



The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

Reference: MS25-000419

Professor Peter Shergold AC
Chair
Australian Research Council Board
GPO Box 2702
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By email: boardchair@arc.gov.au

Dear Professor Shergold

I am writing to outline my expectations for the Australian Research Council (ARC). I expect the ARC to support research that benefits all Australians through supporting Australian universities to deliver excellent research, for Australia's economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit.

I recognise work being undertaken by the ARC Board, and all ARC staff, to appropriately reshape the institution following the 2024 amendments to the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (the Act). Good progress has been made, and there is more work to do.

The highest priority of the Australian Government is to keep Australians safe. Achieving this relies on the contributions of the Australian research community, including the ARC. I expect ARC-supported activities to advance, and not compromise, Australia's security, defence and international relations. I expect the ARC, working with the Department of Education, to provide proactive advice on the potential exercise of powers under the Act relating to these matters, including in relation to existing grants, informed by consultation with relevant Australian Government security agencies

I expect the ARC to focus on addressing threats of espionage and foreign interference affecting Australia's research sector. This includes continually improving processes to identify and assess risks relating to prospective and existing funding decisions made by, or administered by, the ARC. I also expect the ARC to ensure applicants seeking ARC funding are informed of their obligations under Australian law.

I encourage the ARC to support research that supports our inclusive national identity built around our shared values including democracy, the rule of law, basic freedoms and the fair go. In making decisions about grant applications, I expect the ARC Board to have strong regard for relevant hate speech and anti-discrimination laws, including applicant's past compliance with these obligations

In exercising its statutory functions, I expect the ARC to have regard to the Australian Government's National Science Statement and Priorities:

- **Transitioning to a net zero future** – to develop and adopt next generation technologies, particularly in clean energy and storage, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, quantum and robotics.

- **Supporting healthy and thriving communities** – so more Australians can enjoy healthier lives from birth well into old age.
- **Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems** – to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people particularly to have more of a say in advancing research that affects them.
- **Protecting and restoring Australia’s environment** – to mitigate the impacts of climate change and protect our biodiversity, diverse landscapes and ecosystems.
- **Building a secure and resilient nation** – to strengthen our democratic institutions while addressing economic, social, geopolitical, defence and national security challenges.

The recent policy review of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) provides the basis for changes to the fundamental settings and design of Australia’s flagship competitive research grants program. I expect the ARC to implement changes to the NCGP as a priority to ensure it aligns with the policy review’s recommendations.

I ask that the ARC prioritise the design of a new approach to evaluate the excellence, impact and depth of Australian university research. This work should culminate in options for my decision, to be provided together with supporting policy advice from the Department of Education. The proposed approach should align with the policy intent of Recommendation 29 in the *Australian Universities Accord Final Report*.

The current ARC Strategy concluded at the end of 2025. I acknowledge the work underway to develop a new Strategy setting out a vision for the ARC and ask the ARC Board to finalise it as soon as practicable, following consultation with the Department of Education.

To ensure the ARC’s continued effective operation, I ask the ARC Board to carefully manage operating expenses, including by identifying opportunities to reduce duplication and share resources with the Department of Education and other research funders. I expect the ARC to ensure Australians receive value for money across all its activities, including the administration of research grants.

I ask that you publish this letter, along with a response in the form of a Statement of Intent from the ARC Board, on the ARC website.

Yours sincerely



JASON CLARE

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