MEDIA RELEASE 6 September 2013

On behalf of the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH), we reiterate our strong support for an independent, robust, and non-partisan academic peer review grant process, and express concern with recent statements from the Coalition suggesting that in government it would interfere with the ARC’s robust peer review processes.

Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) plays a significant role in contributing to the improved well-being of Australian society—through better informed public policy to address the ‘big issues’ affecting social and economic change, such as: understanding health behavior, the impact of an ageing population, the history of war and its influence today, crime and justice, language acquisition, labour trends, the effectiveness of social welfare support to the less well off in our society, regional development issues, balanced land use and economic development, and anthropological and archeological origins of the human species... to name only a few.

More than one third of the undergraduate students at Australian universities are enrolled in broad based degrees in the humanities, social sciences and creative arts.

As Australia moves into a period of major global and national economic change, a commitment to sustaining socially significant research is critical for our success as a prosperous nation.

To achieve this we need to maintain the independence of the Australian Research Council (ARC), including the peer review process to evaluate the quality of research in ALL areas of our research endeavors.

The independence of both the peer review process and the ARC are the proven method to most likely result in high quality and innovative research for the nation. Cutting funding to research on the basis of populism dressed up as fiscal responsibility will undermine the quality of research informing government and industry into the future.

Who is 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. Our members - Executive Deans and Pro Vice-Chancellors - represent the faculties, where languages are taught across Australian Universities. ASSH disciplines currently represent 33 per cent of all students studying full-time at Australian universities and 29 per cent of all students (34 per cent of domestic students) undertaking postgraduate research at Australian universities.
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