

***Linkage Projects* Consultation Paper**

Summary of Outcomes

Consultation Process

On 11 January 2010 the ARC *Linkage Projects* Scheme Consultation Paper (the Consultation Paper) was released. The purpose of the Consultation Paper was to seek feedback about several proposed changes to the scheme aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its administration and to provide more flexibility for Administering Organisations and Partner Organisations. The consultation period ran for four weeks and closed on 8 February 2010.

Proposed Changes outlined in the Consultation Paper

The ARC suggested changing the nature of *Linkage Projects* application rounds. Round one would be for Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry) (APAI) only proposals. This would involve Administering Organisations submitting a single proposal for the number of APAIs they wished to request. Round two would be for full *Linkage Projects* proposals (excluding APAIs). The ARC also proposed to introduce two levels of required cash support from Partner Organisations: \$5,000 per annum for APAIs involved in projects within low cost disciplines; and \$10,000 per annum for APAIs within high cost disciplines. Respondents were invited to provide comments and state if they agreed to the proposed changes. Respondents also had the opportunity to comment on the proposed timing of the two rounds.

Outcomes

The ARC received 182 responses to the Consultation Paper, comprising 87 responses from institutions (30 Universities; 45 Partner Organisations; and 12 Peak Bodies/Other), and 95 responses from individuals.

The majority of respondents were not supportive of moving to one full *Linkage Projects* round per year, citing that it would reduce flexibility and increase delays for initiating projects with Partner Organisations. A common statement was that this in turn would make it harder for researchers to engage with industry. Feedback from respondents also indicated that industry supports reducing (rather than extending) timeframes within the *Linkage Projects* scheme.

Almost half of the respondents were not supportive of separating APAIs from *Linkage Projects* proposals, citing that APAIs were often an integral part of the proposal. These responses did not take into account the possibility of students still being included in projects.

Most of the respondents who were not supportive of these proposed changes were consequently not supportive of the proposed timing of the two rounds.

More than half of the respondents were supportive of introducing two levels of required cash support from Partner Organisations for APAIs. There were however some concerns raised on this issue, regarding: whether discipline is the most significant cost driver in research training; and whether the proposed change could act as a disincentive for small organisations to engage in the scheme if they are in a high cost discipline.

Next Steps

In light of this feedback the ARC proposes to:

- maintain two funding rounds for the *Linkage Projects* scheme for 2010 with the continued inclusion of APAI requests in each round;
- explore the feasibility of introducing an APAI allocation round; and
- reduce timeframes to initiate grants within the *Linkage Projects* scheme; review current post-award practices and introduce changes to simplify these processes.