

ARC

# Australian Research Council Strategy 2022-2025



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council





# A message from our CEO

**The Australian Research Council (ARC)** is a vital component of Australia's innovation and research system. We play an integral role in supporting the research sector to produce high-quality and impactful research through the delivery of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). Our broader remit includes the provision of high-quality research policy advice, overseeing the Australian research ethics and integrity framework, the national university research assessment system that promotes excellence in research and its engagement and impact, powerful data assets, and our role in fostering research quality, translation and impact. We are the only Commonwealth research funding body that supports non-medical basic research.

The Australian Government's commitment to delivering the Uluru Statement from the Heart adds significant weight to our collaborative work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, industry partners and the broader research community. Indigenous studies is now incorporated as its own disciplinary field within the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification in 2020 and within the ARC's two national research evaluation programs – Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and the Engagement and Impact (EI) assessment. We will continue to work with universities and researchers to increase the profile of Indigenous research by recognising the contribution Indigenous studies makes to the quality, engagement and impact of research in Australia.

We support the highest-quality fundamental and applied research and research training and encourage national competition across all disciplines outside of clinical and other medical research. An economic impact study commissioned by Universities Australia found that each dollar spent on university research and development over the past 30 years grew Australia's GDP by around \$5 in present value terms. We therefore have a critical role in providing ongoing investment in university research to continue to encourage the adoption and translation of that knowledge, increase its impact and achieve greater national benefit for Australia.

Despite a strong track-record over our 21 years as an agency, the past few years have heralded a need for reform and a time of transition as we respond to challenges in our strategic positioning, the evolution of the research sector and changing expectations. This strategy presents an exciting opportunity to transform the organisation, reset our relationships, and build a stronger future together.

Between 2022-2025, we will deliver a refreshed approach to helping shape the Australian research system that delivers better outcomes for the research community and government. Our strategic priorities: World Class Advice and Engagement; Research System Excellence; and Empowered People; are designed to build trust in our operations, our advice and our people.

To underpin this we will increase our engagement with researchers and the university sector, with companies engaged in research, with government departments and agencies, and with research end-users with the aim of working together to identify opportunities for change, improvement and increased impact.

The newly designated ARC Advisory Committee comprises leaders from across universities, industry, and government, and is providing us with high-quality advice and insight on our strategic agenda and functions, under the guidance of the independent Chair, Professor Chris Moran. I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee to improve governance, drive reform, and maximise the benefits of ARC-funded research for all Australians.

The strength of our outstanding College of Experts and the thousands of assessors who support our excellent peer review assessment remain critical to achieving our strategy and we will continue to partner with them to deliver our funding programs, while seeking to improve our support to them. Internationally, we will strengthen our relationships with key international research agencies and stakeholders within the global research system for mutual learning and benefit. Our aim remains to have a world-leading assessment process that ensures we are investing in the highest-quality research and maximising impact for the benefit of Australia.

The Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, announced a Legislative Review of the ARC in July 2022, which will build on this work. I look forward to contributing to the Review and continuing to work with the Australian Government and the research sector to help shape the Australian research environment and maximise the impact of public investment in Australia's university sector.

Our vision to support world-class research and innovation for the advancement of Australian society will remain at the forefront of our strategic thinking and actions. We look forward to working with all our partners and stakeholders to implement this strategy.

