

IN-CONFIDENCE

FT220100427

Arab/Muslim Australian Social Movements since the 1970s: a hidden history

Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah

Admin Organisation

Macquarie University

This project will be the first study of a neglected but constitutive part of Australia's social movement history: Arab/Muslim Australian social justice activism. It aims to recover previously untapped oral histories and rare archival collections of Arab/Muslim Australian activists working in anti-racism, anti-war and feminist social movements from the 1970s to date. Expected outcomes include new knowledge about how this activist community has struggled against external systems and internal conflicts to build a socially just future in multicultural Australia. Anticipated social and cultural benefits include a greater understanding of the transformative act of communities whose movement work is often relegated to the margins.

Rank and Score Data

Assessor	Rank*	Total Accepted	Score	Investigator/ Capability	Project Quality and Innovation	Benefit	Feasibility and Strategic Alignment
- General (Carriage 1)	13 of 47	47	B	B	A	A	A
- General	6 of 51	51	B	B	B	A	A
- General	8 of 40	40	B	B	B	A	A
(A) - Detailed	1 of 2	2	A	A	A	A	A
(B) - Detailed	1 of 1	1	C	C	B	B	B

* Assessment Rank of Total Assessments Ready for Submission or Submitted

Budget Requested by Applicants

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
\$223,489	\$223,227	\$223,251	\$220,968

Requested Fellowship Salary

Participant name	Type	FT Level	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah	Future Fellowship	Level 1	\$163,598	\$163,598	\$163,598

Participant name	Type	FT Level	Year 4
Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah	Future Fellowship	Level 1	\$163,598

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Arab/Muslim Australian Social Movements since the 1970s: a hidden history**Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah****Detailed Assessment (A):****Assessor Comments****Investigator/Capability****Score: A**

The Investigator is an extraordinary example of a public facing academic engaged with some of the most critical issues facing Australia. She is a well known and respected name in academic circles. Her work is very highly regarded, and she has a reputation in the public and creative spheres as well, and as a scholar-activist. Her work explores the nature and experience of marginality, among Muslims particularly, and how this can produce creativity, resistance and agency. She has also focused on intersectionality, recognising that such categories are complex, multifaceted and intersecting. Her work on Islamophobia not only has reached a receptive academic audience, but also is valued by the communities. Abdel-Fattah also has a growing international reputation, with invited talks at a range of universities and elsewhere, including the highly subscribed 'Doha Debates', and she is an acknowledged leader in the Arab community internationally; and a significant media presence. She has won or been nominated for a range of literary prizes, and is a recognised media commentator, taking a sociological perspective to the wider community. She has published a number of academic papers (although perhaps not as many as might be expected) and books, and also writes op eds (14 in the last 6 years). Most unusually, her insights are used in novels and other creative outputs, particularly for children and young adults, translating scholarly understandings into formats that reach wider audiences.

She has excellent links to the Muslim community, and is an active mentor of students and postgraduates.

Her citations are not as high as would be expected, perhaps due to the somewhat low number of outputs, their recency, the fact some outputs are books which tend to have lower citations than papers, and the non-traditional outputs which may be read but not referenced. There have also been some periods of unemployment and career breaks - the FT would secure her academic future, and we need more academics like Randa.

Overall this is an extremely capable researcher with an unusual ability to reach a much wider audience than most. Her insights are powerful and valuable as an alternate voice, and her topic will raise awareness of such contributions of alternative voices over the last few decades.

Project Quality and Innovation**Score: A**

The project builds a neglected area of research - 'diaspora activism' focusing on social movements. This innovative research question offers significant insight into the local and transnational political activities of migrants. The CI argues for the importance of this at the current juncture, given intersectional identities and global consciousness can only be understood through such studies.

The CI is aware of the complexity of the topic, of types of activism and topics of action, of internal conflicts and differences of orientation. It engages aging activists from the 1970s, as well as considering praxis of third and fourth generation Arab/Muslim Australians in activism.

It involves international collaborations with the US, Turkey and the UK. It would be useful to have included more Arab countries for comparison. The project provides for significant development of international links.

The project involves creative and capacity building components, such as the writing workshops. It builds a digital archive and exhibition, and undertakes interviews, focus groups, autoethnography, writing workshops and archival research.

Analysis of the original archival material will be a significant contribution to knowledge, as well as retaining it in a repository. It is interesting theoretically in asking how secular knowledge and practice is engaged with by Arab/Muslim activists; as well as extending understandings of non-white social movements and their impact on mainstream activism. I would have liked to see a stronger theoretical framework. The project clearly outlines two PhD/Masters sub projects directly aligned with the FT.

Given the accessibility of zoom etc, limiting the interviews to NSW and Vic privileges these states and excludes others. Might it be possible to include a few from Qld, NT and WA for example?

Outputs are appropriate, with academic, creative and applied outcomes. The public facing activities will bring awareness to the wider population, and be a source of pride from the communities. Perhaps a policy document might be of use?

