



MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109 AUSTRALIA
Phone +61 (0)2 9850 8645
Email sakkie.pretorius@mq.edu.au

13 August 2025

Chief Executive Officer
Australian Research Council
Via email to ceo@arc.gov.au

Dear Professor Roessner,

Confidential - Grant FT220100427

Thank you for your letter dated 31 July 2025. I respond as follows to the matters raised in your letter.

Expenditure review

The ARC has requested if it is the University's intention to refund the amount of \$8,598.76 referred to in the EY Report. The University has responsibility under the Agreement for expenditure of the Grant Funds. The University's responsibilities include the obligation to repay the ARC if the expenditure is not in accordance with the Grant Guidelines and terms of the Agreement. As the ARC is aware, Dr Abdel-Fattah also has responsibilities in respect of the expenditure of Grant Funds.

The EY report recommended the University performs further analysis on the 19 transactions identified in the ARC report to understand the reasoning and justifications behind the expenditure. The purpose of this further analysis is to determine if the expenditure of all Grant Funds is in accordance with the Grant Guidelines and the Agreement.

For the reasons outlined [REDACTED] and given the recommendation in the EY report, the University will review the 19 transactions as part of the Preliminary Assessment process. I thank the ARC for its understanding of the University's approach.

Integrity matters – Items C1 to C7

The ARC's letter indicates that multiple parts of Items C1 to C7 do not, of themselves, require the University to investigate or necessarily constitute an allegation by the ARC of a research integrity issue.

Items C1 to C7 relate to potential conflicts of interest that may have been declared before, or arisen during, the conduct of the Activity. Under the Grant Agreement and the ARC's Conflict of

Interest Policy, both the University and Dr Abdel-Fattah have obligations with respect to the identification, declaration and management of any conflicts of interest.

As the ARC noted in [20.a] of its letter dated 12 February 2025, cl A2.2.1 of the Agreement requires the University to ensure “*that the project described in the Grant Offer is implemented in accordance with the ‘Project Description’ ... contained in the application*”. The Project Description includes the following (emphasis added):

*“... The overall aim of this project is to advance the field of social movement scholarship in Australia **through investigating Arab/Muslim intersectional, decolonial, transnational, solidarity activism** ...*

*... The project’s research aims will be realised through a mixed methods approach involving in-depth interviews, focus groups, **autoethnography**, writing workshops and archival research ...*

*... **Given I have been directly engaged in the Arab and Muslim activist space since 1997, my experiential knowledge and lived experiences are a conscious part of my approach to this research. I will therefore use autoethnography ...**”*

The research the ARC funded is based on Dr Abdel-Fattah’s lived experiences as an activist and using a form of participative research. The Project Description identifies the inherent reliance on Dr Abdel-Fattah’s experience as an ongoing part of the ARC research.

The expert Assessors engaged by the ARC before Dr Abdel-Fattah’s grant application was considered by the Selection Advisory Committee noted in their submission to the ARC that Dr Abdel-Fattah’s work as a “scholar-activist” would have both benefits but also presented “deep seated issues with the frame”. These issues raise significant complexity as noted by the expert Assessor and responded to by Dr Abdel-Fattah.

