000 - $100,000
  • Step 2:$135,000 - $140,000.

• In addition, $50,000 per year to each Future Fellow’s administering organisation to support related infrastructure and equipment for research projects as well as travel and relocation costs.
Timeframe

• Following the consultation process, the ARC envisages the following key dates will apply to the first round of the Future Fellowships scheme:
  – Future Fellowships funding rules made available in May 2008
  – The closing time for submission of proposals will be in July 2008
  – Announcement of Future Fellowships commencing in 2009 to occur in December 2008
International Collaboration

- As of 26 March announced by the Minister
  - *Future Fellowships and others (ARF etc open to international applicants)*
  - Allowing international students for Australian Postgraduate Awards (Industry)
  - ARC funds OK for travel for international collaborators.

- *Enhancing international collaboration* will be a priority for all ARC fellowship schemes.
When?

- Progressively as schemes open. For the next LP round this would mean...
  1. permitting use of ARC funds for international travel for PIs;
  2. removing the citizenship/residency requirements for APAI students;
  3. making provision so preference may be given to award APDIs to candidates who have the potential to enhance international collaboration.
- Pending Ministerial approval extend the closing date to 23 May (2 weeks later current date).
Centres

- Groundwater Centre, 30 May 2008.
- 2005 Centres being reviewed this year.
- New Centres on a three-year cycle, applications open in 2009, funding commences in 2010 with a life of seven-years.
- Consultation paper released later in the year.
Federation Fellows

- Recommendations for current round later next month.
- Review report and options considered by Advisory Council.
- No formal proposal to the Minister as yet.
Research Networks

- ARC Research Networks is a unique program to bring together best researchers and research teams from across the nation working on specific issues.

- A scheme review is currently under way.

- Review will be in two phases:
  - Phase 1 scheduled to provide preliminary input into the Innovation Review
  - Phase 2 to produce a comprehensive report around September.
Questions
ERA initiative

Defining our strengths,

identifying opportunities…
Objectives of ERA

1. an evaluation framework that provides assurance to government, industry, business and the wider community of the excellence of research conducted in Australia’s higher education institutions;

2. identify at a discipline-level areas of research excellence and areas where there is opportunity for development in Australia’s higher education institutions;

3. allow for comparisons of Australia’s research outputs against national and international benchmarks by discipline; and

4. assist with the development of the government’s broader research and innovation agenda.
Ideally, ERA will ..... 

• Have the confidence of the research community.
• Identify research excellence wherever it is found.
• Reduce the burden on those making submissions and those doing the evaluations.
Encourage behaviour(s)

- Improved quality of outputs.
- Higher levels of activity.
- Increased Collaboration.
- Interdisciplinary research.
- Engagement with industry/end users.
- Concentration, i.e. Scale and Focus.
- Enhanced Internationalisation.
- Strategic planning and investment.
What ERA will not do
It will also not...

- Try to produce a single score.
- Follow the UK timetable.
- Try to impose a single model or paradigm of research across different disciplines.
- And above all............
Won’t mention the “I” word

ERA does not feature the controversial “impact” measure …. involving lengthy, time-consuming written descriptions…. 

Minister Carr, 27 March 2008
• But ...... will recognise excellent outcomes occur across the full spectrum of research and in different ways.
ERA - Key Elements

- Discipline clusters (eight) by institution.
- Successive evaluations up to four per year.
- Research Assessment Committees.
- Produce Cluster Reports.
By institution and discipline(s)

• Level of activity
  – FTE, Income, HDR Students, Outputs.

• Quality of the activity
  – Publications and other outputs of research.

• Performances against benchmarks
  – # citations
  – proportion of internationally competitive publications, performances, etc
  – national benchmarks (income/FTE, publications/FTE, etc).
Please Note - Artificial Data
Publications – Activity and Relevance

Gundaroo Citation Analysis

- Low activity - high citation
- High activity - high citation
- Low activity - low citation
- High activity - low citation

All Unis
IRUA
Go8
Gundaroo

Please Note - Artificial Data
Publications – Activity and Relevance

Comparison against World and Australian Benchmarks for the period 2002-2007

Astronomy
Geosciences
Chemistry
Physics
All Physical Sciences

Please Note - Artificial Data
Next steps

• Address some fundamental questions
  – are there areas/disciplines where there are no proxies?
  – what defines a discipline(s)?
  – how robust are the tiered outlets?
  – do we need other elements (HDR students, engagement etc)?
  – entry point?

• Further develop submission system.
Next Steps cont…

• Consultation paper to Advisory Council & other stakeholders on 22 April for release shortly after.
• Feedback on consultation paper by mid-year.
• Engagement with international activity (HEFCE, Leiden).
• Discussions with individual disciplines on-going.
• Further system building during 2008.
• Limited trials in latter half of 2008 if necessary.
• First cluster evaluation (physical sciences) in early 2009.
• Commence other clusters ASAP thereafter.
Questions