

Submission from the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) in relation to the ARC's Consultation on the proposed Research Insights Capability (RIC) – 5 February 2026

Introduction

The [Australasian Research Management Society](#) (ARMS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australian Research Council's (ARC) proposed *Research Insights Capability (RIC)*. As the peak body representing research management professionals across universities, research organisations, government, and industry in Australasia, ARMS supports the ARC's intent to strengthen national understanding of research performance and impact. A robust and transparent research insights capability has the potential to deliver significant value for the sector and government alike.

However, ARMS members have expressed a strong and consistent view that any such initiative must not increase administrative burden on institutions already managing complex reporting and compliance frameworks. This principle should underpin the design and implementation of the RIC.

Purpose and Value Proposition

While ARMS supports the overarching intent of the RIC, feedback indicates that its current articulation lacks sufficient clarity regarding purpose, scope, and intended value for the sector.

The ARC is encouraged to clearly define:

- The primary purpose of the RIC;
- The intended users of the insights (e.g., government, institutions, public); and
- The value proposition for participating organisations.

Clarity on how the data will inform national research policy, investment, and capability planning will be essential to secure sector buy-in. Furthermore, ARMS urges the ARC to outline how data collected will be safeguarded from inappropriate secondary use or interpretation.

Scope and Benchmarking

ARMS members hold mixed views regarding benchmarking within the RIC. While benchmarking can be valuable when appropriately contextualised, the ARC has indicated that this is **not** the intent of the RIC. The submission therefore recommends that the RIC:

- Focus on generating national-level insights rather than institutional or discipline-level comparisons;
- Avoid being used to create institutional rankings or performance ratings; and
- Be positioned as a collective insight mechanism to inform strategy, not a compliance or performance assessment tool.

Data Sources, Quality, and Repository Standards

ARMS supports the principle of leveraging existing data sources and reporting mechanisms to minimise duplication and burden on institutions. These could include data already captured through repositories, commercialisation and engagement reporting, and existing ARC and NHMRC systems.

Recognising the current variation in repository quality and completeness across institutions and disciplines, ARMS recommends that:

- Sufficient lead time be provided for institutions to prepare data;
- Clear standards and guidance be established for repositories to ensure consistency and interoperability; and
- The RIC serve as a driver for sector-wide improvements in open access, persistent identifiers (PIDs), and metadata standards.

Administrative Burden and Resourcing

Any new data collection or reporting requirement must be appropriately resourced and proportionate to its intended outcomes.

ARMS emphasises that the RIC should build on existing capabilities rather than impose new administrative layers. The ARC should ensure that the system design and operational expectations are achievable for institutions of varying size and capacity, avoiding the creation of what some members described as “a rod for our own backs.”

Principles-Based and Responsible Assessment

Given the current uncertainty surrounding the RIC’s detailed design, ARMS recommends that the initiative be developed and implemented in accordance with principles of responsible research assessment.

These principles should include:

- Transparency of methods and data use;
- Contextual interpretation of research performance indicators;
- Avoidance of perverse incentives; and
- Promotion of collaboration and inclusivity across the research ecosystem.

Embedding these principles early in the RIC’s design will enhance trust and ensure alignment with the Hong Kong Principles, DORA, and other frameworks supporting responsible research assessment globally.

Sector-Wide and Cross-Sector Engagement

To provide a truly national picture of Australian research, the RIC should consider including insights from beyond the university sector, where feasible, including research conducted in hospitals, public sector agencies, and industry.

While recognising the added complexity this introduces, ARMS supports broad engagement in principle and recommends the ARC take a staged and consultative approach to expanding scope over time.

Consultation and Ongoing Input

ARMS members strongly advocate for ongoing consultation throughout the RIC’s design and implementation.

Institutions should have:

- Opportunities to review draft analyses or reports derived from the data; and
- Mechanisms to provide feedback, clarify interpretation, or correct data where necessary.

A transparent, collaborative consultation model will help build confidence in the RIC’s credibility and accuracy.

Alignment with National Priorities

ARMS supports aligning the RIC with Australia’s national research priorities to ensure it provides insights that directly inform strategic decision-making and investment.

The RIC could play a valuable role in:

- Identifying national strengths and capability gaps;
- Informing future workforce and infrastructure planning; and
- Supporting evidence-based policy decisions on research investment and impact.

International Comparisons and Funding Links

While it is useful to consider international models such as those in the UK, New Zealand, and Canada, Australia’s RIC should be tailored to its unique research landscape and policy context.

AUSTRALASIAN RESEARCH MANAGEMENT SOCIETY



www.researchmanagement.org.au



arms.adminofficer@flinders.edu.au



c/- Flinders University,
Sturt Road, Bedford Park, SA 5042



+61 8201 2525

Importantly, ARMS recommends that the ARC clearly communicate that the RIC is not intended to influence funding allocation or institutional performance-based funding. Its purpose should remain insight-driven and developmental, not punitive or competitive.

Conclusion

ARMS supports, in principle, the establishment of a Research Insights Capability that enhances the visibility, transparency, and strategic use of research data at a national level. However, this support is conditional on the initiative being designed to minimise administrative burden, uphold responsible assessment principles, and deliver clear, practical value to the research community.

ARMS looks forward to continued engagement with the ARC as this proposal develops and welcomes the opportunity to contribute further to the design and governance of the RIC.

Contacts:

Hannah Allan, President, Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS)

Email: ARMSPresident@researchmanagement.org.au

Ms Mel Trebilcock, Partnership, Education & Policy Manager, Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) - Email: ARMSPEP@researchmanagement.org.au

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