



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council

ARC

# Corporate Plan 2024-25



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Artist: Mr Greg Joseph of the Yidinji people.

The Australian Research Council (ARC) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to lands, waters and community. The ARC acknowledges the important contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, researchers and the communities they work with, make to our collective knowledge, culture, society, economy, and environment. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past, present and emerging.

## Message from the Chair of the ARC Board

On behalf of the ARC Board, it is my pleasure to present the *ARC Corporate Plan 2024–25*. This is the first Corporate Plan published under the new governance arrangements introduced in the amended *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (ARC Act).

Under the new arrangements, the ARC continues to support Australian universities to engage in excellent research, promote and conduct activities to shape and foster the research landscape and community, and to administer funding to research programs that will create positive economic, social and community outcomes.

These activities are consistent with the ARC's overall strategy. The Corporate Plan 2024–25 underscores this commitment to the vision and ambition of the [ARC Strategy 2022–2025](#) (ARC Strategy), with particular emphasis on:

- world-class advice and engagement
- supporting Australia's research system excellence
- empowering our people.

The year ahead presents significant opportunities. Key here will be the continued work to implement the government response to the [Trusting Australia's Ability: Review of the Australian Research Council Act 2001](#) (ARC Review) report; the completion of the Policy Review of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP); and the ARC's role in supporting the implementation of key recommendations of the Australian Universities Accord.

The ARC Review report is a strong endorsement of the role and positive impact the ARC has had on Australia's research capability over the last 20 years and affirms the broader reform schedule the ARC is undertaking to restore stakeholder trust and drive excellent research for the advancement of all Australians. The creation of the ARC Board is a core outcome of the Government's response to the ARC Review and we are committed to making the new arrangements a success.

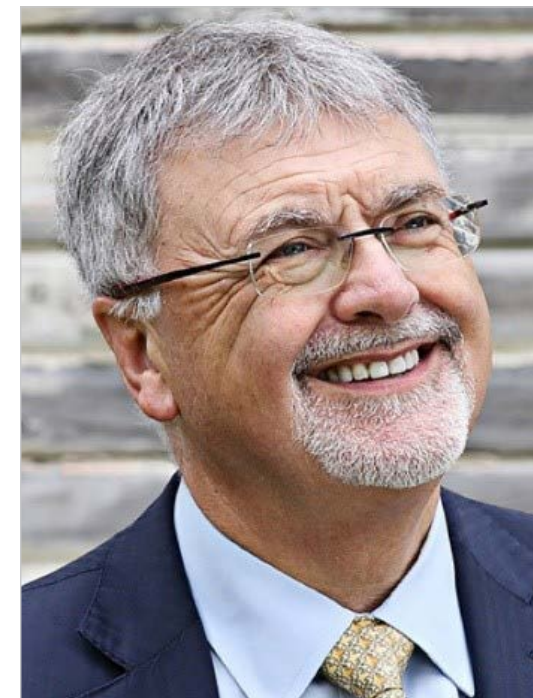
In addition to the ARC's focus on improved grant administration and delivery, the Minister for Education tasked the agency to work with the Department of Education on a Policy Review of the NCGP ([2022 Statement of Expectations](#)). This is an important opportunity to ensure

the overall program remains fit for purpose; provides strong support for excellent pure basic, strategic basic, and applied research; and continues to deliver economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for all Australians, including Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Universities Accord lays out a blueprint for long-term reform for the higher education sector to meet Australia's future skills needs. In anticipation of the government's response to the final report, the ARC will work closely with the department and the research sector to contribute to its implementation as appropriate.

With the establishment of an Indigenous Forum to support the Board, the coming year presents an opportunity to work closely with the Forum, Indigenous Australian researchers and communities, and the research sector to promote, embed, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and knowledge systems.

Much has already been achieved in ensuring the ARC continues to support a world-class Australian research sector. ACIL Allen's report, *Impact assessment of ARC-funded research* (April 2023), illustrates the contribution of research for the nation, with every \$1 invested through ARC grants generating \$3.32. There is more to do in the coming year, and I am confident the ARC will continue to support a dynamic research sector. I would like to thank my fellow Board members; Dr Richard Johnson; and ARC staff for their fine work, professionalism and commitment to the ARC's vision.



Professor Peter Shergold AC, Chair of the ARC Board

## Statement of preparation

I, as Chair of the accountable authority (ARC Board) of the Australian Research Council, present the *Australian Research Council 2024-25 Corporate Plan*, which covers the period 2024-25 to 2027-28, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), and subsection 16E(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule).



**Professor Peter Shergold AC**  
**Chair of the ARC Board**  
**Australian Research Council**

## Chief Executive Officer's foreword


With the passage of amended legislation through the Australian Parliament, the new ARC Board commenced as the accountable authority of the agency on 1 July 2024. I have been delighted to work as part of a cohesive leadership team that successfully prepared the agency for this significant change. ARC staff have focused with a high degree of professionalism on ensuring a seamless transition to these new arrangements and look forward to a successful year ahead under the guidance of the ARC Board.

I anticipate the ARC's focus on strengthening program delivery and administration will be maintained over the coming year, seeing a continuation of initiatives that reduce red-tape on the research sector and improve transparency for researchers. This work is especially important, and the agency remains strongly committed to delivering real and meaningful improvements. Such improvements are more likely to succeed if based on genuine and effective dialogue with stakeholders. The ARC has a strong commitment to building on our work to engage collaboratively and communicate more and more effectively with stakeholders.

The ARC is unique in the way it blends public service and academic expertise at the senior level. The leadership team is committed under the ARC Strategy to ensuring the ARC remains a professional and high-performing agency with empowered staff. We have and will be responsive to feedback from staff on areas to improve internally, including in response to feedback generated through the Australian Public Service (APS) Census.

An important priority for the agency is the ongoing rollout of the ARC Capability Framework. The Framework identifies 9 key areas of capability and outlines relevant goals over the next 2 years, including a more strategic approach to stakeholder engagement, further improvements to our policy advice, adopting technologies to better harness and leverage data for research evaluation, and augmenting our financial controls to improve process efficiency and integrity.

This is an important year for the ARC – one of change and opportunity. As an organisation we are proud of our achievements and energised by the establishment of the ARC Board. I would like to thank staff, stakeholders and colleagues across government for their support and commitment to ensuring the ARC delivers on its mission to fund excellent research, support Australia's research sector, and through this the economic, social, and cultural life of the nation.



**Dr Richard Johnson**  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer**  
**Australian Research Council**



Dr Richard Johnson, Acting Chief Executive Officer

# ARC snapshot

Vision: world-class research and innovation for the advancement of Australian society

\$1 generated

\$3.32 

in additional economic output (GDP) for funding awarded through the NCGP from 2002–2021

13,175 assessors taking part in peer review processes, providing

18,540 

assessments

Investing over

\$1b 

in research in 2024–25 for Australia's economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit

We have added 49 members to our College of Experts and now have

318 

members as part of the peer review process to identify excellent research

Administer over

5,000 

new and ongoing grants under the NCGP

Over

1,000 

new grants for research projects awarded in 2023–24

140 

ARC staff

Over

5,200 

applications received in 2023–24

In 2023–24

2,986 

partner organisations (companies, not-for-profits and government agencies) participated in research projects

Provide grant opportunities through

14 

schemes, funding excellent research across pure basic research, strategic basic research and applied research, and researchers across all career stages

Over

76% 

of funded research projects involve international collaboration

The ARC supported the award of over

\$680m 

in grants through our Research Grants Services (RGS) and software as a service arrangement, in partnership with other agencies during 2023–24

# Our purpose and strategy

The ARC is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity established under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* (ARC Act), located within the Australian Government’s Education portfolio, and reporting to the Minister for Education. The ARC is a vital component of Australia’s innovation and research system. It plays an integral role in supporting the research sector to produce excellent and impactful research for Australia’s economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit through the delivery of the NCGP. The NCGP funds excellent pure basic, strategic basic and applied research in all disciplines except medical research.

The ARC’s broader remit includes the provision of high-quality research policy advice to the Australian Government, supporting research integrity and promoting ethical research, evaluating the excellence, impact and depth of Australian research and expanding Indigenous Australian knowledge systems. It also facilitates partnerships between researchers and industry, government, community organisations and the international community (see **Table 1**).