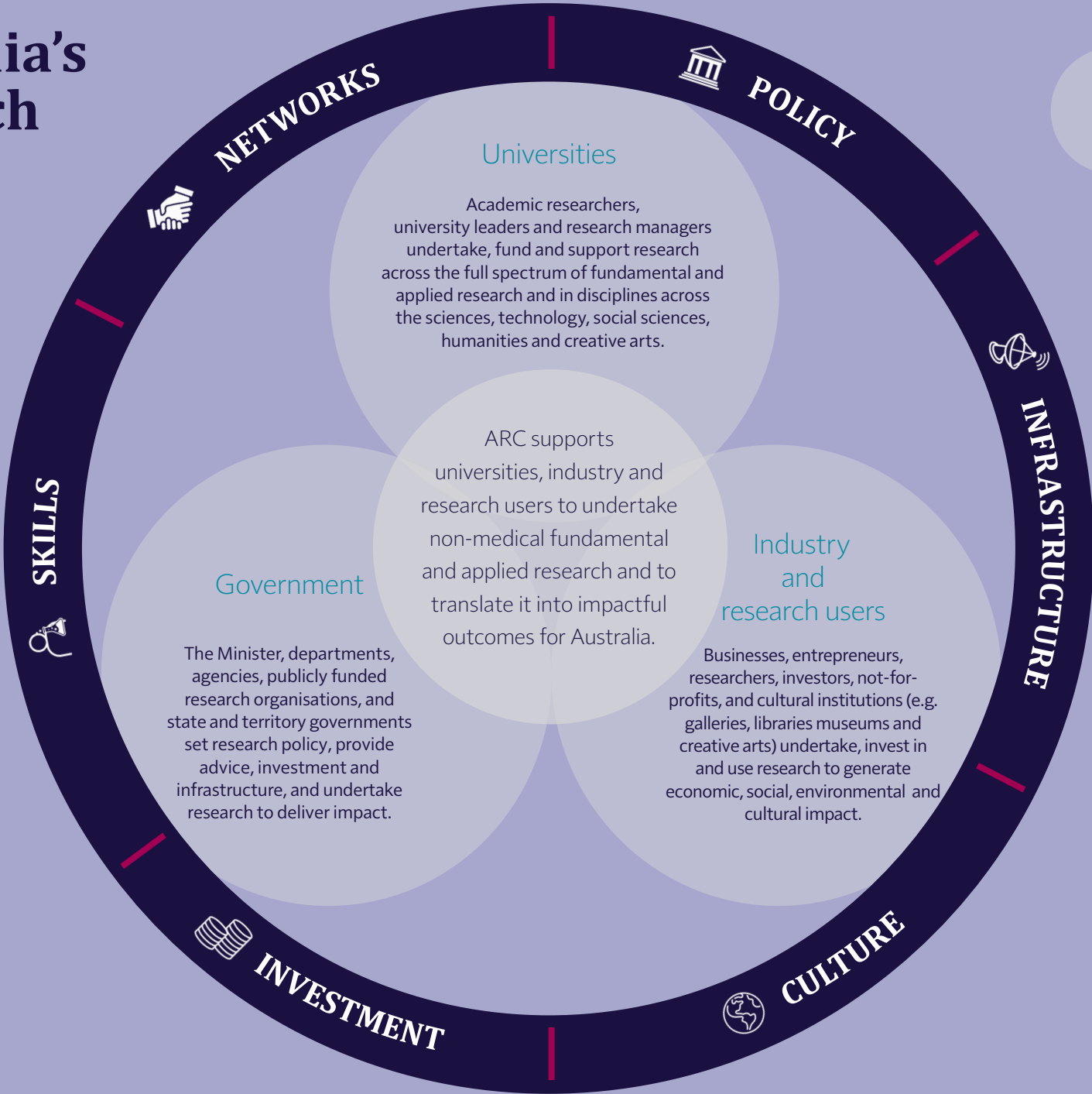


**Ms Judith Zielke PSM**  
Chief Executive Officer





# Australia's research system





# Our operating environment

## Partners

We work alongside many other actors to help shape Australian research, including:

**Universities and researchers** | We work closely with Australian universities and researchers to fund excellent fundamental and applied research.

**Industry** | Australian businesses and industry associations work with us to identify opportunities for innovation and encourage the transfer of skills, knowledge, and ideas into commercial applications and real-world benefits.

**Other research users** | Our programs work alongside cultural institutions, not-for-profits, and social and environmental groups to support research that best serves the interests of the Australian community.

**Government entities** | We work together with a range of government agencies to provide high-quality research advice to the Australian Government and translate the impact and national benefit of the research.

## ARC research focus

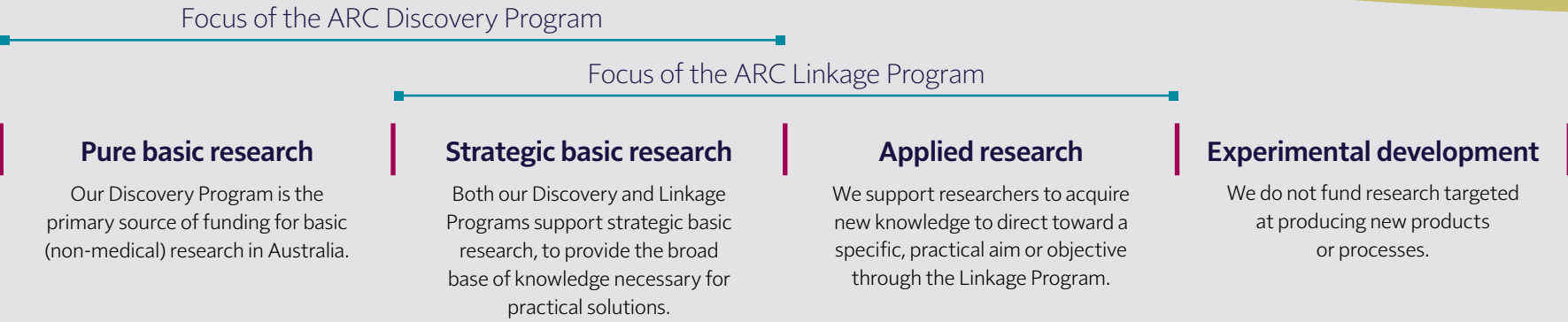
The ARC supports the full spectrum of research from basic to applied research across the HASS and STEM disciplines.

