



Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

19 January 2024

Dear Secretary,

Re: Australian Research Council Amendment (Review Response) Bill 2023

University of Canberra is pleased to provide a letter to the Committee's Inquiry into the *Australian Research Council Amendment (Review Response) Bill 2023*.

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a primary funder of non-medical research being undertaken by universities and their partner organisations, spanning both basic and applied research. It is the only funding body that explicitly funds discovery or fundamental research.

The Bill is an opportunity to strengthen and clarify purpose, governance, and funding arrangements around this key component of Australia's research landscape.

We refer to the independent review, and final report of, the *Trusting Australia's Ability: Review of the Australian Research Council Act 2001* and its 10 recommendations.

University of Canberra participated in this review and at that time raised the need to:

- clarify the role of the ARC;
- re-establish an ARC board which is *advisory* to the CEO;
- strengthen the role of the CEO;
- consider more effective measurement of research impact and engagement;
- review the National Interest Test and discontinue Ministerial power of veto;
- consider the onerous nature of ARC grant processes;
- investigate models for funding the full cost of research, but only in the context of increased funding being available and not resulting in fewer research projects being funded.

Overall, the University welcomes the final report of the review and the Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the review.

We are a member of the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) and strongly support the position set out in its submission on this important matter. We are a member of Universities Australia and support comments in its submission.

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In considering these amendments to the ARC Act the University recommends that the Senate pass the Bill. However, we echo sector comments to give further attention to precise wording in the legislation to ensure that:

- funding to the ARC is sufficient for all its roles, including a legislated indexation factor with an indexation floor to guarantee at least some nominal funding growth;
- Ministerial power to terminate a grant is limited to a threat to national security or risk of foreign interference, and not the more general phrasing currently drafted;
- the size of the Board is commensurate to the roles and aims of the ARC.

The University also encourages the Committee to consider the current work on a Universities Accord. We anticipate the Government's response in the first half of 2024. Reform outcomes established through the Accord may impact arrangements around the Australian Research Council.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Lucy Johnston

Interim Vice-Chancellor and President

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