**Table 1: Our purpose and strategy**

<b>Our purpose</b>	To help shape Australian research for the nation’s economic, social, environmental and cultural benefit by enabling excellent research; evaluating the excellence, impact and depth of Australian research; providing expert advice and research grants services; supporting research integrity and promoting ethical research.				
<b>Our key activities</b>	<b>Fund high-quality, impactful research through competitive peer review</b> Through the NCGP, we support excellent pure basic, strategic basic and applied research and research training for the benefit of Australians, across all disciplines (excluding experimental development and medical research), by awarding funding based on a competitive peer review process.	<b>Evaluate research excellence, impact and depth</b> We develop and conduct holistic evaluations of Australia’s university research that support a competitive and innovation-based economy, and drive improvements in national social and economic priorities.	<b>Safeguard research integrity and security</b> We safeguard the ethics, integrity, and credibility of Australian research through a framework of policies, processes and reviews.	<b>Provide research grant services to government entities</b> We partner with other Commonwealth entities through our RGS to support program design and administration of research grants.	<b>Provide research policy advice</b> We use our datasets, stakeholder relationships, and rigorous processes to position us to provide expert advice to government and other stakeholders in the Australian research system.
<b>Our programs</b> [as per the <a href="#">ARC Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) 2024–25</a> ]	<b>Program 1.1 – Discovery – Research and Research Training</b> - Building Australia’s research capacity by supporting excellent, internationally competitive research projects, fellowships and awards. <b>Program 1.2 – Linkage – Cross-sector research partnerships</b> - Building Australia’s research and innovation capacity by supporting excellent, internationally competitive research projects, infrastructure, fellowships, and centres of excellence that involve collaboration among researchers within and beyond the research sector. <b>Program 1.3 – Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)<sup>1</sup></b> - Improving Australia’s research capacity by evaluating research at eligible Australian higher education institutions against international benchmarks and identifying excellence across the full spectrum of research activities.				
<b>Our strategic priorities</b>	<b>World-class advice and engagement</b> – Our expertise and knowledge of the research system is shared, recognised, and sought out nationally and internationally, enabled by trusted, mutually beneficial relationships with a wide and influential network. <b>Research system excellence</b> – Our streamlined grants programs and processes, world-class data assets, and national assessments enable the research system to continuously improve and ensure Australia remains a leader in research excellence, impact and depth. <b>Empowered people</b> – Our expert workforce has the skills and capabilities essential for the future and operates within a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement with a strong focus on excellent service delivery.				

<sup>1</sup> ERA and Engagement and Impact (EI) have been discontinued, and the government is considering the future of research evaluation in the context of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report. If required the Corporate Plan will be updated to reflect this amendment.

# Improving transparency and understanding of ARC grants processes

The ARC has undertaken significant efforts to enhance transparency in the administration of research grants, aligning with the objectives of the Commonwealth Grants Framework. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to create a service-oriented culture that is flexible and responsive to the needs of stakeholders, as outlined in the ARC Strategy.

The ARC has implemented a strategic approach to transparency, including sharing detailed assessor text and scores with applicants and advising of planned grant award announcements. In response to feedback from the research sector, we have been working to reduce the time taken between a funding decision and the announcement of results. The average announcement time in 2023 was 5 days, an improvement from 7.4 days in 2022 and 10.7 days in 2021. In many cases, announcements were made within 2 to 3 days.

First trialled in the Industry Fellowships Program 2023, unsuccessful but eligible applicants received assessors scores, assessment, ranking and banded feedback. This move aimed to provide valuable feedback to applicants, helping them identify areas for improvement in future applications, and this functionality has now been rolled out to all schemes. Previously, the ARC released detailed assessment texts but did not release the scores, rankings, and ratings provided by assessors.

The Expression of Interest for Discovery Projects 2025 also included a trial of email notification of application outcomes, where the first-named Chief Investigator received an automatic email through the Research Management System (RMS) advising them that outcomes were available. Additional functionality has been built allowing research office staff to also be notified by email when schemes are announced in RMS. We also advised the public through social media that grant announcements would be coming later that day or the following day.



The research sector has widely welcomed the increased transparency, particularly the release of scores and rankings. This greater openness is seen as a significant improvement in the ARC's communication and consultation processes. The feedback suggests that these changes are helping to build trust and satisfaction among stakeholders, who now have better insights into the assessment process and the outcomes of their applications.

**Image credit:** iStock



## Governance

In March 2024, the Australian Parliament passed the *Australian Research Council Amendment (Review Response) Act 2024*. Under the new legislation, from 1 July 2024 the ARC's accountable authority transitioned from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to a new ARC Board. The new governance structure provides a robust framework building on effective pre-existing arrangements to support the ARC in delivering its purpose. Our governance framework ensures the agency operates in accordance with its responsibilities under legislation on matters of effective performance, risk oversight, compliance, and reporting.

The **ARC Board** is responsible for determining the priorities, strategies, and policies for the ARC and advising the Minister regarding these. The ARC Board is Chaired by Professor Peter Shergold AC, and includes a Deputy Chair, and 6 other members appointed by the Minister.

The **ARC Audit and Risk Committee** is made up of independent members who are not officials of the ARC. The committee provides advice to the ARC Board on governance and risk matters. It reviews the appropriateness of the ARC's: financial and performance reporting; system of risk oversight and management; and system of internal control.

The ARC Board is directly supported by 2 advisory committees to assist it to carry out its functions:

- **ARC Advisory Committee**, comprising leaders from across universities, industry, and government, provides high-quality advice and insight on the strategic agenda of the agency.
- **ARC Indigenous Forum**, comprising Indigenous Australian representatives including eminent academics, industry and community/research end users, and early and mid-career researchers, will help the ARC Board bring greater strategic focus to initiatives aimed at strengthening Indigenous leadership in the research sector, building opportunities for Indigenous-led and focused research, and supporting career pathways for emerging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers.

The ARC Board is responsible for the appointment of members of the **ARC College of Experts**. The College is made up of experts of international standing drawn from the Australian research community and assists the Board in the exercise of its powers, including the management and finalisation of ARC funding schemes through a peer review process.

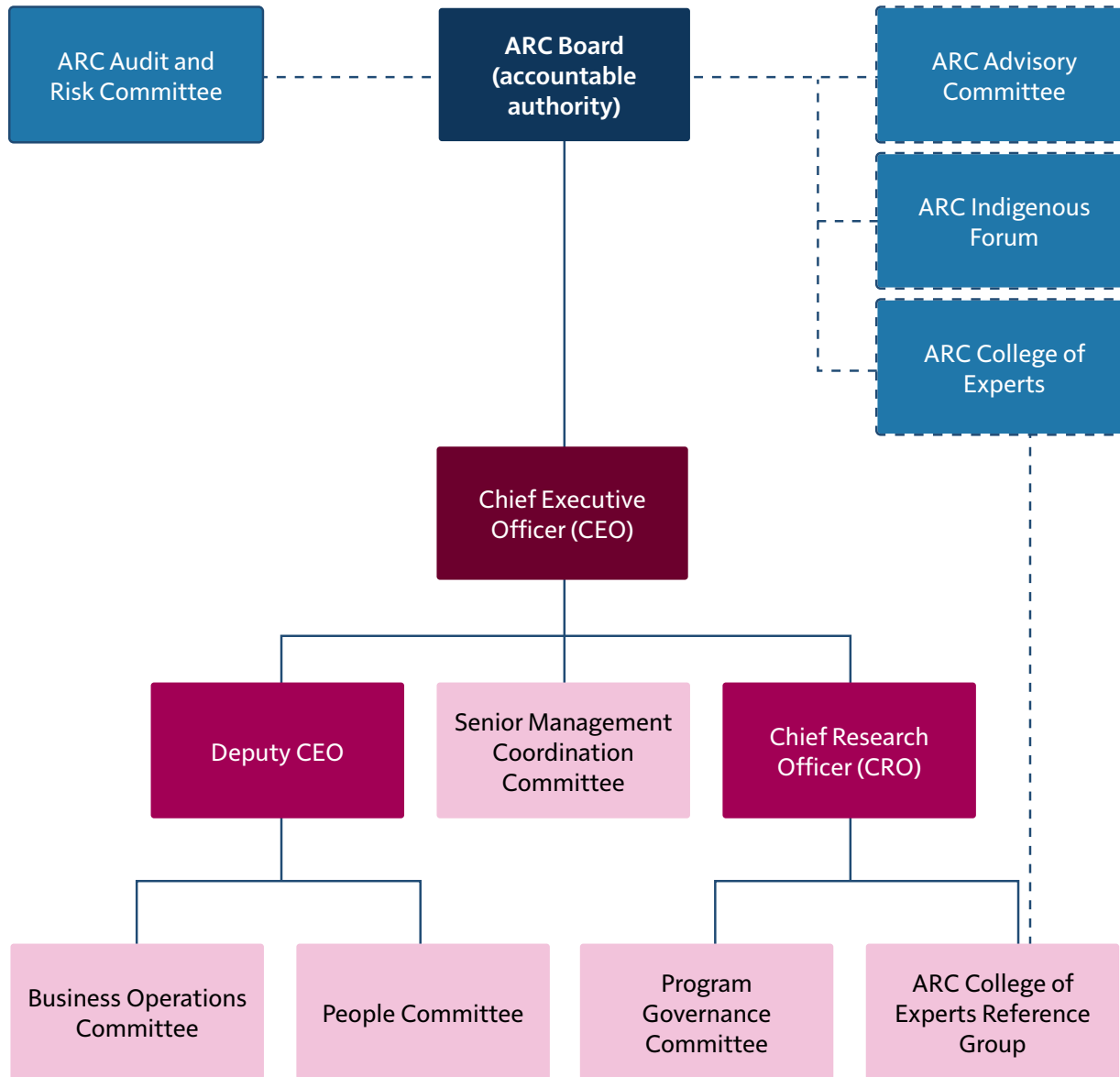
The **CEO** reports to the ARC Board and is responsible for the agency's day-to-day operations and assisting the Board in the performance of its functions. This is coordinated through internal management committees comprising the Senior Management Coordination Committee, Business Operations Committee, and People Committee, and 2 program management committees comprising the Program Governance Committee and the ARC College of Experts Reference Group, representing the ARC College of Experts.

