

From the President

Australian Research funding must be awarded without political interference.

This week at the Senate Estimates hearings, the ARC confirmed that in recent funding rounds for Discovery Projects, Discovery Early Career Researcher Awards (DECRA) and Future Fellows Awards, the then Minister for Education Senator Simon Birmingham denied funding to 11 projects recommended by the Australian Research Council. All of the projects were in the humanities, with a combined total proposed funding of 4.2 million dollars.

This action is very concerning, as is Senator Birmingham's willingness to defend his interference in the award process with disparaging comments about the worth of the humanities projects denied funding.

AARE is committed to research funding being awarded after a rigorous process of review. The Association argued this point in our recent written and oral submissions to the Senate Inquiry into funding Australia's research (https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/FundingResearch/Submissions).

The current ARC process is highly competitive, and includes a rigorous review of all applications before funding is awarded. Conducted under the management of the Australian Research Council, the processes provide a high level of transparency and integrity.

There is no place for political interference in the ARC funding processes. Such moves damage public confidence in the ARC, and impact on the transparency of the funding award processes.

As a professional association of education researchers, AARE will continue to support the fight for rigorous, fair and equitable funding award processes in Australia. I urge our members to raise these issues with universities and other associations that you may be involved in as well.

Professor Annette Woods

President (2017-2018) of the Australian Association for Research in Education.

For more information and other statements that reject this practice:

<http://theconversation.com/simon-birminghams-intervention-in-research-funding-is-not-unprecedented-but-dangerous-105737>

<https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/Media-and-Events/media-releases/There-s-no-place-for-political-interference-in-Australian-research-funding#.W9P6XqNoR4s>

<https://www.humanities.org.au/2018/10/26/government-strips-4m-from-humanities-researchers/>