



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers

ARC Statement of Support and
Action Plan 2017

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The Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity within the Australian Government. Its mission is to deliver policy and programs that advance Australian research and innovation globally and benefit the community.

The ARC funds research and researchers under the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). The NCGP consists of two elements—Discovery and Linkage. Within these elements are a range of schemes structured to provide a pathway of incentives for researchers to build the scope and scale of their work and collaborative partnerships. The majority of funding decisions under the NCGP are made on the basis of peer review.

The ARC also evaluates the quality of research being undertaken in higher education institutions through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) program. This is aimed at identifying research excellence in Australian higher education institutions by comparing Australia's research effort against international benchmarks. ERA assesses quality using a combination of indicators and expert review by research evaluation committees.

ARC support

The ARC supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers through the research funding schemes of the NCGP. NCGP funding is awarded across all disciplines for research projects, fellowships, awards, centres and hubs and is predicated on research excellence.

In line with the principles outlined in the ARC Research Workforce Statement, the ARC supports researchers from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities and seeks to ensure that all eligible researchers have the opportunity to participate in its funding schemes. The ARC recognises the importance of 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.

Encouraging broad participation, including through targeted funding schemes is a priority for the ARC to ensure that outstanding researchers have the opportunity to contribute to Australia's research and innovation goals. All proposals submitted to the ARC are assessed against selection criteria for the relevant scheme through a peer review process. Through this process each proposal will be assessed by researchers with expertise in the nominated field of research.

The ARC draws on the diversity and experience of the ARC Advisory Council, the ARC College of Experts, selection advisory committee members, 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.

Initiatives in place

In support of its commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers, the ARC has the following initiatives in place:

Targeted funding

- The *Discovery Indigenous* scheme provides funding to Administering Organisations to support research projects in any discipline, led by an Indigenous Australian researcher, independently or in collaboration with others, including non-Indigenous researchers.
- Under the scheme, a Discovery Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award (DAATSIA) may be awarded in conjunction with a Discovery Indigenous project. The Award provides salary support, at one of five salary levels, commensurate with Levels A to E appointments for one to five years, for an eligible Indigenous Australian researcher.
- Funding is provided to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher degree by research students, early career researchers and, uniquely under the NCGP, to support honours students; recognising the importance of building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the research workforce and research capacity.
- For the purposes of the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme-specific funding rules an Indigenous Australian means 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.
- In 2012, the ARC funded the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) under the *Special Research Initiatives* scheme—the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Researchers' Network (ATSIRN).

Eligibility

- In addition to the full cohort of Australian universities; AIATSIS and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education are both Eligible Organisations under all 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).

Engagement

- The ARC highlights outcomes arising from ARC-funded research, including the outcomes and achievements of ARC-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and their research.
- The ARC requires all applicants for the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme, where relevant to the project, to build strategies for enabling collaboration with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where appropriate (for example, dialogue / collaboration with an Indigenous cultural mentor) as part of their research.
- Under the Linkage Program schemes, the ARC requires eligible organisations, including universities 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.

Conditions of Award

- Eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers may, through an eligible organisation, apply for funding under all NCGP funding schemes.
- The *Discovery Indigenous* scheme includes provision for part-time employment of DAATSIA recipients and use of DAATSIA funding for other purposes to support a project in changed circumstances.
- Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) is used as a selection criterion to recognise research excellence in the context of the diversity of career and life experiences.

Monitoring/reporting

- From 2015, to help the ARC monitor participation across all NCGP schemes, researchers have been offered the opportunity to identify their Indigenous status in the personal details section in RMS. This information is confidential and only reported in a consolidated form. It is an important input to policy development.

Actions 2017

In 2017 the ARC will:

- provide information on its website about the ARC's initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers
- review NCGP support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and research (including through a general consultation)
- ensure, where possible, ARC committees including the ARC College of Experts and the ARC Advisory Council, include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members
- encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to participate as ARC assessors
- continue to highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers' achievements and research outcomes in ARC publications
- continue to liaise with relevant groups including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) and AIATSIS and, where appropriate, provide input into Indigenous higher education and research policies
- monitor the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers under NCGP schemes, including the *Discovery Indigenous* scheme, to ensure currency with the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and identify any opportunities to improve policies and programs.
- monitor, analyse and report funding outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers across NCGP schemes on the ARC website.

Further information

Further supporting documentation can be found on the ARC website and includes the ARC Research Workforce Statement.

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