

Media release

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Education Minister ought to judge a book by more than its cover - IRU

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group has demanded a full explanation from the Government following news that former Education Minister Simon Birmingham blocked 11 humanities projects from receiving research funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC).

IRU Chair Professor Colin Stirling said:

“The Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences represent crucial components of Australia’s research landscape. They allow us to understand our world and its cultures, and they enable us to learn from the past and make the most of our future. A great research system does not flourish on STEM alone.

“A research project that has passed the rigorous scrutiny of the ARC requires a detailed application that is reviewed by world-class, independent peers and then ranked above all others.

“The Minister may not have liked the titles of some of the proposals, but an Education Minister ought to judge a book by more than its cover.

“The Government must come clean and state exactly why each project was rejected, and it must reaffirm its confidence in the peer review and assessment processes of the ARC.

“We have heard many calls in recent weeks for universities to defend intellectual freedom on campus. This includes the freedom for academics to pursue and express ideas without fear of political interference or retribution. It seems that we must redouble our efforts in defence of the Humanities, Arts and the Social Sciences.

“The IRU will be asking Education Minister Dan Tehan for his assurance that he will not allow political ideology to undermine the humanities or the ARC grants process.”

Full list of projects affected (IRU university projects in red)

Early Career Awards

- Price, Medals and Materials in the Global Exchange - \$391,574 (ANU)
- Legal Secularism in Australia - \$330,466 (University of Melbourne)
- Soviet Cinema in Hollywood Before the Blacklist 1917-1950 - \$335,788 (UNSW)

Future Fellowships

- The Music of Nature and the Nature of Music - \$764,744 (Macquarie)
- **Writing the Struggle for Sioux Modernity - \$926,372 (La Trobe)**

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Discovery Projects

- Rioting and the Literary Archive - \$228,155 (UNSW)
- A History of Australian Men's Dress 1870-1970 - \$325,592 (ACU)
- Beauty and Ugliness in Changing China's Gender Norms - \$161,774 (UNSW)
- Post-Orientalist Arts of the Strait of Gibraltar - \$222,936 (University of Sydney)
- **Music Heritage and Cultural Justice in the Post-Industrial Legacy City - \$226,811 (Griffith)**
- Greening Media Sport - \$259,720 (Monash)

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About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven a network of seven comprehensive universities committed to inclusive excellence in teaching and research in Australia.

Its members are Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University and Western Sydney University.