The CEO is supported by the ARC's senior leadership structure that includes the Deputy CEO, **Chief Research Officer (CRO)**, 4 branches and a cohort of Executive Directors who have an important role in the ARC through their liaison with the academic research sector and the expertise they contribute to our programs, policies, and peer review processes.

The CRO provides strategic advice to the CEO regarding the evolution of the university research sector and continuous improvement to the ARC's operations.

**Figure 1** outlines the ARC governance structure.

Figure 1: ARC governance structure



## Our programs and activities

### Research funding

Through the NCGP, the ARC supports excellent pure basic, strategic basic, and applied research and research training, except experimental development, across all disciplines except clinical and medical research.

The Discovery Program (about \$630 million per year) recognises the importance of fundamental research, dedicated to the creation of knowledge, within a wider framework that encourages links with users of the research. It delivers benefit to Australia by building research capacity through promoting competitive research projects by individuals and teams, research training and career opportunities, international collaboration, and supports the national innovation system to build new knowledge and a knowledge-based economy.

The Linkage Program (about \$400 million per year) aims to build Australia's research and innovation capacity by supporting excellent, internationally competitive research projects; infrastructure; and centres of excellence that involve collaboration among researchers within and beyond the research sector. It supports excellent collaborative research; provides training and career opportunities for current and emerging researchers; fosters industry and other end-user engagement; supports international collaboration; and encourages research that will strengthen Australia's capacity in areas of national priority. Through these partnerships, the Linkage Program encourages the transfer of skills, knowledge and ideas as a basis for securing commercial and other benefits of research.

### Research codes of practice and integrity

The ARC works to safeguard research integrity through a range of policies and activities, including:

- maintaining and applying the ARC Research Integrity Policy in relation to all research funded by the ARC
- fulfilling our responsibilities under the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018* (Code) and associated guidance, for which the ARC is a co-author
- supporting the Australian Research Integrity Committee (ARIC), which reviews, upon request, institutional processes in investigating potential breaches of the Code.

### Advice on Australia's research

The ARC provides high-quality advice on research funding matters, research trends and career pathways and the excellence, impact, and depth of Australian university research. We engage and collaborate with government, universities, industry and internationally to monitor research trends, identify areas for collaboration, and ensure that the ARC retains its reputation for being a world-class funding agency. Our data and analysis is used across government to inform decisions on research and innovation, industry sector investment, workforce issues, gender and equity.

### Research evaluation and impact

The government is considering research evaluation and impact in the context of their response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report. In the interim, the ARC is investigating options to assess the excellence, impact and depth of university research in Australia which is in line with the purpose of the ARC under the ARC Act.

### Research Grants Services

The ARC partners with other Commonwealth entities to deliver research grants by those other entities. This may be through arrangements where the ARC administers research grants under its own programs, or through a grants administration support arrangement whereby the funding entity retains policy, funding and some or all grants administration responsibilities and the ARC supports the administration of those research grants programs. These arrangements aim to make it easier to fund the best research and best researchers in line with policy objectives and provide evidence about the value of research and improve research related outcomes. The arrangements leverage RMS, which is familiar to the research sector and improves consistency of grants administration, data available to government and makes it easier to apply for, assess, and manage Commonwealth research grants in Australia.

# Building infrastructure and resilience for electric vehicles

**Primary Researcher:** Dr Elizabeth Ratnam  
**Institution:** Australian National University



The electric grid that we have known for more than a century is being transformed to meet the global challenge of climate change. As electric vehicles become more common and new challenges emerge, the Australian National University's Dr Elizabeth Ratnam is working to build Australia's fast charging infrastructure in a way that improves the resilience of our electricity grid.

In Dr Ratnam's ARC Linkage project, *Building Australia's Electric Vehicle Fast Charging Infrastructure*, she examines how best to integrate electric vehicle technology with the electricity grid. 'The idea is that we can deploy electric vehicles and actually help the grid,' Dr Ratnam says.

'We think about the average customer, consuming 20 kilowatt hours a day. If that customer looked to buy an electric vehicle and wanted to charge that as quickly as possible when they got home for work, for example, then that would require about 14 kilowatt hours a day – so not quite double, but quite a considerable load.

'If we think about congestion in the grid, on the very hot days in the year when everybody uses their air conditioning – if an electric vehicle is coming home and charging at full throttle, that can drive further investment in the grid just to support the electrification of vehicles.'

Dr Ratnam seeks to help customers save money and support them in the electrification of transportation. 'A way to do that is with vehicle to grid technology, where you discharge the battery, particularly at these peak congestion times,' she says. 'In doing that, we've looked at cases where the costs for a customer if they didn't consider the grid could be something like \$9 a day, but if they did support the grid with this vehicle to grid charging, they could reduce that bill to 70c a day'. The result is an opportunity for customers to improve their savings and a way to reduce the need to invest more in the grid – and to reduce the cost of electricity generally.

'We're partnering with a grid integration company and we're looking to deploy, or translate, that information as a benchmark for new electric vehicle grid-integration methods,' Dr Ratnam says. The research project will develop new control and optimisation algorithms that enable the operation of smart electrical grids with integrated electric vehicle fast-charging capabilities, along with renewable and distributed energy resources.

Dr Ratnam also leads a team in an ARC Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities project, *National Facility for Electricity Grid Security and Resilience Research*. The project aims to establish a national electricity grid security and resilience facility that will strengthen large-scale industrial control systems against cybersecurity threats.

'The National Facility will allow us to test and benchmark new electric vehicle control algorithms against cyber-threats, enabling electric vehicle infrastructure to be better engineered for improved robustness and resilience against cybersecurity threats,' she says.

**Image credit:** MotionArray

## Strategic priorities

The ARC Strategy sets the vision of the agency to 2030 and outlines our key strategic priorities to enable our vision. Through these strategic priorities, we will deliver a refreshed approach to help shape the Australian research system that delivers better outcomes for the research community, government, and the Australian community. For each strategic priority, we have identified several key actions that we will implement and build upon over the course of this plan.

### World-class advice and engagement

Our ability to engage with and inform the Australian research agenda depends on our reputation in core areas of responsibility. By using expertise and know-how to build our reputation and networks, we will strengthen our position as a trusted source of intelligence, advice and connection.

**Table 2: Key actions towards world-class advice and engagement**

Key actions	Years			
	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28
Strengthen strategic engagement with key government agencies.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Establish and maintain strategic engagement with like-minded agencies internationally to share experiences, trends and best practice approaches.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strengthen communication and strategic engagement with the research community, including universities, researchers, industry, and other research users.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Establish and support the ARC Indigenous Forum to facilitate ongoing two-way engagement between the ARC and Indigenous Australian academics and their research partners.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leverage our data capability to identify, analyse and share the value from ARC and other data sets for government, the research sector and industry, and other research users.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to work with universities and other stakeholders to safeguard the integrity and credibility of Australian research.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work with the Department of Education to implement the government's response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report.	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Research system excellence

We have a responsibility to foster excellence within the research system. Our policy, data analysis and research grants administration expertise are the foundation through which to strengthen Australia's research sector. We will support the ongoing quality and impact of Australian research and innovation, using insights to empower the research system to continuously improve.