The budget is appropriate.

It's a brilliant project

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Arab/Muslim Australian Social Movements since the 1970s: a hidden history**Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah****Benefit****Score: A**

The benefit of the project lies in its potential to challenge assumptions about Arab/Muslims Australians as a) a new community b) a ghettoed and inert community c) a conservative and fundamentally unequal and unjust community. It will generate knowledge about their anti-racism, anti-war and feminist activism since the 1970s, and offer digital and public resources to record and display this history. It also challenges the assumption that activist solidarity is a white phenomenon. As such it challenges dominant histories of social movements, and benefits the community(ies) through positive self-representation and public voice, and Australia as a multicultural nation by providing evidence of migrant contributions in not just the economic sphere but the social, political and cultural, and particularly in relation to working towards justice.

At an individual level, it provides an excellent mid career scholar with an opportunity to focus on important research.

Feasibility and Strategic Alignment**Score: A**

The CI has a significant background in the topic, relevant connections, access to archival and other materials, experience with the methods, and a supportive research environment.

Macquarie has some great people, and the CI obviously has a strong network of existing staff to support and mentor her, particularly Amanda Wise and others. She also has significant support outside of the institution (eg Hage). The institutional environment supports this research area, in terms of research priorities as well as materially. The letter of support from the university demonstrates the outstanding contribution Abdel-Fattah has made, and its commitment to the research. This is also evident in their commitment of \$50k to support the project, as well as HDR scholarships. It is a very strong environment, that will offer great support.

Total Calculated Weighted Score: A

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Arab/Muslim Australian Social Movements since the 1970s: a hidden history**Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah****Detailed Assessment (B):****Assessor Comments****Investigator/Capability****Score: C**

Dr Abdel-Fattah has had career interruptions totalling 1 year and 6.5 months linked to parental leave since November 2016. She was awarded a DECRA, which commenced in 2018 and was impacted by the aforementioned parental responsibilities, necessitating working part time for some of this.

The applicant has limited scholarly research outputs in high quality academic outlets, with two books, one with Routledge (international) and one with NewSouth (local) and six articles in Scimago Q1 or Q2 outlets. The applicant also has one book chapter in an established academic press (Routledge).

The applicant has worked in a collegial and supportive research environment, with excellent mentorship from a wide body of well-respected scholars. In turn, Dr Abdel-Fattah has is an associate supervisor to one student who has not yet completed. The applicant mentors two other students through an ISRA mentoring project and others in an informal capacity.

Dr Abdel-Fattah has had limited opportunity to demonstrate leadership capability in a university research environment, which may be due to the aforementioned career interruptions. Supervision and mentoring, combined with near completion of the DECRA demonstrate significant potential for future leadership.

Dr Abdel-Fattah has an expansive wider body of published work, including 'creative work', across fiction outlets and media commentary. Dr Abdel-Fattah has one academic work that has been shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award non-fiction category. This is not a strictly scholarly prize (many of the panel are not research scholars), though demonstrates national standing and contribution to national debates.

The applicant is well networked nationally and internationally and in a good position to build collaborations with other research organisations and disciplines.

Project Quality and Innovation**Score: B**

The proposed research is original and innovative, insofar as significantly more work is required to explore activism across Australia's diverse communities and to understand the role that this plays in shaping Australia's democratic institutions and culture. The aim to explore more the work and activism of Australian feminists of colour is particularly promising. The applicant has deep lived experience of these contexts and could bring this, and an intersectional framework to the fore in shaping an intellectually substantive and important research agenda with important implications for Australian democracy.

Some dimensions of the project, from a conceptual level, are problematic.

The scholar / activist dimension is posited as a strength of the research, yet belies deep seated issues with the frame. Nowhere in the application does the author critically engage with researcher bias or reflexivity in relation to the subjects and topic. The immediate and deep impact of this in shaping the research is clear when for example, the author refers pejoratively to 'moderate' activists and 'white heroics'. I am aware this is embedded a certain literature and critical race studies approach, but without adequate critical introspection, it will arguably lead to pre-determined framing of the research subjects and analysis, many of whom will not self-consciously locate themselves in this frame. And if they do identify in some capacity as 'moderate', it belies a lack of willingness to be prepared to engage with this self-perception to create new knowledge.

Another significant issue for the proposed research is the failure, as a sociology scholar, to delve anywhere near adequately with the very significant body of sociological research on, with and by Australian Muslim scholars about lived experience, citizenship and resistance and activism. Even if critical of this work, it has to be considered and engaged with. It is not clear if this is a conscious choice to exclude this literature or a lack of embeddedness in the field. Consequently the proposed research would be free floating and would not likely make a significant impact within the discipline.

It also also important to note the lack of track record of the author with the primary theoretical frame employed, that of social movement theory. This does not prevent innovative research, but it may lessen project quality.