We play a crucial role funding blue-sky research, with about 60 per cent of our funding distributed through the Discovery Program. This funding is critical to building Australia’s foundational research and underpins the fundamental need for the advancement of knowledge. Our Discovery Indigenous scheme provides about \$7 million each year to support Indigenous researchers and their research.

The Linkage Program aligns with the government’s priority focus on the adoption, translation and commercialisation of research. This program represents about 40 per cent of our funding, which aims to achieve major social, economic, and cultural benefit for Australia.



## Research type and ARC role



For research type see Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-research-classification-anzsrc/latest-release>



# Our identity

The ARC’s role within our operating environment is broader than funding research, and continues to evolve. We are known for our high-quality grant administration, research policy advice, powerful data assets, and role in fostering research quality, translation, impact, and integrity.

What is our purpose?  
To help shape the Australian research system for the benefit of the nation by enabling world-leading research, fostering research quality, translation and impact, and safeguarding research integrity.

What enables us to do it?

## Harnessing expertise

We leverage the wealth of expertise available in the research community and our team, including our expert committees and assessors to support the advancement of knowledge and innovation.

## Leveraging powerful data assets

We use our data, expertise, and other sources to inform research policy advice to the Australian Government and inform the community on trends in the research sector.

## Building relationships

We build national and international relationships with universities, industry and other research users, and government to support our goals.

What do we do?



### We fund high quality, impactful research

We fund research through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) based on rigorous peer review assessment of grant applications.



### We assess quality, engagement, and impact

We assess the quality, engagement and impact of Australia’s university research through our Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and Engagement and Impact (EI) assessments.



### We safeguard research integrity

Together with the National Health and Medical Research Council we safeguard the integrity and credibility of Australian research, including through a framework of policies, processes and reviews.



### We provide grant services

We provide advice and support on program design and research grants administration to other government entities through our Research Grants Services.



### We advise on Australia’s research

We use our datasets, stakeholder relationships, and rigorous processes to position us to advise government and other stakeholders on the Australian research system.





# Our ambition

This strategy sets the vision for the ARC to 2030 and provides the key strategic priorities for the next three years to enable our vision. Between 2022-2025, we will deliver a refreshed approach to helping shape the Australian research system that delivers better outcomes for the research community and government.

## Our vision

World-class research and innovation for the advancement of Australian society.

## Our purpose

To help shape the Australian research system for the benefit of the nation by enabling world-leading research, fostering research quality, translation and impact, and safeguarding research integrity.

## Strategic priorities

### 1. World-class advice and engagement

Our expertise and knowledge of the research system is shared, recognised, and sought out nationally and internationally, enabled by trusted, mutually-beneficial relationships with a wide and influential network.

### 2. Research system excellence

Our streamlined grants programs and processes, world-class data assets and national assessments enable the research system to continuously improve, and ensure Australia remains a leader in research quality, excellence and impact.

### 3. Empowered people

Our workforce has the skills and capabilities essential for the future and operates within a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement with a strong focus on excellent service delivery.

## Strategic priority 1

Our ability to engage with and inform the research agenda depends on our reputation in core areas of responsibility.

By using expertise and know-how to build our reputation and networks, we will strengthen our position as a trusted source of intelligence, advice and connection.

### Initiative 1.1: Build the ARC to be a trusted source of intelligence, advice and connection across the research system.

We will increase our visibility within government and within the research community to improve the advice and expertise we provide.

Our ambition:

- Government agencies and leaders within the Australian research system look to the ARC for guidance on research policy and advice on matters of priority for the research system.
- We build our data capability to provide business intelligence for industry stakeholders to find opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

### Initiative 1.2: Meet the needs of the research community through strategic engagement and collaboration.

The research community expects the ARC to engage with them on its areas of focus. We will engage strategically with our partners to listen to their needs and provide ongoing opportunities for feedback.

Our ambition:

- Our value is widely and consistently understood by members of the research system.
- The research community has regular opportunities to provide feedback and insights on our programs, to share mutual ideas, and to identify new areas of focus with each other.
- We have strong relationships with key international research agencies and stakeholders within the global research system for mutual learning and benefit.

**Initiative 2.1: Position the ARC to be a recognised leader in research grants administration and assessment.**

The ARC is dedicated to the ongoing excellence of the Australian research system. We will use our expertise, data, and networks to improve our research grants administration, assessment and performance.