**Table 3: Key actions towards research system excellence**

Key actions	Years			
	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28
With the Department of Education, undertake a Policy Review of the NCGP.	✓			
Review of peer review processes.	✓	✓		
Work with the research sector to co-design ARC grant application processes to support a more diverse research sector, especially for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, and early and mid-career researchers.	✓			
Deliver a Mapping Indigenous Studies Research in Australia exercise to provide a baseline understanding of research activity, workforce and community impact in this important area of research.	✓			
Work with the Department of Education to develop a National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework to assess the excellence, impact and depth of university research in Australia. <sup>2</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓

<sup>2</sup> This action is pending the government's response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report. If required the Corporate Plan will be updated to reflect this amendment.

## Empowered people

To achieve our outcome, it is important for us to have a highly skilled, engaged and service-centric workforce that understands and drives our purpose. To ensure our people have the right skills and the right culture to succeed and deliver on the ARC Strategy, we launched the ARC's [People Strategy 2023-2026](#) (ARC People Strategy) in December 2023. Ongoing implementation of the ARC People Strategy provides us with a strong focus to steer the agency towards a high-performing culture.

**Table 4: Key actions towards empowered people**

Key actions	Years			
	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28
Continue the implementation of the ARC People Strategy, including delivering workforce planning for the agency, and attraction and employee value proposition strategies to attract and retain the right talent.	✓	✓		
Deliver a robust learning and performance development system for our people, including ongoing agency-wide training and performance management and the ongoing implementation of the ARC's Capability Framework.	✓	✓		
Develop a new workforce strategy for the agency upon conclusion of the ARC People Strategy.			✓	
Ongoing implementation of key <a href="#">APS Reform</a> activities including new people strategies and frameworks on lifting capability in the APS workforce.	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Uplifting the ARC's data capability to assist with planning and policy development

The ARC data team frequently responds to a high-volume of data requests with short turnaround times. Given many requests are similar in nature, they were faced with a challenge: how to improve fast access to ARC data while also uplifting the data capability of our staff. The answer was the development of a self-service data portal known as DataSense.

Our stakeholders and staff access ARC data from a range of sources – from the trend visualisation and the grants search portals and via direct requests to our data team. The DataSense portal provides staff with a more efficient way to access data and empowers them to explore data insights autonomously.

DataSense contains a range of user-friendly Power BI reports that are linked to live data from our NCGP datasets. These reports contain high-level figures and visualisations on a range of data, including Indigenous Australian research and researchers, project funding and project partners, and key information about investigators and proposals. DataSense provides a centralised single-source-of-truth that can be easily adapted to meet the ARC's data needs.

DataSense also provides the data team and select internal staff with access to more detailed data and the interactions between various points of data. The number of organisations that participate on ARC projects can be viewed by scheme, by contribution amounts and by the type of organisation. The data visualisations in each report update automatically as the data is filtered. Reports, key figures and visuals relating to ARC projects and funding are regularly obtained from or cross-checked against DataSense reports, especially when the data needs to be filtered by a number of factors.

In addition to assisting staff, the portal enables staff to quickly access data to assist with agency planning, policy decisions, assisting with providing advice across government, and presenting grant funding findings and statistics to our stakeholders. While the DataSense portal is still in its formative stages, over time the level of self-service and users' accessibility to data will grow, further assisting our work in supporting Australian research.



Image credit: iStock



## Operating context

### Environment

The amendments to the ARC Act have enhanced the ARC's important role in helping to shape and foster Australia's research landscape and consolidating the agency as a valued source of advice on Australia's research environment. The ARC is navigating a rapidly changing environment in which it is critical for Australia to have both the research capacity and quality to help solve many of the challenges Australians currently face, whether that be economic and health impacts following the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing climate change, the rise of new technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), or increasing global instability. Importantly, these challenges also represent an opportunity for Australian research and researchers.

Ongoing reform is expected in the higher education and research sector over the coming years. Improvements to the integrity, accountability and transparency of the Commonwealth grants administration process are set to occur from 1 October 2024, when the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024* comes into effect. The release of the new National Science Statement and National Science and Research Priorities will focus Australian Government support on the most important challenges facing Australia. We will continue to work with the research sector and the Department of Education in implementing recommendations from the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, including the development of a National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework, following a formal response from government.

International collaboration plays a key role in science, research and innovation and we are strengthening our presence in the international research community and liaising with relevant stakeholders. We provide funding opportunities that bring together Australian and international researchers and organisations, and work closely with international partners to support collaborations that benefit Australia.

Australian research can be an attractive target for foreign interference. We work closely with our counterparts across government, universities, and industry to enact strategies to manage foreign interference risks to ARC-funded research.

Whole-of-government initiatives will continue to shape our operating environment. We are committed to reducing emissions to align with the [Climate Action in Government Operations Strategy](#) and have commenced work to contribute to achieving Net Zero by 2030. Building on requirements from the National Anti-Corruption Commission, the ARC continues to implement our integrity framework, and provide a leadership role in maintaining and promoting the responsible conduct of research.

The ARC is implementing recommendations from the [APS Reform](#) through the ARC People Strategy. This includes implementing processes that will enable us to continue supporting world-class research and innovation. Importantly, the ARC relies on the knowledge and expertise of its people, including expert advisors and assessors to deliver on its vision. This strategy supports our strategic priority of empowered people and sets out how our workforce needs to adjust to be able to successfully deliver as part of a unified APS.

Finally, our capabilities and management continue to improve alongside advancements in technology. We are maturing our cyber security resilience to align with government guidance and frameworks. We have a range of controls in place to both manage risks and unlock the opportunities associated with the rapid pace of technology progression, including the use of generative AI.

## Cooperation

In addition to supporting the Minister for Education, we cooperate and collaborate with a broad range of national and international stakeholders. We also work in partnership with our stakeholders to showcase research highlights that benefit the Australian community. The organisations and stakeholders that play a significant role towards helping us achieve our purpose as outlined in **Table 5**.

**Table 5: Stakeholder contribution to achieving the ARC's purpose**

Stakeholder	Contribution towards achieving our purpose
<b>Australian universities</b>	Australian universities are our key stakeholders as recipients of NCGP funding, and for whom we evaluate the quality and impact of research. We work closely with university leaders, such as Deputy Vice Chancellors, and with university research offices, to ensure we are informed by sector knowledge and that there is awareness and understanding of our policies, grants processes and compliance with the funding requirements, and participation in our national research assessments.
<b>Researchers</b>	Researchers play an important role across the NCGP and our national research assessments by delivering excellent research and research outcomes, peer reviewing applications for the NCGP, and participating in our national research assessments. Australian researchers of international repute form the ARC College of Experts and play a central role in identifying and recommending research excellence for funding.
<b>Research peak bodies</b>	We collaborate closely with research peak bodies to ensure our policies and programs are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the Australian research sector, given the broad range of research we fund and evaluate.
<b>Department of Education</b>	We sit within the Education portfolio and regularly engage with the Department of Education to ensure our policy and priority outcomes are aligned with government activities.
<b>Other government departments and agencies</b>	We work across government to ensure our activities align with strategic government priorities and that we comply with cross-government legislative requirements. We collaborate closely with the NHMRC to align grant administration practices where possible, and to oversee the ARIC. Similarly, we collaborate with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to enable research commercialisation and translation opportunities. We also provide grants administration services to other Australian Government entities that fund research grant programs.
<b>Industry, not-for-profit organisations, and other research end-users</b>	Industry, not-for-profit organisations, and other research end users help to maximise the research benefit of ARC-funded research by collaborating and participating in ARC-funded research. These partnerships can include cash and/or in-kind contributions and can lead to better outcomes for research and research translation across sectors.
<b>International collaborators</b>	We are committed to creating and boosting international research collaboration opportunities. Encouraging global research linkages through our schemes is key to ensuring Australian researchers can connect and partner with outstanding international researchers to produce world-leading research outcomes.

# Dating West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapse using molecular sequence data

**Primary researcher:** Professor Jan Strugnell

**Institution:** James Cook University

Professor Jan Strugnell, of James Cook University (JCU), found an exciting new way to test if the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) collapsed during previous high temperatures and if they are comparable to the current rises in temperature – a question that has lingered for almost 50 years. Her approach was not to carry out geological sampling, but through the DNA of the octopus.

