



Cooperative
Research
Australia

**CRA's submission to the
ARC Review Consultation
(December 2022)**

Cooperative Research Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands across Australia upon which our members operate.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

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Recommendations

Scope and purpose of the ARC

How could the purpose in the ARC Act be revised to reflect the current and future role of the ARC?

In our understanding of the critical role of the Australian Research Council (ARC), in supporting basic or discovery research as well as more applied research, the legislation would benefit from expressly stating its powers, role and interactions with other Commonwealth research funding bodies.

Like the [Science and Industry Research Act 1949](#) (the CSIRO Act – Part II, section 9 “Functions of the Organisation”), it would be useful for the Australian Research Council Act 2001 (ARC Act) to set out more clearly the functions of the organisation as a contributor for Australian research capacity.

In addition, the legislation should be flexible enough to allow for changes in the ARC’s function and should reflect its role both in supporting Australian research performance through funding and reporting, but also through capacity building.

Governance and management

Do you consider the current ARC governance model is adequate for the ARC to perform its functions? If not, how could governance of the ARC be improved?

Firstly, following on the example of the CSIRO Act, we believe that Governance of the Council should be covered in the ARC Act.

Secondly, the ARC advisory committee may benefit from broader representation from across portfolios, in as much the same way the [Singaporean National Research Foundation](#) does. In addition, it should extend its representation from research intensive industry and from entities that do translation of research, such as Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs), etc. Finally, we believe that international representation could also be advantageous for the advisory committee.

This would help both to deepen the understanding of the value of research across portfolios, and, to enable engagement with research translation stakeholders. Also, it could draw upon the expertise available in the Australian community in those translation entities and in industry that actively engages with research.

Finally, we believe international representation on the ARC committee would prove useful for ensuring its ability to deliver, not only funding to Australian researchers, but to actually enhance Australian research as a contributor to global knowledge.

Grant approval

Should the ARC Act be amended to consolidate the pre-eminence or importance of peer review?

Cooperative Research Australia (CRA) welcomes and encourages ARC's independence from Ministerial discretion to ensure fair and meritorious designation of grants.

National Interest Test

Please provide suggestions on how the ARC, researchers and universities can better preserve and strengthen the social licence for public funding of research?

CRA recommends considering a redesign of the so that it National Interest Test (NIT) that incentivises Australian researchers to collaborate with their international peers, while managing national security risks. The re-design should acknowledge international collaboration as a critical element of Australian research impact.

Process improvements

What improvements could be made:

- a. **to ARC processes to promote excellence, improve agility, and better facilitate globally collaborative research and partnerships while maintaining rigour, excellence and peer review at an international standard?**
- b. **to the ARC Act to give effect to these process improvements, or do you suggest other means?**

As mentioned before, we believe the NIT could be modified to be used as an incentive for international collaboration. Please refer to question 5.

Other comments

Having regard to the Review's Terms of Reference, the ARC Act itself, the function, structure and operation of the ARC, and the current and potential role of the ARC in fostering excellent Australian research of global significance, do you have any other comments or suggestions?

CRA is an advocate for an integrated systems of programs across governments and states that enable Australian innovation.

We believe that in the ARC's role as supporter of translation and impact, it would benefit from strengthening its links with other schemes to build better capacity and pathways of translation for different industries. Understanding the ARC's capacity to network with other agencies that support translation of research – such as the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Defence – would give better incentives both for industry engagement with research, and for researchers to recognise career possibilities.

Successful clusters that bring together the innovation ecosystem in Australia would create real potential to build scale at speed, offering opportunities for business and industry to grow and transform, and providing a market of new skills and jobs. This ecosystem includes universities and research institutes, ARC and NHMRC programs, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, Industry Growth Centres, Cooperative Research Centres, University Research Commercialisation, incubator hubs, entrepreneurs programs, different levels of Government, industry partners, startups, etc.

Underpinning our recommendation on broadening ARC's advisory committee, would not only enable a clear link between national priorities and research but also pathways through the research ecosystem.