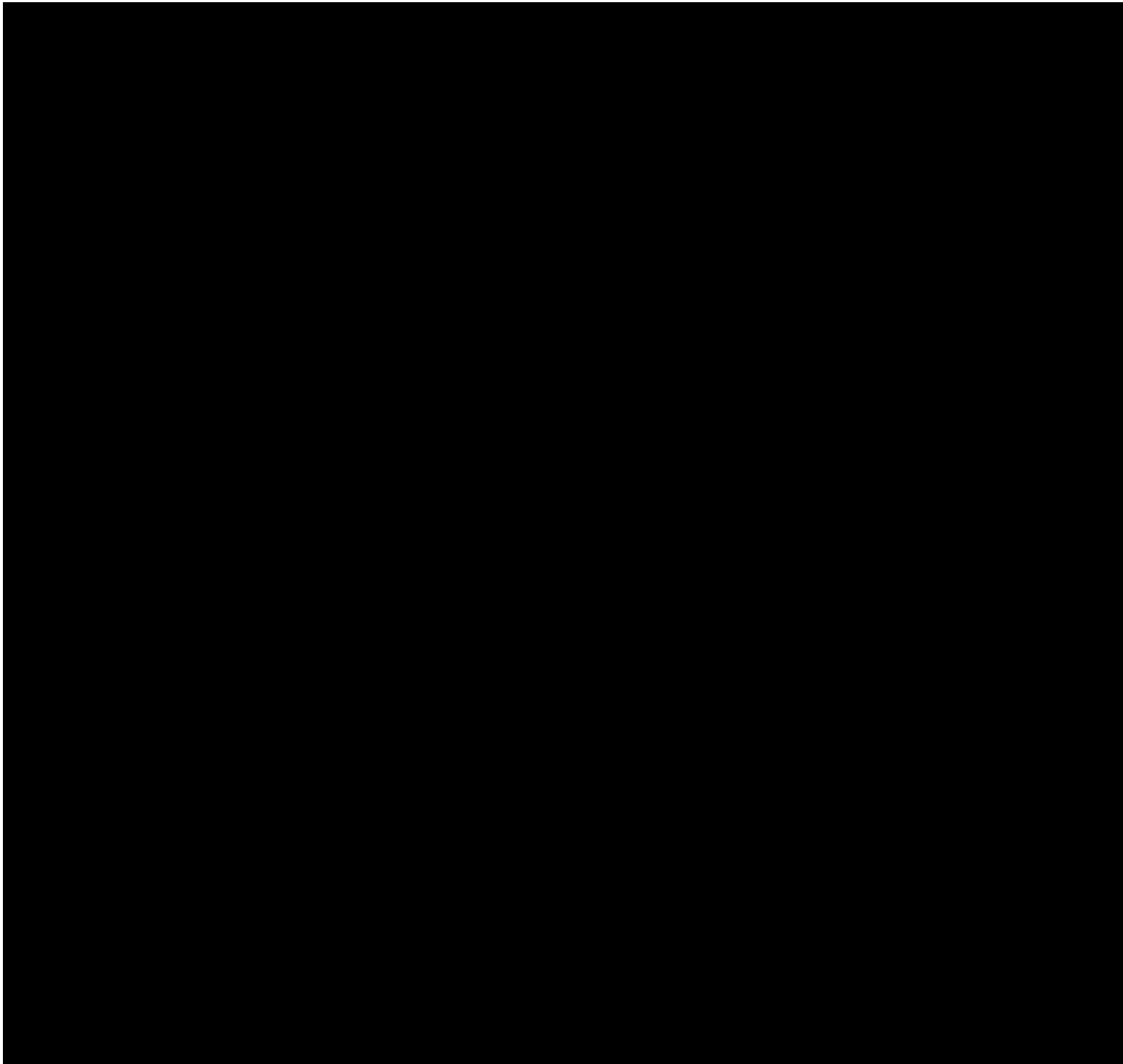
The University’s view is that Items C.1 to C.7 are required to be considered as part of the Preliminary Assessment process currently underway because those items are allegations of a failure to appropriately declare and manage a conflict. While the University wishes to provide the ARC with the information it seeks in its letter dated 31 July 2025, matters involving allegations of research misconduct are required to follow applicable processes and the investigations required by the ARC’s letter of 12 February 2025 enliven those processes.

Accordingly, the Preliminary Assessment will address the ARC’s concerns regarding conflicts of interest as part of its research integrity processes. Subject to this important qualification about the interaction of the Project Description and the ARC’s concerns, the University can advise as follows:

- **Item C.1** – Dr Abdel-Fattah responded “no” in her HREC application in response to whether any member of the research team has any financial or non-financial interests related to this research. The Preliminary Assessment will provide analysis of this issue.

- **Item C.6** – Since the University’s letter dated 2 December 2024, doubts have arisen as to the capacity in which Dr Abdel-Fattah attended the protest at the University of Sydney on 26 April 2024. Consistent with the Project Description as approved and awarded by the ARC, information identified during the preliminary assessment process indicates that Dr Abdel-Fattah attended the protest at the University of Sydney both in a personal capacity and as part of a limited academic outreach exercise. As required in the alternative put in Item C6, the University is considering this issue and the potential for any conflicts of interest as part of the research integrity process currently underway. The Preliminary Assessment will provide analysis of this issue.

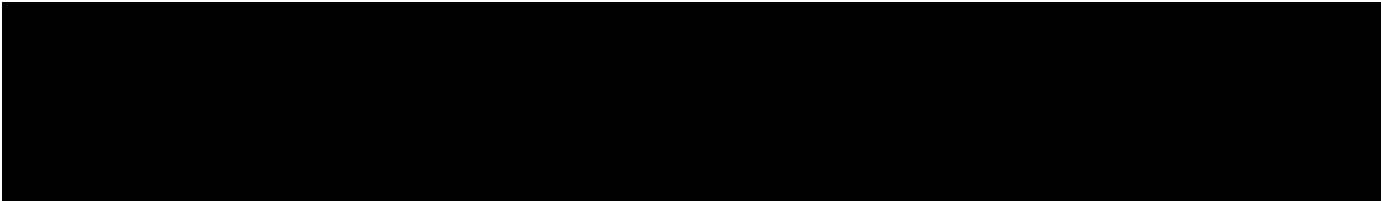
Integrity matters [REDACTED]






Confidentiality of information provided

The University wishes to ensure it meets the ARC's request for information in accordance with its obligation under the Agreement, while also ensuring that it satisfies its obligations to apply appropriate confidentiality to the research integrity process. Confidentiality of the research integrity process is important for ensuring that due process has been applied to that process.



Yours sincerely,



Professor Sakkie Pretorius
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Macquarie University