Professor Strugnell led the multidisciplinary, ARC-funded Discovery project, *Dating West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapse using molecular sequence data*. Her research showed that populations of Turquet's octopuses, which live all around Antarctica, were once able to interbreed by migrating through gaps in rock currently filled by the WAIS.

'The DNA of the Turquet's octopus is an important time capsule which we can use to look into the past,' Professor Strugnell says. 'We were able to investigate the DNA of these octopuses to show that at the interglacial period about 125,000 years ago, we see a connection between these octopuses on either side of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. That could only occur if there was a collapse of the ice sheet at that time.'

Professor Strugnell's study of DNA patterns in the octopus genome found direct and unique connections between populations in the seas around Antarctica that are currently separated by the WAIS. They then statistically tested if this could be explained by their present-day connections. The most recent DNA signatures of direct connections between the octopuses in the seas around Antarctica was during the last interglacial period around 125,000 years ago.

'A terrifying part of what we found is evidence that when the West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapsed, temperatures were very similar to those today. The implication of that is that the ice sheet could collapse under even under minimal temperature rises above, for example, the Paris Agreement targets,' Professor Strugnell says. 'And that could mean sea levels rising several metres – a real concern for the world.'



Professor Strugnell says the research required a multidisciplinary approach, uniting physical scientists and biologists, to help answer an important question about the WAIS. 'I think what's most interesting about this project is the power of multidisciplinary research to bring together different scientists, across different fields, to address very challenging problems in new ways.'

**Image credit:** Nerida Wilson, University of Western Australia, Western Australian Museum

## Capabilities

The achievement of our purpose, strategic priorities, and key activities is dependent on having a strong and effective organisational capability. To support this, we developed the ARC Capability Framework, which outlines the capability goals over the next 3 years and provides an integrated structure that will enable continued investment in our people, processes, infrastructure and data capabilities.

### A service-centric approach to stakeholder engagement, communication and collaboration

Our ability to build and maintain relationships and communicate effectively across the diversity of our stakeholders is critical to achieving our purpose and the vision set out in the ARC Strategy. Our engagement is driven through timely, effective and meaningful communication to inform, collaborate, consult, and promote the value of research to Australia and the wider research community. Building a culture of collaboration, partnership, and customer-centric service with the ARC's stakeholders is key to strengthening our reputation as a trusted source of advice on research matters. We use a range of communication channels to engage with stakeholders, including the ARC website, network messaging, research highlights, outreach activities, media activities, and social media presence. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- The development of targeted stakeholder engagement plans to guide strategic communications activities and build enduring, trusted and productive stakeholder relationships.
- Continuing to build partnerships with our stakeholders to highlight the impact and benefit of ARC-funded research on the Australian community.

## Strategic policy advice

Providing high-quality research policy advice is integral to building our reputation as a trusted source of intelligence, advice and connection across the research system. We are working to strengthen our data analysis and strategic policy capabilities, build a stronger evidence base, grow our understanding of emerging trends and engage domestically and internationally on key policy issues. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Delivery and implementation of the Policy Review of the NCGP.
- Development of high-quality, evidence-based advice on the research system.
- Contribution to cross-government policy work that affects the university research sector.
- Engagement in broader systemic issues affecting research grants and funding.
- Collaboration with domestic and international stakeholders to inform best practice research grant delivery and advice.

## People and culture – diversity and inclusion

We need a highly skilled, engaged, diverse and service-centric workforce that understands and drives our purpose. To drive a high-performing and inclusive culture, we are guided by our [Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#), refreshed in early 2024. This represents a staff-led approach to delivering on our agency's commitment to being a safe and inclusive workplace that values diversity in thinking to find new ways of achieving our purpose. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Refresh our [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) in consultation with our people and Reconciliation Australia.
- Ongoing delivery of the ARC's Diversity Working Group, a staff-led working group that drives activities to encourage an inclusive workplace.
- Developing an organisational culture plan as part of the ARC People Strategy that highlights the benefits of a diverse workforce.

## Grants management expertise

We are recognised as experts in the delivery of research grant programs and supporting excellent fundamental and applied research and research training, consistent with the whole-of-government grants administration initiatives. Members of the ARC College of Experts are experts of international standing who bring disciplinary and broad academic expertise, experience in research administration and leadership, and a strong understanding of the Australian and international research landscape to support high-quality peer review of applications to the NCGP and schemes supported by RGS.

In addition, the RMS provides a standardised research grants process and offers a flexible, robust, stable, and innovative platform for administering research grants. We also provide specialist support for research-based grants administration to other Australian Government agencies that is standardised, streamlined and supports Australian Government standards and requirements. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Review and strengthen ARC peer review practices and assessor management, to support peer reviewers to effectively participate in assessment processes and identify research excellence.
- Streamline and improve post-award grants management, reducing burden to the sector while maintaining high standards of compliance and gathering rich insights into the research outcomes that the ARC supports.
- Continue to streamline and improve grants management and applicant experience.
- Commence the RGS Growth Strategy to embed and improve RGS service management and operations, enable more efficient service establishment, and enable the future scaling and growth of services.

## Research, analysis and evaluation

Our work in research, analysis and evaluation helps shape the Australian research system to continuously improve Australia's research excellence, impact and depth for the benefit of the nation. We engage with our stakeholders to ensure we are monitoring best practice research evaluation methods, while providing policy analysis and advice in relation to research evaluation and impact. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Develop a National Research Evaluation and Impact Framework to assess the excellence, impact and depth of university research in Australia, following the government's response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report.
- Investigate and collect a wide range of available data to evaluate and analyse the performance of the Australian university research system.
- Engage with international funding agencies to explore emerging areas of research evaluation and the development of knowledge impact and translation indicators.
- Explore opportunities to further promote the uptake and use of ARC-funded research to open access publications.

## Data fluency

We collect comprehensive data sets as part of the NCGP grants process, national research evaluation and RGS arrangements and share this information in a responsive and contextualised manner with our stakeholders across government, the research sector, and the community. We seek to promote and leverage the benefits of this powerful data asset to inform research policy advice to government and to inform the community on trends in the research sector. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Cultivate and retain high-end data analytics capability within the organisation.
- Uplift the usage of ARC data holdings to make them more accessible, interpretable, and reliable.
- Enrich ARC data assets to provide better support for policy analysis and initiatives modelling.
- Implement new technologies to better harvest and analyse available data to inform a more robust understanding of the policy environment.

## Technology

Our technology strategy aligns with the Australian Government's [Data and Digital Government Strategy](#), providing services to our client base through digital platforms in a people/business centric manner. We have implemented a cost-effective contemporary operating platform to ensure alignment within the whole-of-government architecture and promote re-use of digital investment by providing and consuming shared digital capabilities with other government agencies. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Finalise implementation of a new information management system to improve the management of the ARC's records and information holdings.
- Deliver cyber security improvements to ensure the security and integrity of ARC and stakeholder data.

## Organisational governance and financial management

We maintain high-quality governance structures that include strategies and frameworks for decision-making, performance measurement and reporting, audit, evaluation, and risk management. These frameworks are supported by internal policies, plans, an online governance and risk management system, and staff training. The ARC shares outcomes and findings from internal audit, evaluation, and external reviews across the agency to improve internal controls and drive continual business improvement.

We have an efficient and effective system of financial controls and procedures in place that meet the needs of our staff and stakeholders while maintaining our financial sustainability and complying with the [Commonwealth Resource Management Framework](#). Our finance section is a source of financial expertise and provides high-quality strategic financial advice across the agency. Our priorities for 2024–25 and the forward years include:

- Strengthening processes to manage personal privacy.
- Providing staff with further tools and guidance in managing conflicts of interest.
- Continual improvement of our financial controls and procedures to improve process efficiency and ensure the integrity of the controls meets our compliance requirements.

## APS Strategic Commissioning Framework

The [APS Strategic Commissioning Framework](#) is part of the government's commitment to reduce inappropriate outsourcing and strengthen the capability of the APS.

In 2024–25, the ARC will reduce outsourcing of core work in line with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework. Our target for 2024–25 focuses on reduced outsourcing of the Portfolio, Program and Project Management job family work, with an expected reduction of approximately \$478,000 in 2024–25 in outsourcing expenditure.

