



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers and Research Statement

Context

In line with the principles outlined in the *ARC Research Workforce Statement*, the ARC supports researchers from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities and is committed to ensuring that all eligible researchers have fair and equitable access to the funding available through the *National Competitive Grants Program* (NCGP). The ARC recognises the importance of, and actively supports, participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in the research workforce and the further development of a cohort of honours and higher degree by research students.

The ARC supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, research students and research under all NCGP schemes, including the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme, which exclusively funds awards, projects and stipends for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research students.

Encouraging broad participation, including through targeted funding schemes is a priority for the ARC to ensure that outstanding research and researchers contribute to achieving Australia's research and innovation goals. The award of NCGP funding is predicated on research excellence determined through a rigorous peer review process involving assessors with expertise in the nominated field of research.

The ARC is committed to collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to increase the visibility of Indigenous research in national research evaluations. Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and the Engagement and Impact assessment (EI) evaluate and report on the quality of research that is conducted in Australia's institutions, how well universities are engaging with the end-users of their research, and how universities are translating their research into economic, social, environmental, cultural and other impacts.

The ARC draws on the diversity and experience of the ARC Advisory Council, the ARC College of Experts, selection advisory committee members, research assessment committees and research leaders and institutions including the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), for advice on mechanisms and strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research.

Purpose

This policy statement articulates the ARC's commitment to continuously supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, research students and research through our key activities. The ARC recognises the valuable contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers make across the range of disciplines funded by the ARC, as well as the impact ARC funded research has on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, research students and research is a fundamental component of the ARC's *Reconciliation Action Plan 2019–2021*, which demonstrates the ARC's commitment to reconciliation, including our Vision:

Research for a creative, innovative and productive Australia—featuring research by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and students and for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples.

Principles

To support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, research students and research the ARC undertakes a range of actions to:

- build a strong and engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce
- capture the quality, engagement and impacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and examine national benefits
- enable national and international collaboration across disciplines, between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous researchers to address complex issues and priorities
- feature Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research outcomes in ARC communications
- ensure engagement by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in peer review and evaluation processes
- promote funding options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers under the NCGP, including the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme, with the aim of achieving population parity participation rates
- monitor the efficacy of funding and assessment mechanisms to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers at all career stages
- participate in policy development and discussions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and priorities
- analyse and report NCGP funding outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research.

Implementation

The ARC has implemented a range of initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, research students and research.

National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP)

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research can be funded under all NCGP schemes.

Targeted funding

- The *Discovery Indigenous* scheme exclusively funds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research students. Funding is provided through Administering Organisations for:
 - projects in any discipline, undertaken by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander researcher (Chief Investigator) independently or in collaboration with other researchers, including non-Indigenous researchers
 - Discovery Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards (DAATSIAs), which are awarded in conjunction with a Discovery Indigenous project, at one of five salary levels (commensurate with academic levels A – E) for up to five consecutive years. A project may include one or more DAATSIAs.

- stipends for higher degree by research students
stipends for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander honours students, which are only available under the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme.

Eligibility

- Under the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme projects must be led by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander researcher. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander researcher is defined as a person of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and is accepted as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person by the community in which they live or have lived.
- All Australian universities, the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and AIATSIS are Eligible Organisations for NCGP funding schemes (except Linkage Learned Academies Special Projects and certain Special Research Initiatives where, depending on the initiative, specific eligible organisations may be identified).

Conditions of award

- DAATSIAs may be undertaken part-time, for a period of up to eight years. Fellowship and award recipients, including DAATSIAs, can access parental, recreation and sick leave, and up to twelve months additional leave.
- In exceptional circumstances, a DAATSIA's salary may be used for other purposes to support a project.

Assessment

- The Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) assessment criterion is used in most NCGP schemes to recognise research excellence in the context of diverse career and life opportunities and experiences. ROPE considers a researcher's capacity, productivity and contribution, relative to opportunity and experience, recognising the impact of career interruptions for any reason, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community obligations.
- The ARC promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership of ARC committees.

Research classification and Engagement

- The ARC is committed to implementing the 20 new fields of research for Indigenous studies, included in the revised Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification ([ANZSRC 2020](#)), in future NCGP scheme rounds.
- The ARC features the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, and research undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, in ARC publications including *Making a Difference: Outcomes of ARC supported research*.
- All ARC funded researchers are required to build strategies for enabling collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as applicable, in accordance with the:
 - *The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (2012)

- *The Australia Council for the Arts Indigenous Cultural Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Music, Writing, Visual Arts, Media Arts, and Performing Arts* (2007)
 - *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders* (2018)
 - *Keeping research on track II* (2018)
 - *The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) – updated 2018.
- Under the Linkage Program, the ARC requires Eligible Organisations to partner with other organisations (including industry, Government, and non- profit) which provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to participate on research projects, centres and hubs.
 - The ARC works closely with stakeholders including AIATSIS and Universities Australia on policies and best practice to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Researchers are able to include that they identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person in the personal details section of an application in the Research Management System (RMS). This information is confidential and only reported in a consolidated form. It is an important input to policy development.
- The ARC monitors the funding outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research in each selection round to identify any issues

National Research Evaluations

- The ARC is committed to implementing the 20 new fields of research for Indigenous studies included in [ANZSRC 2020](#), in the next rounds of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and Engagement and Impact (EI) assessments in 2023 and 2024 respectively.
- The new Indigenous studies fields of research will enable organisations to collect and report information and data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori and Pacific Peoples in ways that were not previously possible.
- The EI assessment uses qualitative studies, assessed by an expert panel comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders of research, business and community, to capture the impacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, as well as university support for translating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research into wider impacts. Outcomes from the EI assessment and highly rated impact studies are published in the [ARC Data Portal](#).
- Consultation with representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research community has, and will continue to be, an important and integral part of developing, reviewing and implementing the ERA and EI programs.