Our ambition:

- Our research grants administration and assessment processes are informed and continuously improved by the emerging needs of the research system.
- Our expertise in research grants administration is recognised by the research community and is sought out by other government agencies.
- We maintain close working relationships with the domestic and international research community to adopt and learn from best practice in research grants administration and assessment.

**Initiative 2.2: Strengthen Australia's research system through high-quality, data-driven national research assessments.**

The ARC collects data, undertakes world-class analysis and tracks performance to empower the Australian research system to continuously improve.

Our ambition:

- We are known for our data-driven analysis on the performance of Australian research.
- We ensure the impact and performance metrics we develop are used to inform continuous improvement in research performance.
- We identify and provide opportunities to advance Australia's research system in areas of national priority and significance.



**Initiative 3.1: Empower our expert people to prepare us for the future.**

Our workforce is our most important asset and critical to our success. We will strengthen the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge of our people. We will attract, retain, and foster diverse talent to ensure our people continue to thrive and succeed.

Our ambition:

- Our people have the required skills and capabilities needed to deliver our purpose and are empowered to build a rich and rewarding career.
- We have the diversity of people, skills, and ideas needed to build a high-performing workforce.
- Talented people seek out the ARC for its rich working environment and the opportunities available.
- We recruit talent to fill gaps in the workforce and supplement our capability.

**Initiative 3.2: Develop a world-leading culture of collaboration, partnership and service.**

The ARC's collaborative and service culture mindset underpins our ability to support the research system. We will strengthen this mindset to build a culture that continues to support partners and stakeholders to succeed.

Our ambition:

- We have a clear focus on providing excellent service to our stakeholders and continue to provide high-quality guidance and information.
- We enable our people to better service, guide and support our expert committees and assessors.
- Our people collaborate and share ideas within and external to the ARC to achieve our purpose.
- Our resources are focused on the areas of highest priority.





# Implementing our strategy – our activities

The activities that will deliver our strategy are outlined below. The measures of success for these will be articulated in the Corporate Plan.

## Strategic priority 1

**Initiative 1.1** – Build the ARC to be a trusted source of intelligence, advice and connection across the research system.

- 1.1.1: Increase strategic engagement with key government agencies.
- 1.1.2: Establish and maintain strategic engagement with like-minded agencies internationally to share experiences, trends, and best practice approaches.
- 1.1.3: Establish a data strategy and service unit to identify, analyse and share the value from ARC and other data sets across government.

**Initiative 1.2** – Meet the needs of the research community through strategic engagement and collaboration.

- 1.2.1: Increase regular strategic engagement with the research sector, including universities, researchers, industry and other research users.
- 1.2.2: Collaborate with the research sector to better communicate the national interest in all projects and assist with the translation of research.
- 1.2.3: Leverage the new data service unit to identify, analyse and share the value from ARC and other data sets for universities, researchers, industry and research users.
- 1.2.4: Continue to work with universities and other stakeholders to safeguard the integrity and credibility of Australian research.

## Strategic priority 2

**Initiative 2.1** – Position the ARC to be a recognised leader in research grants administration and assessment.

- 2.1.1: Promote the ARC’s research grants administration expertise and services, including through the provision of Research Grants Services.
- 2.1.2: Complete the NCGP process review, and work with the research sector to implement enhanced processes and procedures.
- 2.1.3: Ensure ARC grant activities support participation by all researchers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, women researchers and early and mid-career researchers.
- 2.1.4: Leverage our strategic engagements to ensure our research grants administration and assessments are responsive to the needs of the research system, and support a more diverse research workforce.

**Initiative 2.2** – Strengthen Australia’s research system through high-quality data-driven national research assessments.

- 2.2.1: Increase avenues for strategic engagement with the research community to strengthen criteria to measure impact and excellence.
- 2.2.2: Implement outcomes of the review of ERA and EI by transitioning the assessments to a more modern, data driven approach informed by expert review.
- 2.2.3: Ensure ARC research assessments and data deliver information to support a more diverse research sector, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, women researchers and early and mid-career researchers.

## Strategic priority 3

**Initiative 3.1** – Empower our expert people to prepare us for the future.

- 3.1.1: Develop a workforce strategy including current and emerging capability requirements, to ensure we are ready to meet future capability needs.
- 3.1.2: Refresh the service charter and implement annual stakeholder satisfaction surveys.

**Initiative 3.2** – Develop a world-leading culture of collaboration, partnership and service.

- 3.2.1: Develop an organisational plan that shapes and actively embeds a collaborative and service-oriented culture to be flexible and responsive to the needs of our stakeholders.
- 3.2.2: Promote opportunities for ARC staff to learn from and gain experience with the research community.

Australian Research Council

ISBN 978-0-6453208-8-6

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