# A smartphone rip-detection tool to improve rip current awareness

**Primary researcher:** Dr Mitchell Harley

**Institution:** University of New South Wales

Led by Dr Mitchell Harley from the University of New South Wales, ARC Linkage project *A smartphone rip-detection tool to improve rip current awareness* aims to develop a smartphone rip-detection tool – which has been named RipEye – and an online education game to help reduce the number of Australians drowning in rips each year.

Working in partnership with Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) and with an interdisciplinary research team, this project is expected to enhance ability to identify rip currents, especially among high-risk demographics such as young men, culturally and linguistic diverse communities and rural visitors.

Dr Harley says that by harnessing the power of AI and everyday smartphones, this project will help to develop an algorithm that can detect rips from smartphone video footage taken at Australian beaches.

‘Almost everyone these days has a smartphone in their pocket. With this new project we aim to supercharge your everyday smartphone into a new rip-current detection tool that is powered by Artificial Intelligence and specifically adapted for Australian beach conditions. The goal is enhancing the ability of beachgoers to spot rips – and hopefully reduce the number of swimmers unknowingly entering extremely hazardous conditions,’ Dr Harley says.

With a particular focus on unpatrolled beaches, this new smartphone tool will be used by SLSA to provide training and education to help the community become more confident in identifying dangerous rip currents. The research outcomes of this project will support SLSA’s goal to achieve the Australian Water Safety Council’s commitment to reduce drowning deaths by 50% by 2030.

Shane Daw, General Manager of Coastal Safety at SLSA, says that it is important to empower beachgoers so that they can learn more and avoid potentially life-threatening rip currents.



‘Rip currents are the number one beach hazard globally, responsible for one in five drowning deaths recorded along the Australian coast,’ Daw says.

‘Fortunately, here in Australia we have an incredible integrated network of professional lifeguards and surf lifesavers who patrol popular beaches to keep beachgoers safe. However, beach patrols cannot be everywhere at all times, so we need to empower the community to learn more about rip currents and how to avoid them or escape from them safely.’

It is anticipated that RipEye will reduce the drowning burden on lifeguards, the Australian community and the economy – and ultimately make the beach a safer place for all Australians.

**Image credit:** Dr Mitchell Harley

## Risk oversight and management

At the ARC, we take a proactive and positive approach to risk management. We engage with risk so that we can deliver on our programs and strategic objectives through risk-based decision making.

The ARC Board has overall responsibility for risk management at the ARC, setting the ARC's desired risk appetite and tolerance, and assessing strategic risks. The CEO and senior management work with the ARC Board to promote and communicate risk management strategies and practices within the ARC, managing strategic, operational, and fraud and corruption risks and their controls; monitoring the management of shared risks; and reviewing the ARC's Risk Management Framework.

Business areas routinely monitor the ARC's risk environment and review their risks and controls through a centralised risk management system. Risk information from all business areas is regularly reported to the ARC Board, CEO and senior management. The ARC Audit and Risk Committee reviews the appropriateness of the ARC's system of risk oversight and management and system of internal controls.

The ARC Risk Management Framework aligns with the [Commonwealth Risk Management Policy](#) and supports our staff in carrying out risk management effectively. The framework is designed to minimise the possibility of loss or damage to operations, staff, visitors, property, reputation, and assets while recognising innovation and opportunities to meet our objectives. It is underpinned by the ARC Risk Management Policy and ARC Risk Management Plan and Toolkit, which articulate our risk culture, appetite, tolerance and approach to engaging with risk.

## Risk appetite and tolerance

We manage many risks, including shared risks with our delivery partners. When considering the level of risk we are willing to accept or retain in order to achieve our purpose and enable our vision, we consider how these risks may impact on achieving our strategic priorities as outlined in the ARC Strategy and this Corporate Plan.

We recognise that we cannot, and should not, eliminate all the risks inherent in our work. Accepting some degree of risk in our business practices promotes efficiency and innovation. The ARC is willing to accept higher levels of risk when the potential benefits outweigh the negative consequences. In doing so, we must be able to demonstrate we have made informed, evidence- and risk-based decisions.

We have a higher risk appetite related to identifying, proposing, and deploying innovative approaches or new ideas that support achievement of our purpose, where we have appropriately scoped issues, engaged with key internal and external stakeholders, and adequately considered the associated risks and benefits.

However, we have a low appetite for risks that impact on the wellbeing of our staff, the security of the agency and its information, on the ARC's quality of service and ability to deliver its strategic priorities and, as a result, damage our reputation and stakeholder confidence.

Within this context we are committed to mitigating all risks to a target risk level of Medium or Low (where practical and cost effective).

The ARC has identified 3 key strategic risks which could impact the agency on achieving its objectives (**Table 6**). The ARC actively manages and regularly reviews the controls for these risks.



**Table 6: ARC strategic risks**

Strategic risk	Mitigation
<p><b>ARC-funded research is not creating new knowledge or achieving impact</b></p>	<p>We have a range of policies and processes, including rigorous grants administration and peer review systems, to support the funding of research that will lead to new knowledge. Over the last 12 months, we strengthened the controls for this risk through implementing our strategic priorities; continually improving grants administration processes; increased engagement with our stakeholders; and introducing a new two-stage application process. The ARC Advisory Committee and a newly formed ARC Indigenous Forum provide the ARC Board with advice to assist the ARC in achieving its objectives.</p>
<p><b>The ARC is not engaging effectively with its stakeholders</b></p>	<p>We take a proactive approach to our engagement and communications activities, including through our partnerships and strategic communications capability. The CRO and Executive Directors have bolstered our outreach with the research community, and we continue to improve our tools of engagement, including our website. We have strengthened agency coordination to ensure a consistent message across all vectors of engagement. We are working to build and maintain stronger relationships across the full diversity of our stakeholders, including through consultation and co-design.</p>
<p><b>The ARC fails to comply with its legislative requirements and key government policies</b></p>	<p>We have well-established governance and financial processes for ensuring compliance with legislative requirements and key government policies. In addition, we undertake regular staff training, participate in cross-government groups, have a dedicated General Counsel, and regularly review the agency's compliance with all applicable legislation. Furthermore, we have reviewed our suite of governance documents and tools to ensure they meet the needs of the new ARC Board and support the agency through its transition to a new governance arrangement.</p>

## Subsidiaries

The ARC does not have any subsidiaries.

# ARC Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage

**Primary researchers:** Dr Christopher Wilson, Distinguished Professor Sean Ulm, Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt

**Institutions:** University of Wollongong

Investigators at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH) have used their research into the history of Australia to tell stories from around the country dating back tens of thousands of years. Several of the Centre's projects have recently been featured in *The First Inventors* documentary television series on Channel 10 and SBS, exploring the convergence of Western science with Indigenous Australian knowledge and sciences.

ARC Centres of Excellence like CABAH are pioneering new ways of working in partnership with Indigenous Australian communities. Distinguished Professor Sean Ulm, a Chief Investigator at the Centre, says the goal is a process of co-design where researchers develop questions in collaboration with Traditional Owners.

'CABAH's objective has been to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to conduct research on Country and in laboratories, to tell the globally significant and culturally inclusive history of Australia,' says Professor Ulm. 'One of the defining features of CABAH is working with Traditional Owners using methods that are respectful of different ways of viewing and knowing the world.'

The Centre's collaborative approach is one of the reasons Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt, who was the Director of *The First Inventors*, wanted to partner with CABAH as the primary research partner for the series. 'They have a really good understanding of the importance of outputs from research that go beyond just academic articles, and inevitably the outcomes of their research are going to have meaning and impact on the aspirations of those First Nations communities,' says Professor Behrendt.

'To have a research partnership that wasn't so singular, and because of the nature of this Centre of Excellence, being multifaceted and multidisciplinary, people could see how their own slice of research fitted into a broader narrative.'



One of CABAH's legacies will be its Research Training and Ethics program, which offers professional development opportunities to all Centre members, from PhD candidates to Chief Investigators. Ngarrindjeri early career researcher Dr Christopher Wilson, who features in *The First Inventors*, says being part of the Centre has given him access to researchers and disciplines he may not have encountered otherwise.

'Building those networks has been a really fundamental step for me – getting to know who's who in these disciplines and the work that they do and how that can contribute to telling a story of the past,' says Dr Wilson. 'I think this series has given a glimpse into the kind of work that researchers and Indigenous communities from CABAH do, and hopefully, people will be excited and hungry for more.'

**Image credit:** Supplied by JCU. CABAH Associate Investigator Ariana Lambrides (JCU Node) working with Traditional Owners on Jiigurru.

