

Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee

***Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Category Standards and Other Measures) Bill
2020***

Submission by the Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council (ARC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee in relation to their consideration of the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Category Standards and Other Measures) Bill 2020*.

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity established under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (ARC Act). The ARC provides advice to the Government on research matters and administers the National Competitive Grants Program, a significant component of Australia's investment in research and development. The ARC's mission is to deliver policy and programs that advance Australian research and innovation globally and benefit the community.

To achieve its mission, the ARC supports the highest quality fundamental and applied research and research training through national competition across all disciplines. The ARC encourages partnerships between researchers and industry, government, community organisations and the international community and is responsible for identifying excellence, engagement and impact in research in Australia and creating incentives to improve the quality, impact and engagement of Australian research.

The specific changes to the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act* (TEQSA Act) and the *Higher Education Support Act* (HESA) are related to provider categories and improvement of regulation for TEQSA purposes which are outside of the remit of the ARC and do not impact on the activities of the agency. The ARC self-identifies and names Eligible Organisations in its Grant Guidelines which are approved by the Minister for Education on a scheme by scheme basis. The lists of Table A and Table B providers contained within HESA are utilised as a guide only to which Higher Education providers are eligible to apply for ARC funding.

As the proposed amendments to the TEQSA Act and HESA do not impact on the ARC, the ARC does not have any concerns with the *Provider Category Standards and Other Measures Bill 2020* progressing.

It is worth noting that the bill states that 'TEQSA must have regard to the quality of the research undertaken by the entity or provider' and that TEQSA may determine matters relating to the quality of research in its consideration of threshold standards. The bill does not specify how TEQSA will determine research quality, so it is currently unclear whether there will be any direct link to ARC processes. The ARC administers a national research evaluation framework that evaluates the quality of university research by discipline—Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA). The ARC is currently undertaking a review of ERA and its companion program—the Engagement and Impact (EI) assessment, which assesses how well researchers are engaging with end-users of research, and shows how universities are translating their research into economic, social, environmental, cultural and other impacts. The review is due to be completed in the first half of next year, and the next iterations of ERA and EI are scheduled to take place in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Both exercises have previously identified that excellent research is occurring in all Australian universities. We expect the review of ERA/EI methodology will create an updated methodology that will continue to showcase that for the benefit of Australia.