

10 July 2024

Prof Steve Wesselingh
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Dear Professor Wesselingh

Response to the consultation on the draft Good Institutional Practice Guide

I would like to congratulate the NHMRC and the Research Quality Steering Committee on the draft Good Institutional Practice Guide (the Guide) and for taking the initiative on this critical issue.

It is an excellent document which clearly identifies many of the current barriers to better research practice, recognises the key role of culture, and identifies behaviours and practices that can foster this culture.

Research Australia has supported the [The Landscape of Australian Health and Medical Higher Education](#) report, an overview of the 2023 Australian national survey of workplace culture and wellbeing for early- and mid-career researchers engaged in health and medical research. It identifies many of the barriers to better research that the Guide is seeking to address.

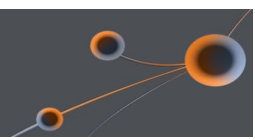
The Guide acknowledges there are good practices that can be adopted and provides instances of good practice, including at Australian research institutions.

Research Australia's EMCR working group has also undertaken a survey of resources available across Australian research institutions and has identified many programs and practices that support EMCRs and research leaders to improve research practice and culture.

Research Australia suggests that awareness of practices and initiatives that can improve research culture is not the primary barrier to improving research culture; significant work has already been done to identify the issues and raise awareness. The key problem is implementing the measures needed to improve the culture.

Contributing factors are the historically insufficient priority given to these measures by research funding bodies, research institutions and research leaders; and the inadequate resources committed by research funding bodies and research institutions to funding these activities.

These factors of insufficient priority and under resourcing are currently preventing the sector wide, comprehensive and routine adoption of the measures the Guide proposes. While research institutions and



research leaders have an essential role to play, we believe there are other organisations that must also participate if we are to succeed.

This includes Research Australia, and I have already identified some of the work we have done in this area. The NHMRC has also participated in this endeavour, most recently through the development of the Guide. Further involvement by the NHMRC is going to be essential if the Guide is to achieve its ambition of driving substantial sector wide improvements in research culture.

Research Australia believes leadership and involvement from the NHMRC will be essential and will demonstrate the NHMRC's ongoing commitment to improving research culture and practice. Without the NHMRC, it is unlikely to succeed.

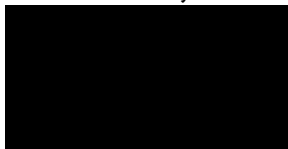
We would welcome the opportunity to work with you, the Research Quality Steering Committee, other peak bodies and research institutions that want to participate in a coalition to improve research practice and culture. There is a range of activities the collaboration could undertake, including, for example:

- developing a strategy and implementation plan,
- developing a Good Institutional Practice self-assessment tool
- sharing existing best practice resources and approaches that can be used within institutions at different levels, (individual, team, division, whole of institutions)
- collaboratively developing new resources and approaches.
- bringing cohorts of researchers together from across research institutions for professional development, peer support and learning. (Cohorts could be drawn for example, from EMCR Ideas Grant applicants, Investigator Grant applicants at different career stages.)

The finalisation and publication of the Good Institutional Practice Guide will provide impetus for improvement that we can build on if we act collectively. If it is left to individual institutions to implement on their own, there will, at best, be isolated improvements and islands of excellence, rather than the systematic improvement that can be delivered by collective action, which will reduce unwanted variation and optimise quality and impact.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this brief letter and the invitation in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Nadia Levin
Chief Executive Officer
Research Australia

