Career Disruption

Career disruption represents a category within the assessment of relative to opportunity. A career disruption is considered separate to other categories, as it is anticipated to have longer lasting impacts on a researcher's career progression than is necessarily reflected by the actual time taken as leave or absence from their research. Circumstances considered under career disruption include:

- Pregnancy,
- Major illness, and
- Carer responsibilities
  - Parental leave
  - Care for immediate family (e.g. spouse, children or elderly parent).

A career disruption involves a prolonged interruption to an applicant's capacity to work, either due to absence (for periods of 1 month or greater) and/or long-term partial return to work, to accommodate carers responsibilities or illness.

Applicants are encouraged to provide details of how their specific disruption has affected their track record, funding opportunities and career progress. In addition to impacting on publication rates, a career disruption can severely diminish the possibility of presenting at conferences, establishing an international reputation, applying for funding, obtaining preliminary data for grants and taking on new students.

The period of career disruption may be used for example: (i) to determine an applicant's eligibility for a scheme (e.g. Early Career Fellowships); (ii) to allow the inclusion of additional Track Record information for assessment of an application (e.g. Project Grants); or (iii) for consideration by the Peer Review Panel during their deliberations (e.g. Program Grants). Further details on how career disruptions are considered in each Scheme are outlined in each Scheme's specific documentation (including Funding Rules, Category Descriptors, Advice and Instructions, and Peer Review Guidelines). The impact of any career disruption(s) may also be considered by assessors when determining an applicant's achievements against the selection criteria relative to opportunity.

Circumstances that impact upon research productivity which are considered under Relative to Opportunity (NHMRC Funding Rules, Section 3.6) but are NOT (generally) career disruptions include:

- employment outside the research sector including time spent working in industry,
- restrictions on publication associated with time spent working in other sectors (e.g., industry, policy and government),
- clinical, administrative or teaching workload,
- relocation of laboratory or clinical practice setting, and
- the typical performance of researchers in the research field in question.

Circumstances that are not career disruptions, but which may have impacted an applicant’s productivity, are considered during Peer Review. Consideration of achievement against assessment criteria relative to opportunity
reflects the NHMRC's aim that assessment processes accurately measure an applicant's track record relative to stage of career, including consideration as to whether productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities available to the applicant.