

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-2014

Agency - Australian Research Council

Department of Education Question No. ED0168_14

Senator Carr asked on 20 November 2013 , Hansard page 37

Question ARC projects

Senator KIM CARR: What was the peer review finding on all of those projects? Prof. Byrne: The peer review finding was that they should be funded, and they were funded. Senator KIM CARR: Can you provide me with advice on each of those four projects as to what the value of those particular projects was in the assessment of the peer reviewers? Prof. Byrne: What are you asking there? I am confused about what your question is. Senator KIM CARR: Do you agree with the assessment that this was waste? Prof. Byrne: I agree with the recommendation of our panels that they should be funded. Ms Paul: And they have been funded. Prof. Byrne: And they were funded. Senator KIM CARR: Do you agree with the description that these projects were wasteful? Ms Paul: You are asking for an opinion, Senator. I am not sure Professor Byrne can give it. Perhaps Professor Byrne could take on notice what the peer review— Prof. Byrne: The peer reviewers for those recommended for funding in an environment where four out of five get rejected, so the peer review process identified the merits of those grants. So I will stick with the recommendations of my committees, which said that they were deserving of funding, in an environment where the success rate is only 20 per cent. Senator KIM CARR: How many reviewers looked at each of these four grants? Prof. Byrne: I do not know that, but at a guess it would be a minimum of two internal and likely to be three external. Ms Harvey: We can take on notice the number. The ARC is not in the practice of releasing individual peer review assessments. Pg. 38 Senator KIM CARR: I understand that. Ms Harvey: We can take on notice the number for each one.

Answer

The Australian Research Council (ARC) has provided the following response.

The ARC runs a competitive, rigorous and robust assessment process for grant applications to deliver quality funding outcomes under the National Competitive Grants Program.

Proposals submitted for ARC funding are assigned to independent assessors from a range of organisations, who assess and provide written comments on Proposals against the selection criteria. Proposals are then ranked and allocated a budget relative to other Proposals by the ARC College or other Selection Advisory Committee (SAC), on the basis of the Proposal, any assessors' reports and any rejoinder. Following the recommendations of the ARC College or other Selection Advisory Committee, the CEO must make recommendations to the Minister in relation to what Proposals should be approved and at what level of funding, and what Proposals should not be approved.

The four projects listed and the number of peer reviewers who assessed them are:

1. Discovery Project: The God of Hegel's Post-Kantian Idealism
Administering Organisation: The University of Sydney
Number of reviewers: 6 (two ARC College of Experts and four independent assessors)
2. Linkage Project: Spatial dialogues: public art and climate change
Administering Organisation: RMIT
Number of reviewers: 4 (two ARC College of Experts and two independent assessors)
3. Discovery Projects: Religious clerics, medical authorities, and sexuality in Islamic interpretations of reproductive health technologies in Egypt
Administering Organisation: Macquarie University
Number of reviewers: 4 (two ARC College of Experts and two independent assessors)
4. Future Fellowship: The quest for the 'I': reaching a better understanding of the self through Hegel and Heidegger
Administering Organisation: University of Western Sydney
Number of reviewers: 5 (three Selection Advisory Committee members and two independent assessors)