

Bond University

Evaluation of the Knowledge and Innovation Reforms

Reviewing Australia's Block Research Funding Scheme

Executive Summary

Bond University:

- *Supports the retention of the principles for public funding of research.*
- *Recommends that publicly-funded research should cover all costs associated with research.*
- *Strongly endorses the retention of the research publications index, as it is an internationally recognised benchmark of research excellence.*
- *Rejects the 5% cap of institutional gains through RTS and IGS.*
- *Does not support an RAE to allocate block funds.*
- *Believes that as a private, not for profit, University it should be eligible for full IGS funding.*
- *Recommends merging IGS and RIBG schemes of block funding.*
- *Submits that it should be eligible for research funding as a regional University.*

Prefatory Statement

As a private, not for profit, University, Bond University has not received block funding for research prior to 1998. Bond University was included in *Schedule 1 of the Higher Education Funding Act 1998* enabling this University to obtain funding under the Nationally Competitive Grants Program. However, Bond University was excluded from some ARC programs such as Linkage-International, Linkage-Infrastructure and the DEST funded IGS program that rewards research higher degree enrolments and completions.

Evaluation of Public Funding of Research

Bond University is now eligible to receive RTS, RIBG and IGS (restricted) funding, and to apply for all nationally competitive research grants. We have found that the principles for public funding of research viz peer reviewed excellence; institutional autonomy and responsiveness; student choice; linkage and collaboration; and transparency, contestability and accountability are principles that we endorse. However publicly-funded research should cover full costs of research and not be cross-subsidised by funds diverted from teaching programs.

Performance-Based Funding of Research

Performance-based funding of research has assisted Bond University in establishing its research management strategies. The HERDC categories of research performance have been useful for internal and external validation of quality research performance at this University.

Retention of the publications index is essential as it is the principal internationally recognised benchmark of research excellence. It also recognises quality "low-cost" research, particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Over 75% of research active faculty at Bond University undertake research in the Social Sciences and Humanities. For these faculty the research publications index most equitably reflects their research performance as they prosecute high quality research for relatively small contributions from public research funds. This University strongly endorses the retention of the research publications index, as this best reflects quality research contributions to the *Knowledge and Innovation* reforms from the Social Sciences and Humanities.

Bond University rejects the 5% cap of institutional gains through RTS and IGS. This capping contradicts the principles of competitive research funding and provides very limited incentives for those Universities that seek to improve their research performance.

Bond University does not support the introduction of an RAE to allocate block funds. These assessments have very high compliance costs (if fully funded), and are not sufficiently refined to recognise and reward research excellence by individuals or small groups of researchers. We recommend that there be an increase in the publicly-funded research funds, allocated primarily through research councils, and that granting councils fund the full cost of research programs.

Research Training Scheme

Bond University was excluded from the RTS until 2002. Thus it is too early to comment on the effect of this scheme at this University. It has focused attention on the quality of student supervision. These issues are also being addressed in the wider context of quality assurance.

Institutional Grants Scheme

Research higher degree load and HDR completions at Bond University are not included in IGS determinations for this University, as they are not HECS-liable HDR-EFTSU. The original intent of the Kemp Green Paper was to recognise each University's contribution to HDR training in the allocation of IGS funds. The current regulations restrict HDR training to HECS-liable and RTS liable HDR. This restriction is grossly inequitable, because Bond University is currently training 54 HDR EFTSU at no cost to the taxpayer. This restrictive practice is a disincentive to enrolling HDR students at this University and is contrary to the objectives of the *Knowledge and Innovation* reforms.

Research Infrastructure Block Grants

Bond University recommends merging IGS and RIBG schemes. The guidelines for expenditure of these funds overlap significantly, and the objectives of these funding schemes can be easily and efficiently merged. This merged funding scheme would decrease the costs of administering these funds.

Research and Research Management Training

The requirement to submit RRTMR's has focused attention on the strategic planning of research, and quality research management processes at Bond University. As RRTMRs are public documents, this public accountability of quality research performance has greatly assisted research and research management training at this University.

Regional Support Package

Bond University recommends that it be included as one of the Universities eligible for research funding as a Regional University. The Gold Coast is the fastest developing non-metropolitan region in Australia and our collaborative research with partners, such as Varsity Lakes IT Research Park and the Gold Coast City Council, would be enhanced if we were designated as a regional University for research funding.

Contestability of Funding for the IAS of the Australian National University

The IAS has recently been successful in obtaining nationally competitive research funds. As these funding agencies focus primarily on international-quality peer review, then the IAS clearly is contributing to the national objectives of the *Knowledge and Innovation* reforms and this arrangement should continue.