

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

PART 1: PRE ARC ACT

THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL HAS A LONG HISTORY – FOUNDED IN 2001 UNDER THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ACT 2001 IT IS DIRECTLY DESCENDED FROM THE 1965 AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH GRANTS COMMITTEE (ARGC).

1965

The Commonwealth Government established the ARGC in 1965 to advise the Minister on the merit of applications for research funding from individuals and teams and suggest the allocation of funds. The

Committee made recommendations from an available budget on Commonwealth funding support of research proposals which had been developed and submitted by university researchers around the country. This was called the Australian Research Grants scheme, later known as the Large Research Grants Scheme and predecessor of today's *Discovery Projects* scheme. In the first funding round in 1966 there were 406 successful applicants who received a total of \$3.99 million.

1988

The Federal Government's White Paper – Higher Education: a policy statement, July 1988 – heralded the creation of a unified national system of institutions, educational profiles. The National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) was established as an advisory body with the role of providing coordinated independent advice to the Minister

The ARC was established as one of 4 constituent councils of NBEET. The role of the ARC was to provide both research funding and research policy advice, with a major responsibility for research carried out in the higher education sector. The ARC became responsible for various research support schemes previously administered by the ARGC and CTEC.

2001

The ARC became an independent body on 1 July 2001 under its own legislation, the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*, with a broader range of advisory functions and full administrative responsibility for the assessment of grant applications.

1946

The Commonwealth Universities Research Grants Committee was established in 1946. It was initially constituted as an Interdepartmental Committee chaired by the Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education. The Committee had responsibility for advising on the allocation of Commonwealth research funds.

1974

In 1974 the Commonwealth assumed full responsibility for funding higher education. This led to the establishment of Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC), which had an advisory role and responsibility for allocating government funding among universities. In 1982 the Special Research Centres program commenced when CTEC established 10 centres of excellence in higher education institutions. In 1985 the Key Centres of Teaching and Research program commenced with the establishment of seven centres. The current *ARC Centres of Excellence* scheme has its origins in these earlier programs.

1996

When NBEET was abolished in 1996 most of its councils were wound down. Legislation to effect the abolition was not passed until March 2000. The ARC continued to operate throughout this time, as its functions included direct responsibility for funding advice and elements of program administration.