RAO Seminar Wrap-up Session

Women in Science: Saraid Billiards
Indigenous Health Research: Sam Faulkner
Applying for Grants: Sarah Turnewitsch
RGMS Upgrade: Gerry Doherty
RAO Presentation 1: Sybil Woolfson
RAO Presentation 2: Christina Spargo
Boosting Dementia Research: John McCallum
Administering Grants: Joanne Mitchell
Complaints & Research Misconduct: Sarah Byrne
ARMS RAO Lead Panel Session: ARMS
CEO’s report (Prof Warwick Anderson)

• Peer review and the importance of transparency, fairness and thoroughness

• There will be further discussion/consultation re NFFC and early triage

• Falling funding rates and the “perfect storm”
Project Grants

“The perfect storm”

- Increasing number of applications / research years requested
- A peer review process designed to handle 2000 apps
- Falling administrative support (productivity dividends)
- Increasing funding request sizes for all proposal durations
- Many more 4 & 5 year grant requests
- Flat funding into the foreseeable future
Women in Science (Dr Saraid Billiards)
- need for whole of sector buy-in to improve participation & retention
- career disruption assessment requires appropriate information

Indigenous Health Research (Samantha Faulkner)
- NHMRC 5% target has been reached and exceeded
- role for RAOs in identifying ATSI researchers

Applying for Grants (Sarah Turnewitsch)
- benefits of providing minimal data – app targeting to GRPs
- need for better summaries
The Headlines

RGMS (Gerry Doherty et al)
- improved user friendliness in Version 13
- limited scope for some changes that might be desirable

RAO Perspective (Sybil Woolfson; UniMelb)
- implementation of a grant submission management process

“Boosting Dementia’ initiative (Prof John McCallum)
- NHMRC’s National Institute for Dementia Research
- there is room for the “maverick researcher with the breakthrough idea
Administering Grants (Joanne Mitchell)

- Variations
  - within RGMS; used to track progress; the policy to be published

- Firmer position re changes to what was peer reviewed

- No payment without relevant ethics approval

- No collection & forwarding of transfer funds

- One commencement date on Schedules
The Headlines

RAO Perspective (Christina Spargo; Menzies NT)
- strong and passionate ATSI focus; child & global health & emerging tropical diseases
- robust internal peer review and triage

Complaints and Research Misconduct (Sarah Byrne)
- obligation on Administering Institutions to disclose
- protections for all concerned
NHMRC Assessment Myths and Other Issues

• NHMRC encourages budget cutting to save money
• NHMRC discriminates against 4 (20%) and 5 (13%) year Project apps
• GRPs take little notice of applicant rebuttals (1 & 2 SP)
• GRPs take little notice of external assessor reports (2SP)
• GRPs take little notice of reports of career disruption
• Team quality and capability scores are enhanced by AIs
“Project Grants support the creation of new knowledge by funding the best investigator-initiated research project plan of five years, or less, in any area relevant to human health”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1 (x%)</th>
<th>2 (x%)</th>
<th>3 (x%)</th>
<th>4 (x%)</th>
<th>5 (x%)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>33 (1.0%)</td>
<td>205 (6.1%)</td>
<td>2725 (81.5%)</td>
<td>258 (7.7%)</td>
<td>123 (3.7%)</td>
<td>3344</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>33 (0.9%)</td>
<td>245 (7.0%)</td>
<td>2799 (79.8%)</td>
<td>281 (8.0%)</td>
<td>150 (4.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>41 (1.1%)</td>
<td>242 (6.5%)</td>
<td>3044 (81.7%)</td>
<td>271 (7.3%)</td>
<td>130 (3.5%)</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>36 (0.9%)</td>
<td>202 (5.2%)</td>
<td>3132 (79.9%)</td>
<td>356 (9.1%)</td>
<td>192 (4.9%)</td>
<td>3918</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>28 (0.7%)</td>
<td>175 (4.6%)</td>
<td>2352 (61.7%)</td>
<td>770 (20.2%)</td>
<td>485 (12.7%)</td>
<td>3810</td>
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Budgets

• NHMRC does **NOT** ask for budget cuts to save money

• Recommend what is essential to successfully complete the research plan (PSPs; DRC; EQ; duration)
  – provide opportunity to achieve a successful research outcome

• NHMRC does **NOT** recommend funding for poorly justified:
  – Direct Research Cost requests
  – personnel costs at levels that are not required to complete the work
  – inappropriate funding durations

• A poorly constructed/justified budget can undermine an otherwise strong application
Peer Reviewers

- Applicants receive and respond to the reports from the 1SP and the EAs
- 1 and 2SPs re-assess their scores in the light of the rebuttal and the NFFC list is finalised (up to 50% in 2014)
- In session, the GRP hears reports from the 1SP who concentrates on the “strengths & weaknesses” of the application AND from the 2SP who specifically reports on the views of the EAs, provides personal views and drives the budget discussion
Responding effectively to the assessor reports

- Both 1 and 2SP report on the quality of the rebuttal
- Rebuttals can elevate or sink an application
- Therefore, it is critical that applicants stay cool in rebuttal
  - do not get angry on paper – “play with a straight bat”
  - answer the queries as if everyone of them is reasonable and worthy of a considered response
  - if space permits, reply to all queries, but otherwise, reply in a priority order
  - support your rebuttal with new data if available and if space permits
Assessment of Track Record Relative to Opportunity

All panel members will assess each application against the selection criteria and take into account relative to opportunity considerations re Team Quality & Capability, relevant to this application.

Relative to opportunity considerations may include:

- amount of time spent as an active researcher
- available resources
- clinical, administrative or teaching workload
- relocation of an applicant and his/her research laboratory or clinical practice setting
- restrictions on publication associated with time spent working in other sectors
- career disruption (pregnancy; carer responsibilities; major illness)
Assessment Criteria and Scoring

All assessors must score against each criterion using the Category Descriptors:

• Scientific Quality (quality of the research plan; 50%)

• Significance and/or Innovation (significance of the expected outcomes and/or innovation of the concept; 25%)

• Team Quality and Capability (relevant to the application, relative to opportunity; 25%) (AIs not included)
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