



## AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ASIA PACIFIC FUTURES RESEARCH NETWORK

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October 4 2005

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### Submission to RQAF on RQF Preferred Model

The ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network Management Committee is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the RQF Preferred Model and we appreciate the EAG's efforts at furthering research quality in the Australian Higher Education Sector.

We have the following concerns that we would like to bring to the RQAF Team's attention in terms of Asia and Pacific Studies, fields of major concern to Australia's national interest. The main theme of our comments is that the connections *between researchers in different universities* that produce research excellence need to be recognised and encouraged within any structure for the implementation of the RQF.

Specifically, we strongly support the proposal outlined in 2.8.2 that consultation be undertaken on the effect of the RQF on the distribution of research resources to universities and PFRA.

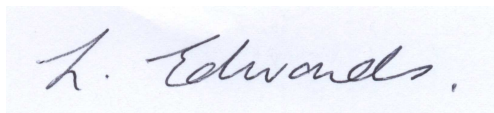
1. We are concerned that the resulting research-funding mechanisms be sufficiently flexible to guarantee research funding to a wide range of institutions.
  - o In the interdisciplinary fields of Asia and Pacific Studies, a considerable proportion of the high quality and innovative research that Australia produces has been conducted outside of the older more established universities. By their very nature such fields of research are more likely to emerge in newer institutions. The role of the newer or smaller institution in providing the space conducive to research creativity and innovation is vital to the health of the research sector as a whole. The importance of allowing the free-flow of ideas and Research Active staff between and among Australia's diverse universities is crucial to ensuring that excellence in research output is able to continue in non-traditional disciplines and in emerging research fields. Any mechanism that results in the consolidation of funds in any one part of the Australian University sector could potentially diminish the dynamism that has enabled Australia to lead the world in many aspects of Asia and Pacific Studies.

2. Similarly, we are concerned that the research-funding mechanisms encourage inter-university collaboration. Facilitating cooperation ensures that researchers are able to make the production of high quality research their main focus and would eliminate constraints generated by inter-institutional rivalries.

- Over the last 2 years, the ARC-Asia Pacific Futures Research Network and its predecessor ARC-SRI bodies have built a detailed picture of the range and scope of researchers in Asia and Pacific Studies around Australia. Although Pacific Studies is centred on the ANU, it also has important sites of high quality research spread across several states, while Asian Studies expertise is spread across all Australian universities. The Network has dedicated considerable time and energy to encouraging cooperation between researchers across universities in an effort to build connections, where the existing IGS and RTS funding models inhibit intra-university cooperation (in both research training and in research *per se*). Our objective with the implementation of the RQF's funding distribution model would be to seek a system that rewards collaboration between institutions. Only with such a structure can we ensure that unique combinations of researchers, regardless of their particular institutional locations, are able to undertake joint research activities. Such a structure would build upon the collaborative spirit developing from the ARC Network's scheme. Intellectual collaboration of this nature prioritises the excellence of the research project itself rather than institutional hubris or financial concerns. A mechanism that recognises the importance of collaboration will enhance research quality in fields with a broad institutional distribution of researchers, such as Asian Studies.

We hope that the ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network's experience of nurturing research excellence through promoting collaboration among the geographically disparate researchers in our field is useful to your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Louise Edwards  
Convenor  
ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network

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