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Arab/Muslim Australian Social Movements since the 1970s: a hidden history**Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah****Benefit****Score: B**

More work is required understand the complex evolution of activism in Australia's diverse communities and how this shapes wider Australian institutions. This includes projects grounded in intersectionality of race, religion, class and gender amongst others that shape the societal conversation about belonging – and resistance.

In a climate currently shaped by significant social and economic flux, the proposed project, if calibrated effectively, could offer important new knowledge about diversity and Australia multiculturalism. These are primarily social and cultural benefits, with longer term economic outcomes linked to the strengths of Australian multiculturalism.

Feasibility and Strategic Alignment**Score: B**

The proposal seeks to achieve impact, much of this through community focused outputs. The cost appears to be proportional to these achieving these outputs.

Dr Abdel-Fattah is situated in an excellent research context and would continue to benefit from mentorship by senior scholars. The support and facilities available are excellent.

Those elements of the research that may involve engagement with indigenous Australians are very well grounded in pre-existing high quality relationships with key individuals.

Total Calculated Weighted Score: C

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Arab/Muslim Australian Social Movements since the 1970s: a hidden history**Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah****Rejoinder for****FT220100427**

A states that this is 'a brilliant project' and B considers it "original and innovative".

Investigator/Capability

Both assessors suggest my number of scholarly outputs is somewhat 'limited' and A notes my citations are lower than expected due to the recency and type of outputs (see p 43-44). My 2021 book, based on the DECRA, was published the year I submitted this proposal. I have published with Routledge 'an established academic press' (B) and am applying for a Future Fellowship 5 years since PhD conferral, the earliest stage of eligibility. Despite this short time and acknowledged career interruptions (A & B), I have a strong track record. I have 25 weighted outputs in 6 years (including 5 points for each of my books and major non-traditional outputs). According to Macquarie University's Arts Faculty Research Productive guidelines, I have an average of over 4 outputs per year, the expected range for a research-productive Level D or E staff member in a research-intensive role (I am Level B). My role as a 'public facing academic engaged with some of the most critical issues facing Australia' (A) must also be considered. A & B commend me for my non-traditional outputs and my 'unusual ability to reach a much wider audience than most' (A), a testament to my commitment to research that benefits audiences beyond the academy, including the various communities I work with (p 8, 39).

B comments I have had limited leadership opportunities in the academy, although acknowledges 'significant potential for future leadership'. My ROPE p 39 outlines my leadership as an academic working with community organisations, students and peers. A notes that I am 'an acknowledged leader in the Arab community internationally'.

Project Quality and Innovation

A suggests including more Arab countries for comparison as well as interviewing activists in states other than NSW and VIC. I will focus on NSW and VIC initially for feasibility reasons and will interview activists in other states as the project progresses. My interviews will also inevitably lead me to collaborate with scholars in Arab countries given the Arab transnational activist focus of the project.

B notes potential for researcher bias or a lack of reflexivity by claiming that I refer 'pejoratively to 'moderate' activists and 'white heroics''. This is a misinterpretation. In D2 (p15), I state that this project will 'help us to rethink dominant histories about social movement activism in Australia by decentring white stories and heroics and bringing into light a neglected dimension of Australia's social movement history ...' I am not minimising white stories and heroics but seeking to shift attention to those of a neglected group of activists. As A acknowledges, this project 'challenges the assumption that activist solidarity is a white phenomenon'. As to the word 'moderate' I use quotation marks not as an attack, but to signal that the word's meaning is contested. This project emerged specifically because of my positionality as an Arab/Muslim scholar-activist engaged in reflexivity and critical introspection on the power dynamics within activist communities. D2 (p8-9) outlines why I consider it essential that activists 'navigating complex social differences' and experiencing 'intra-community tensions and conflicts' reflect on the work needed to 'overcome these fault-lines'.

B questions why I have not engaged more with literature by Australian Muslim scholars about lived experience, citizenship, resistance and activism. I am immersed in this field especially via my PhD and DECRA projects. This project builds on that research but shifts focus to a particular dimension of Arab/Muslim activism, one that A states is 'a neglected area' and B acknowledges requires 'significantly more work'. The literature B refers to adopts different theoretical approaches and conceptual frames, for example focusing on locally-oriented projects enacted in mainstream multicultural activist movements within Australia. Even these projects are rarely studied as 'social movements' in their own right. The strength of this project is that it seeks to fill this gap in social movement studies by focusing on activists whose work 'is often relegated to the margins' (p2, 10). A and B question whether my theoretical framework could be stronger, although B asserts that my 'intersectional framework' will contribute to 'shaping an intellectually substantive and important research agenda with important implications for Australian democracy'. D2 (p 8-9, 11-12) clearly outlines my theoretical contribution: drawing on Black/Indigenous social movement scholarship, feminist literature and critical race theory to build a theory of intersectionality and Arab/Muslim Australian social movement participation. My Project Description and ROPE sections make clear the breadth of my knowledge on these theoretical frameworks and as A notes I have 'a significant background in the topic.'