

The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts

Media Release: Friday 26 October 2018

The Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools (ACUADS) and the Australian Council of Deans of Dean and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) join with our colleagues from the Deans of Art, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) and the Australian Academy of the Humanities to make this statement. ACUADS and DDCA write to express grave concern at the revelation in the Senate Estimates hearing for the Education and Employment Legislation Committee of 24 October 2018 that eleven Australian Research Council (ARC) funding applications were rejected by Mr Simon Birmingham, then Minister for Education and Training. All these applications were from the Humanities.

The grant applications rejected by the former minister, had passed the rigorous assessment process exercised by the Australian Research Council (ARC), in line with funding rules and requirements, and each had been recommended for funding by the ARC's CEO. All eleven Humanities projects were rejected without explanation. Five of the eleven projects rejected by the then minister were in the DECRA and Future Fellow categories, representing the future of the Humanities research community. These award categories have never been previously subject to ministerial rejection.

ACUADS and the DDCA join our Humanities peak body colleagues to express concern at the inexplicable and unjustified ministerial rejection of research recommended by peer review. The then Minister's decision demonstrates a lack of understanding of the critical importance of Humanities research. In the 2018 QS World University Rankings, the top 100 universities include nine Australian universities for Arts & Humanities, demonstrating that our researchers are internationally recognised as some of the best in the world.

We note that such a rejection has not occurred in over a decade and that this act was contrary to a protocol that required ministerial rejections of grants to be publicly declared. We call on the Morrison Government to reinstate the protocol introduced during John Howard's Prime Ministership following a similar unilateral decision by then Education Minister Brendan Nelson.

The eleven rejected research projects include six Discovery Grant applications totalling \$1,424,988, three DECRA grant applications totalling \$1,057,828 and two Future Fellowships totalling \$1,691,116. ACUADS and the DDCA calls on the Morrison Government to restore this research funding to the Humanities as per the ARC's recommendations.

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