

## Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The purpose of this survey is to collect responses to three proposals to improve the participation of women in ARC-funded research.

If you experience any difficulties while completing this survey, please contact the ARC for assistance ([PolicyandStrategy@arc.gov.au](mailto:PolicyandStrategy@arc.gov.au)).

We would very much appreciate having all responses back to us no later than **12 December 2019**.

It is estimated that this survey will take 15 minutes to complete, depending on the level of comments you wish to make.

## Privacy collection statement

The information collected from this survey will primarily be used internally by the ARC for the purpose of gaining a greater understanding the sector's thoughts regarding increasing women's participation in research. In addition, aggregated information from the survey may be used to communicate the results of the survey to the sector and others as well as supporting changes to the grant guidelines and assessment processes. Disaggregated, anonymized direct quotes may also be used to emphasise a particular point.

By ticking 'I understand' below, you are indicating that you have understood and agreed to this privacy collection statement.

I understand the above privacy statement

## Survey recipient details

### 1. Survey recipient details

*If you wish to remain anonymous, you are not required to fill in the contact detail table below.*

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Name            | Dr Vanessa Wong  |
| Role            | Chair  |
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### 2. I am filling this survey in as:

An individual

A representative of a university

A representative of a peak body

A representative of a government department or agency

Other (please specify)

## Proposal 1:

The ARC established the Discovery Early Career Researcher Awards (DECRA) scheme in 2012 to provide targeted support for early-career researchers. The success rate for women has been higher than for men in every year except one since the scheme was established. However, the application rate for women has consistently been much lower than for men.

To improve women's participation, the ARC proposes a specific target of 50 per cent of DECRA applications from women by 2023 (for the round commencing funding in 2024) with an interim target of 45 per cent by 2021 (for the round commencing funding in 2022). The requirement that at least 50 per cent of applications be from women will be implemented at an institutional level, rather than for individual disciplines.

### 3. Should the ARC introduce a requirement to have 50 per cent of DECRA applications from women?

Yes

No

### 4. Please outline any impacts or perverse outcomes you foresee resulting from the initiative.

The Early- and Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) Forum consulted with its membership about the three initiatives to help prepare the responses to this survey.

The EMCR Forum supports the introduction of a requirement to have 50 percent of DECRA applications from women. This policy can potentially accelerate the recruitment of women in institutions that currently have poor representation of women in research.

However, the EMCR Forum would like to highlight the need to implement measures to decrease additional burdens that this initiative may create for women in research. There is a risk that eligible women may be pressured by their institutions to apply, even when the applicants do not think it is the appropriate time in their career to apply for that specific grant. As researchers can only apply to be considered for a DECRA twice in their careers, the timing of the application should remain strategic for each researcher to maximise their chances of being successful.

The EMCR Forum would like to take the opportunity to highlight that the requirement for 50% of applications from women does not openly recognise applications from researchers who do not identify using binary gender descriptors. We encourage the ARC to incorporate considerations around the participation of non-binary/non-conforming researchers in the design of the proposal.

### 5. Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms open to the ARC to increase the support for women in early career research?

*Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.*

*(i) Disclose specific dates for announcement of outcomes at the time of the application*

The uncertainties of the announcement dates currently are extremely damaging to applicants' mental health and significantly impact on their ability to plan ahead. The absence of deadlines for the announcement of results encourage many women in the

early career researcher stage to choose career paths outside of Australia or the research sector with more certain future prospects instead of awaiting fellowship outcomes.

*(ii) Transparency in guidelines for ROPE*

The assessment of ROPE is unclear, not transparent and can significantly disadvantage women. Women are more likely to have career interruptions and undertake periods of part-time work. It is unclear how this is evaluated in the ROPE section.

Blind assessments or removing names from proposal can address some of the biases in assessment

*(iii) Improving mentoring of potential DECRA applications*

By providing a numerical target for applications, there is the potential to adjust the numbers in the applications by forcing women to apply or by limiting the number of men who apply. An alternative approach is for the ARC to provide support and enable organisations to improve guidance, assistance and mentoring in putting together a competitive application, rather than focusing on numbers.



### Proposal 3:

The ARC provides annual statistics to each eligible organisation on its participation and success rate by gender across the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP), compared to the results for all universities and their relevant cohort (if applicable). The ARC proposes to publish statistics on participation and success by gender for all eligible organisations on its website.

**9. Should the ARC publish data on institutional performance (applications by gender) on its website?**

Yes                      x  
No

**10. Please outline any impacts or perverse outcomes you foresee resulting from the initiative.**

The EMCR Forum strongly supports this proposal.

Publications of the results would be beneficial for both institutions and applicants. Transparency on gender parity and representation from other underrepresented groups is absolutely crucial, along with measuring, monitoring, and publishing these statistics. Publication of institutional performance is in line with other initiatives such as SAGE and Athena Swan accreditation. Public results provide researchers with information about the type of institution they may wish to join.

However, women may be asked to participate in name only, without being included in a collaborative sense. Given the restrictions on the number of grants Chief Investigators (CIs) can hold at any one given time, this could potentially be detrimental to women CIs if negotiations regarding contribution to the leadership of the project or sharing of the research funds is unclear.

**11. Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms available to the ARC to provide incentives to eligible institutions to promote themselves to women as employers of choice?**

*Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.*

EMCR Forum members indicated that publication of institutional performance should also occur in other funding schemes, including all other ARC grant applications. Publication details should include gender parity of Chief Investigators and Future Fellowship applications.

## Other suggestions:

### 12. Please provide comments on any other aspects of the three initiatives.

The three initiatives can be important tools to address barriers to improve gender parity for women in research and enable women to succeed in their roles. However, the EMCR Forum would like to see similar initiatives extended to all other grant schemes. In addition, the ARC should seek to open dialogue with EMCRs and women in research to generate ideas, explore strategies to improve the current situation, achieve targets, uncover systemic problems and improve the overall career experiences of female researchers. The EMCR Forum welcomes the opportunity to work with the ARC in this area.

The EMCR Forum also strongly urges the ARC to maintain momentum in improving diversity and inclusion in all areas, beyond gender.

### 13. Do you have alternative proposals for mechanisms available to the ARC to increase women's participation and retention in the research workforce?

*Please include the argument for your proposal and suggestions for implementation.*

The EMCR Forum would like the ARC to consider implementing a two-stage application process. This approach has the potential to lead to more efficient use of time for applicants and assessors and would especially benefit researchers working part-time (the majority of whom are women).

One approach is for the first stage of the application to be subjected to a blind review process, focusing on the merit of the project only. Once a project is deemed to have merit, the second stage will focus on gathering information on the applicant, such as publications and other measures of research excellence.

There are many occasions where ECRs "shadow write" Discovery Project (DP) or Linkage Project (LP) applications and who are not named as CIs. These applications are submitted under a senior CI's name who has a well-established track record to increase the chances for success and funding as named CIs cannot draw salary from projects. If funded, the ECR usually benefits because they are employed on the successful project as the post-doctoral fellow but are significantly disadvantaged because there is no opportunity to record their name as the project CI to establish own track record. The EMCR Forum would like to invite the ARC to consider options to allow named ECR CIs to draw salary from both DPs and LPs.

**Thank you for completing this survey.**