# Performance

Our performance measures are an integral component of the ARC performance cycle and are designed to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of our work in achieving our purpose and key activities. We recognise the importance of reliable and relevant performance information to illustrate how we are achieving our purpose and regularly report on performance to the ARC Board, CEO and senior management.

## Performance measures and targets

Performance measure 1	The percentage of ARC schemes completed in time to meet ARC published timeframes			
Related programs in PBS <sup>3</sup>	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review	
Outcome	NCGP application assessment processes are conducted in an efficient and timely manner			
Methodology	The number of ARC schemes where outcomes were announced within the published timeframes on the ARC website against all ARC schemes where outcomes were announced, for the reporting period			
Measure types	Quantitative & Efficiency			
Target	100% of scheme rounds outcomes are announced within the timeframes published on the ARC website			
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	✓	✓	✓	✓
Changes from previous year	Nil			

<sup>3</sup> PBS programs are outlined on [page 7](#).

Performance measure 2		The percentage of submitted progress, End of Year and final reports reviewed on time			
Related programs in PBS	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
Outcome	The ARC reviews completed final grant reports and submitted End of Year Reports, Progress/Annual Reports in a timely manner (within 90 days of submission) to ensure researchers are not impeded in applying for additional grants				
Methodology	Percentage of reports processed within the reporting period i.e. finalised (approved/waived) or de-submitted back to the research office for action. 90 days is calculated from the last date of submission.				
Measure types	Quantitative & Efficiency				
Target	More than 90% of completed final grant reports and submitted End of Year Reports, Progress/Annual Reports, which are reviewed by the ARC within 90 days of submission				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	Nil				
Performance measure 3		The percentage of appeals upheld against NCGP application assessment processes for all applications submitted			
Related programs in PBS	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
Outcome	The ARC manages NCGP application and assessment processes fairly and in accordance with Grant Guidelines				
Methodology	Number of appeals upheld in the specified reporting period against all applications where the appeals decision was made in the reporting period				
Measure types	Quantitative & Effectiveness				
Target	The number of upheld appeals against administrative processes related to applications is less than 1% of all submitted applications				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	Nil				

Performance measure 4		The percentage of ARC-funded research projects involving international collaboration for all ARC-funded research projects			
Related programs in PBS	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
Outcome	The ARC funds a high proportion of projects involving international collaboration				
Methodology	The number of research projects indicating actual international collaboration divided by the total number of research projects displayed as a percentage. Data based on collaboration with nominated country/countries as per final reports approved within the reporting period.				
Measure types	Quantitative & Output				
Target	More than 70% of research projects involve international collaboration				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	Nil				
Performance measure 5		The average number of days to action research integrity investigation outcomes reported to the ARC			
Related programs in PBS	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Safeguard research integrity		
Outcome	ARC-funded research is undertaken with integrity and complies with national codes on research ethics and the <a href="#">ARC Research Integrity Policy</a>				
Methodology	The total number of working days for the ARC to action research integrity investigation outcomes divided by the total number of research integrity investigation outcomes actioned in the reporting period. Total days and total number include only research integrity investigation outcomes actioned in the reported period.				
Measure types	Quantitative & Efficiency				
Target	Investigations reported to the ARC Research Integrity Office are considered and actioned by the ARC in less than or equal to 30 working days				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	Nil				

Performance measure 6		The proportion of funded Chief Investigators who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher			
Related programs in PBS	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
Outcome	ARC grant activities support leadership of projects by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers				
Methodology	The percentage of unique Chief Investigators who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher on funded applications, as a proportion of the total percentage of unique researchers on funded applications under the NCGP, for an average of 4 years. The target will be met if the result is greater than the figure calculated for the previous reporting year.				
Measure types	Quantitative & Output				
Target	The percentage of Chief Investigators who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher on funded applications is higher than the previous reporting period				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	The measure has been updated from the number of individuals to the proportion of all funded NCGP Chief Investigators to provide more meaningful performance information				
Performance measure 7		The percentage of approved projects where the Administering Organisation is notified within 21 days of approval			
Related programs in PBS	1.1 & 1.2	Related key activity	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
Outcome	NCGP application decisions are communicated in accordance with the <i>Australian Research Council Act 2001</i>				
Methodology	The percentage of approved project notifications sent to administering organisations within 21 days throughout the reporting period				
Measure types	Quantitative & Output				
Target	Administering Organisations are notified within 21 days for all (100%) of the approved projects				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	This is a new measure and was introduced in the 2024-25 PBS				

<b>Performance measure 8</b>		<b>The ARC peer review process identifies research excellence</b>			
<b>Related programs in PBS</b>	1.1 & 1.2	<b>Related key activity</b>	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
<b>Outcome</b>	The ARC uses a robust peer review process to make funding recommendations based on expertise representing the breadth of research fields funded by the ARC, and through close engagement with the research sector				
<b>Methodology</b>	The ARC has identified 3 reporting mechanisms (with defined targets) to determine whether the ARC peer review process identifies research excellence. The ARC considers the mechanisms identified appropriate to assess the overall measure.				
<b>Measure types</b>	Quantitative & Output				
<b>Target</b>	The ARC achieves this measure by using a robust peer review process to make funding recommendations based on expertise representing the breadth of research fields funded by the ARC, and through close engagement with the research sector				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Changes from previous year</b>	This is a new measure and was introduced in the 2024-25 PBS				
<b>Reporting Mechanism 1: The percentage of full applications that receive a minimum of 2 peer review assessments per application across all NCGP schemes</b>					
<b>Target</b>	More than or equal to 90% of applications receive a minimum of 2 peer review assessments				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Reporting Mechanism 2: The percentage of different Fields of Research the ARC College of Experts covers reflecting broad experience and expertise of the College</b>					
<b>Target</b>	ARC College of Experts represents more than or equal to 80% of the total number of Fields of Research covered by the NCGP				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Reporting Mechanism 3: The number of outreach engagements where the ARC promotes, educates or recognises participation in, the peer review process</b>					
<b>Target</b>	The result will be benchmarked for 2024-25. Future year targets to be determined following a review of results from 2024-25				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	
	N/A	TBA	TBA	TBA	

<b>Performance measure 9</b>		<b>The total contribution from partner organisations for all research projects funded under the Linkage Projects scheme</b>			
<b>Related programs in PBS</b>	1.2	<b>Related key activity</b>	Fund high-quality and impactful research through competitive peer review		
<b>Outcome</b>	The ARC fosters an environment for collaboration between researchers and partner organisations. Total contribution from partner organisations for every ARC dollar is equal to or higher than the previous year.				
<b>Methodology</b>	Total partner organisation contribution (cash and in-kind funding) divided by total ARC funding for the same scheme round. Includes all funded Linkage Projects where outcomes were finalised within the reporting period.				
<b>Measure types</b>	Quantitative & Effectiveness				
<b>Target</b>	Average dollar contribution is more than or equal to the previous year				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Changes from previous year</b>	Nil				
<b>Performance measure 10</b>		<b>Develop a proposal for a new research evaluation framework</b>			
<b>Related programs in PBS</b>	1.3	<b>Related key activity</b>	Evaluate research excellence, impact and depth		
<b>Outcome</b>	The ARC has a proposal for a new research evaluation framework which will evaluate the excellence, impact and depth of Australian research				
<b>Methodology</b>	The measure will be met if the ARC develops a proposal for a new research evaluation framework				
<b>Measure types</b>	Qualitative & Output				
<b>Target</b>	The ARC develops a proposal for a new research evaluation framework to evaluate research excellence, impact and depth in Australia				
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>	
	✓	-	-	-	
<b>Changes from previous year</b>	The measure has been revised since the 2024-25 PBS to reflect the government's response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report and the amended ARC Act, which require the ARC to evaluate research excellence, impact and depth in Australia. This is an interim measure and is relevant for the 2024-25 reporting period. New performance measure/s will be established to assess the effectiveness of the new research evaluation framework once it is in place.				



