

MEDIA RELEASE: Friday, 26th October 2018

Backing Australian Humanities research

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) joins with our colleagues from the Australian Academy of the Humanities to express our deep concern and grave disappointment at the revelations in the Senate Estimates hearing for the Education and Employment Legislation Committee yesterday, 24 October, concerning the rejection of 11 research funding applications by the former Minister for Education and Training, all from the humanities.

The research projects rejected included six Discovery Grant applications totaling \$1,424,988, three DECRA grant applications totaling \$1,057,828 and two Future Fellowships totaling \$1,691,116, all of which had passed the rigorous vetting process put in place by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and had been recommended for funding by the Council's CEO. All 11 humanities projects were rejected without explanation.

The Council is greatly concerned at the inexplicable rejection of research recommended to the Minister, an act that has not occurred in over a decade, and is deeply alarmed at the apparent attack and sidelining of humanities research. Australian researchers are some of the best in the world in the humanities, with nine universities ranked in the top 100 for Arts & Humanities in the 2018 QS World University Rankings.

"Australia's humanities researchers are recognised internationally as world-leading. The ARC is the key source for funding much of that research. Australia has benefitted greatly from having a robust, independent, merit-based system for assessing and allocating research funding. This secretive interference by the former Minister seriously undermines the trust and confidence in the system," said Professor Mandy Thomas, President of DASSH.

"At a time when the value of the humanities and interdisciplinary research is seen as vital to addressing society's most serious problems, this move could seriously impact Australia's international research reputation and our ability to attract and keep the best and brightest researchers in the field."

DASSH calls on the Morrison Government to restore the funding to the humanities sector and to show real support to the work of Australia's humanities, arts, and social sciences researchers.

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About DASSH

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) is the authoritative agency on research, teaching and learning for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) in Australian and New Zealand universities.

DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research and teaching and learning in their universities. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching), a Network of Associate Deans (Research) and a Network of Associate Deans (International).