Performance measure 11		The ARC provides expert advice on research across government			
Related programs in PBS	1.1, 1.2 & 1.3	Related key activity	Provide research policy advice		
Outcome	The ARC is a trusted source of advice on research matters across government				
Methodology	The ARC has identified 3 reporting mechanisms (with defined targets) to assess whether the ARC provides expert advice on research across government. The ARC considers the mechanisms identified appropriate to assess the overall measure.				
Measure types	Quantitative & Output				
Target	The ARC achieves this measure by providing timely and expert advice on research across government				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Changes from previous year	This is a new measure and was introduced in the 2024-25 PBS				
<b>Reporting Mechanism 1: The ARC provides expert advice to parliamentary inquiries on research across government within timeframes provided</b>					
Target	100% of responses to parliamentary inquiries are submitted within the timeframes provided				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Reporting Mechanism 2: The number of government committees and forums on research attended by the ARC</b>					
Target	The result will be benchmarked for 2024-25. Future year targets to be determined following a review of results from 2024-25.				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	N/A	TBA	TBA	TBA	
<b>Reporting Mechanism 3: The number of Senior Academics engaged as Executive Directors who provide the ARC with expert advice on research</b>					
Target	The average number of Executive Directors employed by the ARC across the year will be more than or equal to 3				
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	

<b>Performance measure 12</b>	<b>Clients are satisfied with the services provided by Research Grants Services</b>			
<b>Related programs in PBS</b>	Nil	<b>Related key activity</b>	Provide research grant services to government entities	
<b>Outcome</b>	ARC's RGS are high-quality, fit-for-purpose and meet the needs of clients			
<b>Methodology</b>	All ARC RGS clients will be surveyed annually. The survey will allow clients to rate their satisfaction with the services provided by RGS.			
<b>Measure types</b>	Quantitative & Effectiveness			
<b>Target</b>	100% of clients are satisfied with the services provided by ARC's RGS			
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>	<b>2027-28</b>
	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Changes from previous year</b>	This is a new measure introduced to the ARC Corporate Plan 2024-25			

## Reducing the burden on researchers through the use of persistent identifiers

In 2018, the ARC integrated persistent identifiers (PIDs) for researchers – the Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) – into the ARC's RMS. The purpose of integrating ORCID into the RMS was to reduce administrative burden on researchers.

The integration meant that information about researchers' publications can be imported from their ORCID record into their grant applications, eliminating the need for manual data entry. Coupled with auto-update functionality, information can transfer from a publisher's ICT system directly to ORCID and then to the RMS system, requiring no manual entry. This workflow ensures that information is only required to be imported once and can be reused repeatedly.

In 2022, the Australian Research Data Commons and the Australian Access Federation commissioned the MoreBrains Cooperative to analyse the incentives for the Australian research sector to adopt PIDs. In their study [Incentives to Invest in Identifiers](#), they use the integration of ORCID into RMS as a pivotal case study.

The MoreBrains study estimated that as many as 31% of Australian researchers had linked their ORCID accounts to RMS by 2022 to significantly streamline their grant applications. The study estimated that this may have saved researchers across the sector 30,088 days of their pre-award workflows.

Additionally, at the end of the grant life cycle researchers can use the PIDs in RMS to assist them with final reporting on their research. The study estimated that this had saved the Australian academic sector almost \$849,000 and 904 days of researchers' time that can now be spent on productive research.

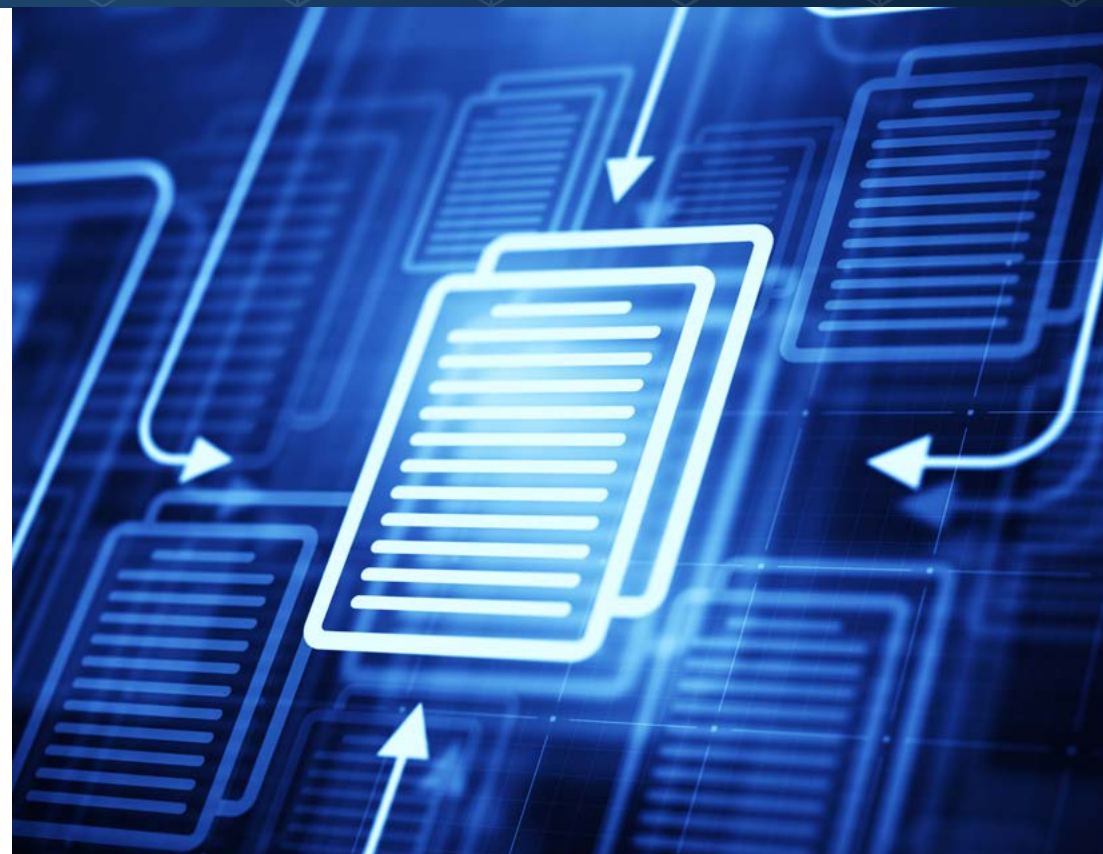


Image credit: iStock

## Acronyms

<b>AI:</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>APS:</b>	Australian Public Service
<b>ARC:</b>	Australian Research Council
<b>ARC Act:</b>	<i>Australian Research Council Act 2001</i>
<b>ARC People Strategy:</b>	<i>ARC People Strategy 2023–2026</i>
<b>ARC Review:</b>	<i>Trusting Australia’s Ability: Review of the Australian Research Council Act 2001</i>
<b>ARC Strategy:</b>	<i>ARC Strategy 2022–2025</i>
<b>ARIC:</b>	Australian Research Integrity Committee
<b>CABAH:</b>	ARC Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage
<b>CEO:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CRO:</b>	Chief Research Officer
<b>EI:</b>	Engagement and Impact
<b>ERA:</b>	Excellence in Research for Australia
<b>GDP:</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>ICT:</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>JCU:</b>	James Cook University
<b>NCGP:</b>	National Competitive Grants Program
<b>NHMRC:</b>	National Health and Medical Research Council
<b>ORCID:</b>	Open Researcher and Contributor ID
<b>PBS:</b>	Portfolio Budget Statements
<b>PGPA Act:</b>	<i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i>
<b>PGPA Rule:</b>	<i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014</i>
<b>PID:</b>	Persistent identifier
<b>RGS:</b>	Research Grants Services
<b>RMS:</b>	Research Management System
<b>SLSA:</b>	Surf Life Saving Australia
<b>WAIS:</b>	West Antarctic Ice Sheet

## Glossary

**Applied research:** Original work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge with a specific application in view. It is undertaken either to determine possible uses for the findings of basic research or to determine new ways of achieving some specific and predetermined objectives.

**Australian Universities Accord:** An Australian Government review of the higher education system, aimed at devising recommendations and performance targets to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of higher education for the long-term benefit of the nation.

**Chief Investigator:** A researcher who satisfies the eligibility criteria for a Chief Investigator under the Discovery Program or Linkage Program Grant Guidelines and takes responsibility for the conduct of an ARC-funded project.

**Pure basic research:** Experimental and theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge without looking for long term benefits other than the advancement of knowledge.

**Partner Organisations:** National or international organisations (other than Eligible Organisations) that satisfy the eligibility criteria for partner organisations under the NCGP including business, industry, not-for-profit, government and international higher education organisations.

**Peer review:** Evaluation of research applications by experts, usually in the same research discipline.

**Strategic basic research:** Experimental and theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge directed into specified broad areas in the expectation of practical discoveries. It provides the broad base of knowledge necessary for the solution of a recognised practical problem.

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